



# Memory, Politics and Religion

The Past Meets the Present in Europe

Edited by Frances Pine, Deema Kaneff and Haldis Haukanes



# **Memory, Politics and Religion**

## **The Past Meets the Present in Europe**

The essays in this book explore the relations between politics, religion, and memory and commemoration. The authors, all social anthropologists who work in Europe, address some of the most profound and complex questions evoked by analysis of memory. How are rememberings of the past used to legitimate competing political and religious claims? How do unofficial memories serve to contest or subvert public histories? What is the role of silence in preserving, or 'muting', painful and traumatic experiences of the past? The ethnographies investigate such questions in a wide range of settings, from Romanian religious sites during the communist period and after the demise of communism, to violence and terrorism in fascist and post-Francoist Spain, postwar sites of commemoration in France and the newly independent Croatian state.

The ethnographic approach brings individual experience, the 'thick description' of daily life at the local level, to the study of the practices and ideologies which underpin religious and political beliefs and institutions. In this way, the metanarratives of historical analysis are supplemented, enriched and at times transcended by less frequently heard local voices and stories, and even by poignant silences. The ethnographic detail presented by each of the authors provides unique insight into the processes by which claims to the present are made through the past. This in turn illuminates some of the more subtle aspects of the social reproduction of relations of inequality, manifested both in power and in marginality, between individuals, local and national institutions and the state. In each case study, memory shadows politics and religion, sometimes as a conservative force, sometimes as an impetus for change and rupture.



# **Halle Studies in the Anthropology of Eurasia**

---

## **General Editors:**

Chris Hann, Richard Rottenburg, Burkhard Schnepel

## **Volume 4**

Frances Pine, Deema Kaneff and Haldis Haukanes (eds.)

# Memory, Politics and Religion

The Past Meets the Present in Europe



<https://doi.org/10.52038/978-38258-8051-6>

Made available under a CC BY-NC-ND 4. license.

Cover Photo: World War I monument at the Butte de Vauquois (France), 2000 (Photo: Paola Filippucci).



Gedruckt auf alterungsbeständigem Werkdruckpapier entsprechend  
ANSI Z3948 DIN ISO 9706

**Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek**

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

ISBN 3-8258-8051-6

**A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library**

© **LIT VERLAG** Dr. W. Hopf Berlin 2004

Fresnostr. 2 D-48159 Münster

Tel. +49 (0) 2 51-620 32 22 Fax +49 (0) 2 51-922 60 99

e-Mail: [lit@lit-verlag.de](mailto:lit@lit-verlag.de) <http://www.lit-verlag.de>

**Distribution:**

In Germany: **LIT Verlag** Fresnostr. 2, D-48159 Münster

Tel. +49 (0) 2 51-620 32 22, Fax +49 (0) 2 51-922 60 99, e-Mail: [vertrieb@lit-verlag.de](mailto:vertrieb@lit-verlag.de)

# Contents

	Preface and Acknowledgements	vii
1	Introduction Memory, Politics and Religion: A Perspective on Europe <i>Frances Pine, Deema Kaneff and Haldis Haukanes</i>	1
	Part I: Contesting History and Transmitting the Past	31
2	Memory and Marginality: Remembrance of War in Argonne (France) <i>Paola Filippucci</i>	35
3	From Avoidance to Engagement? Coming to Terms with the Nazi Past in a German Home Town <i>John Eidson</i>	59
4	The Power of Genre: Local History-Writing in Communist Czechoslovakia <i>Haldis Haukanes</i>	93
5	Disciplining the Past in Post-Soviet Ukraine: Memory and History in Schools and Families <i>Tanya Richardson</i>	109
	Part II: Power, Authority and Ideology	133
6	Burying Two Bishops: Legitimizing the Church through the Politics of the Past in Romania <i>Vlad Naumescu</i>	137
7	Soviet Ideology and Religious Practices in Simferopol, Crimea <i>Ina Vogelsang</i>	157
8	Constructing the Bulgarian Pythia: Intersections of Religion, Memory and History in the Seer Vanga <i>Galia Valtchinova</i>	179

9	Tarantism and the Politics of Tradition in Contemporary Salento <i>Giovanni Pizza</i>	199
	Part III: Contested Memories, Violence and Silence	225
10	Religious Celebrations and the (Re)creation of Communities in Postwar Knin, Croatia <i>Carolin Leutloff-Grandits</i>	229
11	Evangelical Transformations of Forgetting and Remembering: The Politics of Gitano Life <i>Paloma Gay y Blasco</i>	255
12	Fighters, Martyrs, Victims: Political Conflict, Ambivalent Moralities and the Production of Terror and Modes of Governance in Contemporary Spain <i>Susana Narotzky and Paz Moreno</i>	273
	Contributors	295
	Index	299

## **Preface and Acknowledgements**

An appreciation of the part played by recollection and commemoration is crucial for an understanding of the place of politics and religion in contemporary Europe. The authors represented in this book use ethnographic cases to reflect on the changing relationship between religious and political institutions. These institutions and their accompanying ideologies play critical roles in the creation of boundaries between groups and nations, and of identities. Through their organisation and leaders, political and religious movements demand loyalty, evoke emotion and stake claims to exclusive truth and morality. Although in a formal sense religious and political institutions are often opposed, both engage with emotional, somatic and practical experience, and they share many of the same technologies, references and of course followers. It is by considering them together, and examining how they are formed and perpetuated in relation to complex and far reaching claims to and about past events, actors, places and symbolic and material property, that we can best understand the way they work in contemporary societies.

In these processes both metanarratives of history and social memory, and local histories and personal memories, play significant roles; often equally important are the apparent gaps in both grand narratives and daily (mundane) recollections – the things about which little or nothing is said and the voids or empty spaces that exist where one might have expected to find some form of marking or commemoration. Whether expressed consciously through acts and words, performed through unconscious embodied processes, or shrouded by silence, memory constructs and (re)forms both past experiences and present identities. Dwelling on the one hand at the level of individual, and on the other at that of social (or collective), consciousness, it is concerned with everyday forms of popular historicisation. This aspect of memory makes it a compelling starting point for a discussion of the places where politics, religion and the past meet. At the level of the individual, of the community, and of the wider nation, memory provides us with a unique key to understanding the present – what people remember, what they appear to forget or about which they do not speak, and what they quarrel over and contest.

The ethnographic record shows us that across cultures and through time memory is one of the most powerful tools available for articulating, maintaining and reproducing both politics and religion. This book focuses on political and religious domains in present day Europe at those points where

individual memory and collective or social memory intersect, in unison or in opposition.

The book originated in a panel we convened at the conference of the European Anthropological Association in Kraków in 2000. We had all been working on eastern Europe for some years, and were becoming increasingly interested in questions to do with the past, different narratives and stories, and the place of memory. In keeping with the general theme of the conference, we invited participants to speak about religion, politics and memory in both eastern and western Europe.

The original panel consisted of papers by six participants: Paloma Gay y Blasco, Carolin Leutloff, Berardino Palumbo, Giovanni Pizza, Michael Stewart and Ina Vogelsang. The discussion following each paper, and at the end of the session, was unusually animated and stimulating; it was clear that the themes attracted a great deal of interest and debate. When we decided to publish the papers as an edited volume, we invited several colleagues we knew to be working on similar issues in Europe to submit chapters. The response was even better than we had hoped for, and this collection is the outcome. Unfortunately, in the end neither Michael Stewart nor Berardino Palumba was able to contribute a paper, but their participation in the original panel added greatly to the discussion and helped us to formulate our ideas on various topics.

We are grateful to the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle and the Centre for Women's and Gender Research of the University of Bergen for providing us with the facilities and support to work on this book. The themes of the book correspond closely with the current research focus on religion and civil society of the Postsocialist Eurasia Department at the Max Planck Institute.

The final preparation of the manuscript took place in Halle and would have been impossible without the knowledge, editorial skills, good humour and patience of Berit Westwood. Chris Hann has supported the project from the beginning, has helped us to realise it, and has as always been extraordinarily generous with his time and knowledge. All of the contributors inspired the book project with their thoughts and enthusiasm. Diana Quetz, Tobias Köllner and other student assistants helped with the preparation of the manuscript. Paola Fillippucci gave us a photograph for the cover, which Judith Orland designed. We thank you all.

Frances Pine  
Deema Kaneff  
Haldis Haukanes

## ***Chapter 1***

### **Introduction**

### **Memory, Politics and Religion: A Perspective on Europe**

Frances Pine, Deema Kaneff and Haldis Haukanes

Time past and time future  
Allow but a little consciousness.  
To be conscious is not to be in time  
But only in time can the moment in the rose-garden,  
The moment in the arbour where the rain beat,  
The moment in the draughty church at smokefall  
Be remembered; involved with past and future.  
Only through time is time conquered.

T.S. Eliot<sup>1</sup>

### **Engaging with Different Pasts**

The recent proliferation of memory studies in anthropology suggests that individual and social rememberings wax and wane in intensity and in performance in direct relation to political change. Since 1989, works on the former socialist countries indicate that the demise of state socialism and with it its hegemonic hold on memory and history production has allowed and in fact generated an outpouring of counter memories and histories hidden, ‘forgotten’ and forbidden under the intrusive discipline of the socialist regimes. Other writings on memory politics, most notably on the Holocaust (Boyarin 1994) and, in a different way, on European Roma, show that what is apparently forgotten, erased from memory, or even evidence of a refusal of painful recollection, may in fact itself be an alternative way of implicitly remembering though the very silence it adopts (Stewart 2004; Gay y Blasco this volume). Further, as studies of places and monuments of commemoration make very clear, memory sites themselves are not fixed spaces. Rather they change periodically as they are contested by different interest groups all

---

<sup>1</sup> Eliot, T. S. 1979 [1944]. *Burnt Norton*. In T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*, p. 5. London: Faber and Faber.

holding complex, and dissimilar, ideas about what such sites do, and should, represent (see Young 1989, 2000; Huyssen 1994, 2003; also Assmann 1995; all on commemorative sites in Germany; see also Filippucci, Pizza and Valtchinova on France, Italy and Bulgaria respectively, this volume).

Political and religious movements often involve the same processes, particularly evocations of and appeals to the past. In Europe, the engagement between religious and political institutions has varied according to time and place, enacted sometimes as competition for public legitimation (e.g. eastern Europe during the socialist period), sometimes as co-existence in mutual dependency (e.g. Spain and Italy, during fascism and at different times since). At particular times and in particular places either religion or politics, or both, may determine the major focus of national identity, individual belief and commitment, and either or both may define the major fields of social and cultural practice.

The role of the state is obviously one crucial aspect of any consideration of memory, politics and religion in contemporary Europe. Since the great nation building drives of the nineteenth century, those living in Europe have witnessed repeated instances in which state leaders and those aspiring to political power have appealed to collective memory to forge senses of national identity, to justify and sometimes generate the exclusion, expulsion or death of those ‘others’ who fall outside the national (remembered) body politic, and to legitimate claims to geographical areas outside politically defined boundaries. The use of such memory politics is still vivid in all of our minds from war images following the breakup of Yugoslavia, but this is only one recent example of a recurrent phenomenon, played out most dramatically and tragically by the totalitarian fascist and communist regimes<sup>2</sup> of the twentieth century.

In totalitarian states there is no official space for counter histories or oppositional memories; indeed the insistence on one totalising or hegemonic account of history is an essential element of totalitarianism. In this sense,

---

<sup>2</sup> Here we are using totalitarianism to refer specifically to fascism and Stalinism, not to all of the diverse socialist regimes in twentieth century Europe (see Arendt 1968: xxiii-xxxix for a distinction between totalitarianism and ‘detotalitarianism’). The model of totalitarian states which dominated American descriptions, particularly, of the Soviet Union and its satellites during the 1950s and 1960s is, as Watson (1994) and others have discussed, too inflexible and unwieldy to accommodate “actually existing socialism” (Bahro 1978). Where the ideology of a one party state may insist on one ‘totalising’ account, in practice people find constant and ingenious ways to circumvent the rules governing everyday life and narratives of history and memory. It is also true, of course, that the leadership and the dominant line of thinking in any state changes over time and in response to different events and trends, so that even the ‘hegemonic’ narrative can be seen as far more fragile and fluctuating than a totalitarian model would imply.

interpretation and control of sites of memory can be seen as a major technology of state power. However, as Watson (1994) and others have argued, and as various chapters in this volume confirm, even in oppressive one party states both individual and group counter memories are kept alive, often in secret places and through hidden or disguised ceremonies of commemoration. Struggles by various states to control, re-form or eliminate particularly threatening memories, and what appears to be the impossibility of accomplishing this task in the long term, are described in several chapters here (see especially Narotzky and Moreno on memories of fascism in Spain, Naumescu on the silencing of the Greek Catholic church in Romania, and Richardson on memories of Stalinism in Ukraine).

But it is not only one party states which have a vested interest in control and generation of particular forms of commemoration and narratives of remembered pasts. The rise of the nation state in Europe in the nineteenth century was linked to the concept of a unified, homogenous population, identified with a particular place and territory, and often, although not always, with a dominant religious affiliation and political structure. Poland is the prime example of an historical identification between religious and national identity, while its neighbour Germany offers a counter example of a unified political structure encompassing religious diversity. As Lambek (1996a), Boyarin (1994) and others have discussed, the nineteenth century concept of a unified, bounded nation was paralleled by one of a bounded and indivisible individual, with a unified 'self' and a coherent set of memories. But, as Filippucci's account of the recollections of the First World War held by residents of the Argonne, and Vogelsang's of good and bad memories of the Soviet period in Crimea, show clearly, even within one individual there may be competing or discordant remembering.

Neither is the coherent, unified nation state an unproblematic concept. In some parts of Europe members of different religious traditions have maintained relatively peaceful coexistence for quite long periods of time. In others, religious leaders have vied for economic, political and spiritual ascendancy, in contests which have continued through the twentieth and into the twenty-first century. Experiences of war or other traumatic political events, or of religious movements or revelation, are often appropriated by the state and incorporated into national discourse in ways that attempt to supersede or simply ignore local interpretations which threaten temporal and spatial coherence. These processes are rarely straightforward, and are themselves subject to change. In other words, the past is not only a contested field at a given moment, but one which shifts and transforms over time.

Underpinning contested and changing histories, and the tension between public and hidden memories and commemorations, is a struggle for



power. Conflicting memories are not only about what ‘really’ happened. They are also about identity claims, identity formation and identity politics (Assmann 1995; Lambek 1996a). In the most basic sense, legitimation of and through memory is an ideological tool. Through mutual understandings and hence confirmation of particular shared pasts, people build their identities and make their social relations. By contesting the pasts remembered by others, they mark these others as different and may exclude them from various social, political or economic relationships. In claiming a particular version of the past as ‘true’ and reinforcing that ‘truth’ through reference to specific physical and temporal sites of memory, state and other institutional bodies attempt to legitimate their claims, and to establish their *right*, to power. By keeping alive and reiterating counter memories, by producing and reproducing interpretations which challenge the hegemonic account, individuals and groups outside the official corridors of power offer alternative routes to legitimacy, and alternative, if often muted or hidden, criteria for shared identity (Watson 1994). To consider only official histories, formal accounts and historical documents is tantamount to ignoring a far greater complexity of the past. Implicitly or explicitly, fragments of the past carried in and reproduced by the rememberings of marginal or subordinated groups often challenge hegemonic discourses. In so doing they introduce and perpetuate the possibility of alternate presents and futures. As such, they always represent at least a potential source of power and tool of opposition.

The past, as it is formally coded in texts, embodied in rituals, landscapes and commemorative builtspaces, and buried deep in the unconscious body of individual memory, becomes fundamental in power struggles in all of the regions discussed in this volume. By concentrating on politics and religion, the authors seek to extend our understanding of the dialectical nature of relations between institutional histories, the claims for entitlement and legitimacy which are made through them, and local level responses and alternative strategies which modify or counter them. Eric Wolf (1982) showed us some time ago how Europe created, in opposition to itself, another world of ‘people without history’. But, as the writings of social historians such as E. P. Thompson, Christopher Hill and Eric Hobsbawm, and earlier in the early twentieth century, of political theorists such as Bakhtin and Gramsci demonstrate, within Europe itself similar configurations of dominant or hegemonic discourse, silenced local voices, and muted but resilient alternatives also mould both the past and the present.

### **Where Religion and Politics Meet**

Throughout Europe the church and the state have together spun a tangled web since the spread of Christianity. Until the twentieth century, the state

and church were inextricably bound together at the heart of local, national and international politics, at certain times facing each other as rivals for resources and power and at others joining forces as allies against other faiths or orders and competing political factions. In many European countries the state still claims at least part of its legitimacy through the church. In the United Kingdom, the reigning monarch is the titular head of both the state and the Church of England. Even where separation of church and state has been most effectively implemented, the definition of a permissible reach of religion into the public domain often remains a highly emotive and politicised concern: in France, the secularisation of the state has been deliberate and extreme, and the resultant banishment of religious symbols from the public secular sphere rigorous and at times controversial (as in the case of the headscarves worn by Muslim school girls). In socialist eastern Europe the state, despite its explicit secularism, at particular junctures found use for religion in legitimating nationalist claims, and in locating a shared space of common interest for 'the people' and 'the government'. In Poland, the leaders of the Catholic church were at times persecuted and at times accommodated and even courted by the government, but the enormous popular allegiance to the church was never successfully repressed, and the church consistently formed the focus of popular resistance to communism (Kubik 1994). Compared to Poland, in Bulgaria and Romania a much more effective secularisation severely limited the power and visibility of the Orthodox churches, but popular religion, often disguised as folk culture or ritual, endured throughout. (Kligman 1988; Kaneff 2004; Naumescu, Valtchinova this volume). The ambiguity of the position of religion in European politics, where historically it appears sometimes in the guise of a colonising force and sometimes as a force for populist rebellion or quiet resistance, is drawn out in many of the essays here.

It is useful to distinguish between the state and church as institutions, and the broader, more encompassing sets of beliefs and relations that constitute political and religious ideologies and are incorporated into day to day practices. The distinction is reflected in the different perspectives taken in various chapters of the book: some contributors offer close examinations of institutional state and church relations (Naumescu and Valtchinova) while others focus more on political and/or religious relations in the context of daily life (Gay y Blasco and Vogelsang). In eastern Europe since socialism the past has become a battle ground for contested institutional histories, some sympathetic to communism, others discrediting it, and for still others reaching back to pre-communist times and non-communist, often religious, institutions and practices. In other words, pasts are being both renegotiated

and reclaimed, through texts, through control of space and place, and through performance of ritual.

Various anthropologists have considered the connections between ritual and the past (Bloch 1989; Cole 1998; Lambek 1998; or on Europe specifically Kertzer 1991; Tak 2000; Creed 2002). In its repetition, its often cyclical performance, and its formality of language and symbols, ritual time stands outside daily time not only bringing the past into the present but in effect often collapsing the past into a time out of time. The theatrical rituals of church and state serve as periodic demonstrations of power, but also as communications of correct and stable order. For example, the importance of dead bodies and their highly ritualised reburial in eastern Europe reflects the reordering of people's social universes that took place after 1989 (Verdery 1999). Although the reversals which constitute part of many royal rituals may upset established hierarchy momentarily, in the end they reintegrate and restore order (Gluckman 1977; Bloch 1999). If we shift our focus downwards from the level of state ritual, the exaggerated populist reversals of carnival and burlesque subvert and unsettle the strongest and most entrenched images of hierarchical power, through often grotesque parody of the weakness or corruption of the political leader, and of the sexuality and corporality of the priest. In carnival, boundaries of sex, gender and class are continually transgressed and pushed to their limit, and in this process they both express tension and provide a space for alternative possibilities (Le Roy Ladurie 1980; Bakhtin 1984). In the secular socialist states, attempts to abolish religious ritual, and ritual around life crises of marriage, birth and death, were largely unsuccessful (Vogelsang this volume). And so the state officials instead invented forms of secular ritual as alternatives to those of the church. In the Soviet Union, for instance, marriage palaces replaced churches as the place of weddings, but the ritual trappings of the ceremony and its celebration progressively bore more and more resemblance to those of the church (Binns 1980 *passim*; Lane 1981 *passim*; Figes 1996: 746). The attempts by state leaders to take over religious days of celebration or commemoration for their own performances of political and military power have been well documented: it is well known, for instance, that in the socialist states of eastern Europe, nearly every religious holiday was countered, on the same day or the one before or after by a state one, often combining nationalist and communist commemoration (Lane 1981; Hann 1990; Kubik 1994). In all of these different types of ritual, repetition and symbol are directed towards the evocation of past events and former epochs; in calling up memory they claim the right to bear the mantle of the past. All the chapters in this book provide us with an ethnographically based knowledge of such 'tools of memory' – people's many ways of dealing with the past in the

present – as they operate in different social situations. Even more fundamentally they raise the question of why memory is so important in these instances, and in response show us that the battle ground in these struggles is the past, for it is the past that links ideology and practice.

## **Notes on Memory and Anthropology**

### ***Memory Politics, Power and the Past***

Recent work focusing on memory in Europe by anthropologists, cultural theorists, psychologists and historians has been dominated by certain critical moments and events. Not surprisingly, these are the often worst of times, those moments which have left the deepest and most tragic scars on victims and witnesses and which are often still indelibly written on the received memories of their descendants. Most obvious is the Holocaust, where we have seen the traumas of displacement, torture and genocide to be engraved not only on the memories of survivors but also on what Marianne Hirsch has called the postmemories of following generations (1999: 8). Memories of fascism in other contexts, in Greece, Spain and Portugal, have been less extensively discussed, but similar patterns, weaving together memories of terror, ubiquitous state violence and power, and retreats into silence, are striking (see Collard 1989 for one of the first discussions in anthropology to look at memory, silence and contested pasts, in this case in relation to memories of the Greek civil war; for Spain see Narotzky and Moreno this volume). Fixed in an earlier time are accounts of the First World War and the more historical work focusing on sites of battle and commemoration of the dead, all evoking albeit from a longer chronological distance images of brutal, horrendous and pointless deaths of thousands of young men in places to which they had few if any connections (see Winter 1995; Filippucci this volume). Finally, there are recollections of communism and its associated traumas of deportation, purges and killings, betrayals within friendships and families, and decades of discipline by the intrusive state. Since the dismantling of the Soviet regimes, a growing literature has addressed memory issues through discussions of hidden resistance during communism, of retribution and reconciliation since, and of the retrieval of hidden or suppressed memories in the light of social, political and national reconstruction (see for example Passerini 1992; Watson 1994; Skultans 1998; Wanner 1998; Merridale 2000). However, as recent work on postsocialism (Hann 2002; Pine 2002; Kaneff 2004; Richardson and Vogelsang this volume) also shows clearly, such memory is by no means straightforward. For many people the communist period is remembered as a good time, or at least as a

time characterised by certain kinds of economic security, and a certain ethos or morality, which are now threatened or are feared to have been lost.

Anthropological interest in social memory grew as a consequence of the dialogue between the anthropological and historical disciplines. Since then it has developed most fully through engagement with cultural analysis, critical theory, psychoanalytic theory and postmodernism. The Marxist awareness of class relations and histories of oppression and inequality, the Gramscian understanding that recorded histories are more likely to be those of the hegemonic authorities than of the working class or the peasantry, Michel Foucault's attention to counter memory as well as the postmodernist agenda to deconstruct the metanarrative and widen the number of heard 'voices', have all provided impetus for the growing interest in social memory. Recent works by anthropologists focusing on non-European societies have given us insights into the extent that understanding of memory, and mnemonic processes and practices, vary cross culturally (Vitebsky 1993; Bloch 1995, 1996; Carsten 1995; Lambek 1996b; Cole 1998, 2001). However, Europe continues to be a fascinating location for memory work, partly because it provides a space to consider the critical edge between literary history, historiography and non-written, often discordant but equally strong counter memories, and partly because much of the theory on memory originates in European intellectual tradition. In other words, Europe (or more precisely European academic culture, or the European intelligentsia) is often both the source of critical thought and, when accepted uncritically, the problem itself.

Freud's insistence that memory was both problematic and essential to any attempt to probe the human condition and the individual psyche made its mark on both literature and social theory writing in the early to mid twentieth century; for anthropologists his major breakthrough lies in the realisation that the human mind, like human remains for the archaeologist, is layered, and much that is not visible on the surface wields a powerful influence over states of being, relations to others, and personal and social identity. His insight that past episodes and experiences that appear to be forgotten continually re-emerge and exercise their presence in present acts and interpretations is echoed in much of the recent work on social memory, although the emphasis in the latter is less on the individual unconscious than on a wider social and political amnesia. Using ideas taken from psychoanalytical approaches and from other disciplines focusing on issues of 'trauma' (such as Holocaust remembering, or recollections of childhood abuse), anthropologists have attempted to adapt memory in order to look at past collective events that are not talked about in the 'normal' way. The work of Paul Antze (1996), for example (see in particular the chapters by George, Kenny, Young in the same volume) draws on both psychoanalytic theories and psycho-

therapeutic insight and technique to look at kinship practices and patterns of kin and gender reproduction.

Other works focus on the way in which the past is encoded through social practices such as speech, gestures, dance, rituals, and through objects and the organisation of space. Frances Yates, in her seminal study of *The Art of Memory* (1966), showed the importance of mental imaging of places, texts and buildings, and of mnemonic technique and structure in perfecting memory as an art or a skill. Paul Connerton's *How Societies Remember* (1989), provides an historical analysis of social memory as both practice and process, and the most explicit mapping of these different memory practices. In these studies, as in the works of Maurice Halbwachs and later of Pierre Nora, we see an almost formal exegesis of memory as an art form, an aide to social cohesion and collective sentiment, and a base for social identity. From a more familiar anthropological perspective, the works of Maurice Bloch (1995, 1996), Jennifer Cole (1998, 2001) and others not only give us vivid ethnographic accounts of memory practices in non-western, non-industrial contexts, but also go beyond this in their recognition of the need to view memory in terms of cognitive processes.

### ***Collective Memory***

Despite the undoubted significance of Freud's works, his impact on social anthropological writings on memory has been less marked than that of Halbwachs, and more than half a century later, of Nora. Until very recently social anthropologists have been extremely wary about engaging with psychoanalytic theories, or indeed with any theoretical approaches to the individual mind, psyche or personality. Rather, the social anthropological field of enquiry has been defined by reference to the collective and the social, in other words, to the relations and practices which originate with the individual but are abstracted from the subject to the objectivised self, and then to the collectivity of 'social persons'. In this sense, it is easy to understand why it is the idea of social or collective memory which has been most influential in anthropology.

The term 'collective memory' was introduced by Halbwachs<sup>3</sup> in 1925, but has only really been taken up by social anthropologists in the past two decades or so, following attempts to theorise the concept of social memory

---

<sup>3</sup> Although Halbwachs is usually seen as the originator of the concept it reflects among other influences his close connection with the Annales School of Social Historians, particularly with Marc Bloc, Lucien Febvre and Georges Lefèvre (Douglas 1980 [1950]; Coser 1992).

in various disciplines such as psychology, archaeology and social history.<sup>4</sup> In Halbwachs' work the influence of his teacher Durkheim is clear. For Halbwachs, memory was most importantly a social rather than an individual phenomenon. Through their membership in social groups such as those based on family and kinship, religion or political allegiance, individuals received and formed their memories. Any social group had a collective memory, which was transmitted, and reproduced in its members, over generations. The individual was simultaneously a member of various different social groups or collectivities, each of which evoked and reproduced its unique set of memories. Thus, as Connerton has pointed out, the problem of individual versus collective memory is eliminated here: there can be no individual memory without collective memory.

With exemplary lucidity, (Halbwachs) demonstrated that the idea of an individual memory, absolutely separate from social memory, is an abstraction almost devoid of meaning. He showed how different social segments, each with a different past, will have different memories attached to different mental landmarks characteristic of the group in question (Connerton 1989: 38).

This of course leaves us with the problem, which Connerton addresses in his own work, of how memory is transmitted. If every collective to which an individual belongs forms that individual's memory, what happens when one memory is diametrically opposed to another memory drawn from an opposing source? For Connerton, the problem is resolved by uncovering the mechanisms by which memory is transmitted: referring to Halbwachs' own work, as well as to that of Marc Bloch, he discusses the roles of the older generations in educating and training. In agrarian societies, where the parents work long hours away from the house, it is the grandparents who take responsibility for teaching the children language, morals and social contexts (1989: 39). But such familial memory is only one part of a much larger process of social remembering: repetition and ritual, played out in the two forms Connerton describes as commemorative and embodied practices, are the major vehicles for transmission of social memory. The spectacular and regularly repeated rites of the Third Reich, like the rites commemorating the battles, victories and ideologies of communism, imprinted a particular memory of a national past on the generations which observed and participated in them. For the Romans, as Yates showed, memory was an art developed

---

<sup>4</sup> The literature on social memory is enormous and still growing. It is beyond the scope of this introduction to provide a comprehensive review, rather, we have selected certain ideas and authors to discuss on the basis of their relevance for the material which most concerns us here. For a detailed, indeed almost encyclopaedic review of the literature, see Olick and Robbins 1998; see also Winter and Sivan (eds.) 1999: 6-39.

within a strict mental discipline of repetition, association and recollection. For the recent totalitarian regimes of Europe, the aim may have been rather different (the legitimation and perpetuation of a particular ideology at a mass level, rather than the honing of oratory and other performance skills at an individual one), but the repeated public displays of symbolic acts linked to specific places and events produced similar processes of mental inscription.

What neither Halbwachs' work on collective remembering nor Connerton's more sophisticated delineation of commemorative ceremonies and bodily practices, shows, however, is how counter memories, memories which fall outside and indeed contest the hegemonic rites of the state or the unifying practices of the collective, are also maintained and reproduced. The main critique which anthropologists make of Halbwachs is exactly this; the emphasis on the collective, even if there are multiple collectivities, leaves no room for dissent and change. Like Durkheim before him, Halbwachs described a positivist ideal of social reproduction, but the reality is often a much messier process. Perhaps Halbwachs could have resolved this problem had he paid more attention to contest and power. However, he emphasised instead the social ability to eliminate or adapt to discordant memories and failed to take into account the fact that the plurality of contested memories is a constant tension in many social contexts, and indeed one which is itself reproduced over time. In language reminiscent of Durkheim, he reflected that "society tends to eliminate from its memory everything which could separate individuals" (quoted in Connerton 1989: 38). Thus, not only memory but also society itself is reified to the point that there is little scope for disruptive voices. Rather, when a change takes place, it is because "society is obliged to become attached to new values, that is to say to depend on other traditions which are in better relation to its needs and present tendencies" (1989: 38). As many recent studies show us (including those of Richardson on Ukraine and Naumescu on Romania in this volume) such an emphasis on memory's ability to conform to society's needs is problematic. Apart from the problem of reification, it fails to take into account the remarkable range of ways in which memories counter to the dominant social voice are kept alive over time, or how in times of oppression or change deeply incompatible memories are maintained simultaneously, often generating conflict as the keepers of each vie for the status of holder of 'true' memory.

### ***Memory and History***

Just as there are many types of history (White 1987; Burke 1991) so too there are many kinds and repositories of memory. Indeed, distinguishing the border between history and memory is often difficult. Are life stories recorded by professional interviewers history or memory, or are they formal-



ised histories of specifically elicited memories? Like Watson, we want to avoid a reduction of social memory to history. As she puts it:

Although definitional exercises may not be very satisfying, in my view shared history and memory should not be collapsed, nor should those who are concerned with the past eschew the realm of memory altogether, leaving it as has so often been the case, to the cognitive psychologists and philosophers. I do not wish to invoke the dichotomies between Lévi-Strauss's hot and cold societies, nor do I wish to deny that there are many kinds of history. ... However, for those of us who are concerned with unorthodox transmissions of unapproved pasts, memory is a word too precious to abandon. ... Shared memories produce powerful images by taking up themes, telling stories, and making it possible to reexperience events in ways that are significantly different from the history of the professional historian. In creating shared memories we construct visions of the past rather than chronologies. Time itself may be collapsed or made inconsequential as these memory visions are evoked, shared, transmitted, and continually altered – while remaining ostensibly the same (1994: 8-9).

Further, as Nathalie Zemon Davis and Randolph Starn point out from their historians' perspective, memory itself both has a history or histories, and is 'subject to shifting historical boundaries' (1989: 2).<sup>5</sup> Thus,

One variant of the old Nature-Culture trope contrasts the supposedly 'organic' flow of memory with the historian's more or less calculated accounts of the past; representing Nature to history's Culture, memory either gives us unvarnished truths or, conversely, tells uncritical tales. Collapse the Nature-Culture distinction, as poststructuralist criticism has done in various ways, and both memory and history look like heavily constructed narratives, with only institutionally regulated differences between them (1989: 2).

Distinguishing different types and scale of social process can provide a key to the relation between individual memory from history, even as we understand both to be 'heavily constructed narratives'. Andrew Lass's (1994) delineation of personal recollection, remembrance, and history is useful here. Lass points us towards the process by which personal recollection elides into first memory and then history. Writing about his first return visit to his native Prague after 1989, he shows how his friends' stories of the public protests and demonstrations leading up to the 'velvet revolution' change

---

<sup>5</sup> These authors use the term counter-memory to refer to alternatives to these heavily constructed narratives or, following Foucault, 'the residual or resistant strains that withstand official versions of historical continuity' (1989: 2).

almost before his eyes. His friend Katerina evokes for him a picture of herself and her husband in their cottage in the countryside, hearing news of demonstrations in Wenceslaus Square on the radio. Later the conversation moves from Katerina's personal memory to a narrative of an episode involving Havel, and a public prosecution. As Lass points out, it becomes a chronology, with heroes and references (1994: 96). Although Katerina was not herself there, it is "as if, for a brief moment, she had been an eyewitness" (1994: 97). The public nature of the event, and its telling and retelling in popular discourse, creates the collective feeling of having participated in and remembered the same set of events, impersonalised into 'everyone's' memory. The personal recollection with idiosyncratic detail which is frozen in news reports and immortalised in coffee table books, then later becomes historical remembrance (1994: 99-101). Here there is deep implicit recognition of the importance of understanding the relationship between the individual (the remembering subject) and the social (the collective objectification of meaning), and the ways that the recollection of a personal experience can become subsumed over time into a homogenised and far more impersonal narrative of shared history.

Time, space, and place, and the presence or absence of a fixed chronology, all come into play in understanding the relationship and the distinction between history and memory. Nora's monumental work on *lieux de memoire* specifically addresses these issues in the context of contemporary France. For Nora, the decline of peasant culture in the face of industrialisation marked a 'fundamental collapse of memory' (1989: 7). Processes of democratisation, the spread of mass culture, the growth of media, the independence of nations after periods of 'colonial violation', and what he refers to as a 'process of interior decolonisation (which) has affected ethnic minorities, families and groups that until now possessed reserves of memory but little or no historical capital' (1989: 7), have all contributed to this collapse. Nora distinguishes between real memory, 'social and unviolated, exemplified in but also retained as the secret of so-called primitive or archaic societies', and history, 'which is how our hopelessly forgetful modern societies, propelled by change, organize the past' (1989: 8).

From an anthropological view point, this association between memory and ritualised, unchanging temporality on the one hand, and history and forgetfulness and change on the other, seems too close to the distinction between 'hot' and 'cold' societies for comfort. However, the distinction Nora makes between memory as 'life', as a process of 'permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived', and history as

‘the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer’ (1989: 8), suggests a far more nuanced comparison than that of Lévi-Strauss. Thus sites of memory, such as archives, monuments, museums and so on, are identified and built when memory itself fades and becomes petrified as history. They appear to stand between memory and history, devoid of the spontaneity and the passion that Nora equates with true memory, but fixed as points in a “differentiated network ... an unconscious organization of collective memory” (1989: 23). For Nora, the ‘acceleration of history’ in the twentieth century, characterised by a move from unity to multiplicity within the nation state, has been paralleled by an erosion of the unification of memory and history in national narrative, in which first memory and increasingly now history fail to provide a foundation for social cohesion (Olick and Robbins 1998: 201).

### *Memory and the Problem of Culture*

Various scholars have made a link between the rapid pace of change in the last decades and a general preoccupation with the past, social and personal memory, and sites of commemoration. In such analyses, an almost obsessive ‘return’ to the security of a past that seems knowable is identified, and seen as a reaction to the doubts and uncertainties churned up as the present and the future appear increasingly fragmented and unknowable. Not all of these scholars concur with Nora’s pessimism concerning the demise of memory (see for example Winter 1997). For many anthropologists, the idea that memory can become encapsulated by history, and further that memory is a facet of peasant or primitive society, is problematic because of the implicit assumption of lineal social progression. While many might be uncomfortable with the dichotomy implied between memory based and history based societies, however, distinctions between history and memory, and between distinct types of memory, as different technologies for incorporating or addressing the past in the present, are helpful. Assmann for example makes a distinction between ‘everyday’ or communicative memory and cultural memory, but explicitly rejects the thesis that when everyday memory is ‘crystallised in the forms of objectified culture’ (texts, buildings, monuments etc.), memory is transformed into history (1996: 128). Rather, he proposes that

in the context of objectivized culture or organized or ceremonial communication, a close connection to groups and their identity exists which is similar to that found in the case of everyday memory...a group bases its consciousness of identity and specificity upon this knowledge and derives formative and normative impulses from it, which allows the group to reproduce its identity. In this sense, objectified culture has the structure of memory (1996: 128).

The difference between the two types of memory lies in their temporality. Everyday memory is communicated between people, in different social contexts, as stories, experiences, jokes, without relation to a fixed point in time. Its span shifts, but does not extend back over more than three or four generations (1996: 127). Cultural memory on the other hand revolves around fixed events in the past, and is perpetuated through particular sites, monuments, texts, and practice (1996: 128). For Assmann, cultural memory brings together the contemporised past, culture, and society (1996: 129). The important point in terms of the present discussion is that this is an endlessly variable process, which changes from place to place and from epoch to epoch.

One society bases its self image on a canon of a sacred scripture, the next on a basic set of ritual activities, and the third on a fixed and heroic language of forms in a canon of architectural and artistic types. The basic attitude towards history, the past, and thus the function of remembering itself introduces another variable. One group remembers the past in fear of deviating from its model, the next for fear of repeating the past (1996: 133).

We can discern shades of the first group in the rituals of remembrance carried out in the Crimean cemeteries described by Vogelsang in this volume, and of the second in Germany's attempts to accept the responsibility for the acts of fascism, described by many recent authors including Eidson in this volume, or in Leutloff-Grandits's account in this volume of religious rituals emphasising mutual suffering and reconciliation in postwar Croatia.

Much of the current work on cultural memory is reminiscent of Durkheim, in the sense that it assumes a dominant collective memory, a cultural or social unity formed through consensus about the past, creating a clear sense of identity (for a critical assessment of the Durkheimian position see Bloch 1989: 108-12). However, the critical voices of Bakhtin, Gramsci and Benjamin, emphasising discordance as much as unity, have had equal, if not greater, influence on recent discussions of memory politics and culture. These discussions attempt to avoid the Durkheimian reification of culture and the collective, emphasising instead practice and agency:

Cultural memorization (is) an activity occurring in the present, in which the past is continuously modified and redescribed even as it continues to shape the future ... the stuff of cultural memory is ... the product of collective agency rather than the result of psychic or historical accident. ... (C)ultural recall is not merely something of which you happen to be the bearer but something that you actually *perform*, even if, in many instances, such acts are not consciously and wilfully contrived (Bal 1999: vii).

Most of the chapters in this book are similarly concerned with multiple past ‘continuously modified and redescribed’, or with counter memories of individuals and groups which for long periods of time are repressed, discredited or contested or silenced by the dominant narratives. Some tell of survival of these memories, and their re-emergence as political tides turn and dominant memories are rewritten or expand to allow inclusion of other stories and other pasts (Richardson, Vogelsang). Some portray counter memories running as subterranean streams against the main tide of politically or religiously entrenched discourse (Narotzky and Moreno, Naumescu). And some show how local memory accommodates to official state discourse rather than contesting it (Haukanes and Valtchinova).

In some of the recent studies of commemorative monuments, photographs, and texts created in response to traumatic pasts, we find delicate and nuanced analyses of memory politics which problematise and elaborate upon the question of collective memory while not disregarding it entirely (e.g. Bal, Crewe and Spitzer 1999; Young 2000; Huyssen 2003). Writing about the evocative nature of photographs from the past, Marianne Hirsch interweaves various accounts of memories of childhood, taken from fiction, poetry and photographic art. In each work, a child is drawn to photographs (in the photographic work of Lorie Novak literally drawn *into* the photograph), of which the captured images are other children who were victims of the Holocaust: Anne Frank, an unknown boy in a crowd rounded up by German soldiers, Jewish children from a French orphanage who would later be discovered and deported. Hirsch uses the term ‘postmemory’ to describe “the relationship of children of survivors of cultural or collective trauma to the experience of their parents, experiences that they ‘remember’ only as the stories and images with which they grew up, but are so powerful, so monumental as to constitute memories in their own right” (1999: 8). These stories and images are so powerful, Hirsch argues, that they constitute “spaces of remembrance, more broadly available through cultural and public, and not merely individual and personal, acts of remembrance, identification and projection” (1999: 9). This concept of postmemory has reverberations in several chapters of this book, most obviously in Filippucci’s discussion of the overshadowing presence of the First World War in contemporary Argonne, and its shifting relationship with other, more ordinary senses of the place’s past, and in Naumescu’s portrayal of the stories and images of the repression of the Greek Catholic church, and the space of memory that it occupied.

The fraught nature of conflicting interpretations of recent political pasts is not confined to images and stories. It is also reflected in material forms, in buildings and monuments which explicitly commemorate critical

events or moments, or implicitly make comment on them. Some of the most dramatic images of the fall of communism are those which record the toppling of statues of Lenin and Stalin and the dismantling of the Berlin Wall. Their counterpoint is found in the reopening or building of churches, and the re-designation of public spaces. In Warsaw, for instance, shortly after the end of communism the former Party headquarters was reopened as the new Stock Exchange, while in Sofia in 1989 the Party building became the site of the temporary Christmas market. But there are also longer term processes of commemoration which defy the symbolic immediacy of building or dismantling a statue, or reopening or re-designating a building. How are we to commemorate events which are too horrific to celebrate, and too complicated for any straightforward process of mourning? The controversies over the Vietnam memorials in the United States, and the impossibility of finding a memorial form which could both acknowledge the dreadful futility of the war and solemnise the loss of soldiers' lives and the sacrifices made by veterans, suggest that the time when the nation state could celebrate its triumphs unproblematically with heroic memorials is past (Huyssen 2003). Huyssen's work on Berlin architecture addresses similarly unsettled and unsettling memories. He describes a city where both memory and forgetting are quite literally written in stone, as Berliners have attempted to rebuild their city after the architectural destruction of the Second World War and then the GDR. Traditionalists opting for the development of the *Keiz* (traditional neighbourhood) vie with the advocates of 'high-tec global architecture'. "Forgotten are the architectural and planning experiments of the 1920s. ... Forgotten or rather repressed is the architecture of the Nazi period, of which Berlin, after all, still harbours significant examples. Ignored and quickly to be forgotten is the architecture of the GDR, which many would just like to commit in its entirety to the wrecking ball" (2003: 61). In terms of explicit commemoration, Huyssen sees Libeskind's Jewish Museum as "a better memorial to German and Jewish history, the history of the living and of the dead, than any official funereal monument could possibly be" (2003: 71):

As architecture ... Libeskind's museum is the only project in the current Berlin building boom that explicitly articulates issues of national and local history in ways pertinent to post-unification Germany. In its spatial emphasis on the radical ruptures, discontinuities, and fractures of German and German-Jewish history, it stands in opposition to the critical reconstructionists' attempts to create a seamless continuity with a pre-1914 national past that would erase memories of Weimar, Nazi and GDR architecture in the process. As an architecture of memory, it also opposes the postnationalism of global

corporate architecture a la Potsdamer and the Leipziger Platz, an architecture that has neither memory nor sense of place to begin with (2003: 21).

Just as acts of political protest, such as those of the Basques described in this volume by Narotzky and Moreno, are attempts to force memory back onto pasts that have been forgotten or silenced in the interests of national expediency and unity, so also cultural production can serve to challenge rewritings of a homogenised past from which periods of fracture and discontinuity have been erased, airbrushed out like the missing faces in official state portraits during Stalinism (King 1997).

### ***Memory, Cognition and Practice***

Works such as those above help us to understand what people remember, what meanings memories carry, how they are transmitted and reproduced, and how they are constructed and reconstructed as political and social contexts change over time. Studies of social memory show us that people remember through bodily or habitual practices, through hidden rituals, through family kitchen memories kept alive in private, while those of cultural memory emphasise the communication and transmission of shared pasts through place and space, through texts and through monuments or buildings which may hold quite different meanings in the dominant memorial narrative. But we are left with the question of how memory itself works. Answers to this question seem most likely to be found in research from cognitive psychology. The recent works of several social anthropologists reflect an increasing desire to bridge the gap between the two disciplines and to formulate a more synthesised approach (e.g. Bloch 1998).

Drawing particularly on the 1930s work of the psychologist Frederic Bartlett (1999 [1932]), Cole argues for an understanding of remembering which emphasises the importance of its emotional or affective aspects, as well as its strong base in the conventions of language and symbols (Cole 2001: 23-5). She goes beyond what she sees as the positivist functionalism of both Halbwachs and Bartlett, and advocates an approach which is more practice based, in which memory is a manifestation not only of politically defined needs but also a set of moral practices (see also Lambek 1996b). In a recent article on Roma and the politics of Holocaust memories, Michael Stewart has pursued this line of enquiry, suggesting that the enigma of Roma memory, marked by an almost complete absence of explicit rememberings or commemoration may be unravelled if attention is redirected from commemorative politics, practices and narratives to implicit memories, embedded in cognitive processes and embodied and regularly enacted in the daily prejudices, discrimination and potential for violence that marks their social

relations with non Roma. Thus, Stewart argues, “Roma do not need commemorations to remember – the rest of the world does it for them on a daily basis” (2004: 576). In other words, Roma dealings with others are a constant embodied reminder of both present exclusion and, through them, of the Holocaust and other traumas of the past. A social constructivist approach is not enough, and so anthropologists are increasingly looking to cognitive processes of recognition, distinction and repetition, as well as to the politics of memory – whether as moral practice (Lambek 1996b) or as practices linking personal experience with public representation (Stewart 2004).

But from all of this, we are left with the question of what is memory? If we are searching for an answer that encompasses more of the social aspects than cognitive approaches offer, but want to avoid the reification of the ‘social’ and the ‘collective’, it is a question which is perhaps more easily dealt with by indirect answers in fiction and poetry, and even in more definite assertions of autobiography, than in social theory. The writings of Marcel Proust, Virginia Woolf, T.S. Eliot and Milan Kundera speak to and about memory in a way that the rigours of social science do not usually allow. Indeed, Proust’s *madeleine* has become symbolic of the experience of remembering. When we read his description of the flooding of past sensory traces into the present senses, evoked simply by the smell and taste of the *petite madeleine*, we understand it immediately and implicitly. The mundane nature of recollection is absolutely familiar. As Bal (1999) points out, however, the memories released by an experience like tasting the *madeleine* are different from the banal embodied memory which allows us to avoid getting wet by stepping over puddles as we walk in the rain. The latter is a set of actions predicated on past experience, the former sets into motion a narrative of the past (1999: viii; see also Benjamin 1968: 202-5). But recollection also links us to the rest of the world, as we insert ourselves, personally, into events and places outside our direct experience. We know, if we are of a certain generation, exactly where we were, what we were doing, when we heard Kennedy had been shot; for subsequent generations, it is likely that the fall of the Berlin wall, and later the events of September 11th in New York, will carry similar resonance. These are a different kind of memory, attached to a sense of the political, whether clearly formed or not, and to a particular sense of being part of a collective.

The *madeleine* has become a collective symbol, at least in western literary tradition, but the familiarity it evokes is based on images which are individual and personally specific. Benjamin perhaps comes closer than most theorists to reconciling these different genres, beautifully and often obliquely uniting the longing of the soul to the spare and harsh experience of the



historical body.<sup>6</sup> If, however, we are pushed to define analytically the difference between these and other sorts of recollection, or if, and this is of course even more complicated, we are asked to identify where a particular memory is located and of what it is made, we are faced with an almost insurmountable task of explanation. Memory is both individual and collective, it is highly selective, it is both part of each individual's life story and simultaneously a flexible and shifting resource drawn on, and continually reformed, through relationships in groups and collectivities.

### About this Book

As anthropologists, the authors contributing to this book provide ethnographies of memory, located within a wider framework of religion and politics that help us to account for the importance of the past in the present. The case studies drawn from eastern and central Europe document the extent to which the half century of communist rule in this region generated common strands of dominant discourse and metanarrative, as well as common processes of local opposition and resistance, alternative or hidden stories, and entrenched and painful silences. We are shown also, that the demise of socialism in turn has given rise to new forms of conflict and contestation, as well as new resolutions (e.g. Richardson on contested identities, Naumescu on resolution, Leutloff-Grandits on both).

As the material in the contributions from western Europe clearly demonstrates, however, such phenomena are by no means confined to socialist or postsocialist worlds. Memories of fascism continue to haunt the former fascist states; Narotzky and Moreno's examples from Spain show that the particular ways in which violent political acts are classified, recalled in public and in private, and understood, have profound and disturbing implications for present political processes. Religion and politics also provide sites for narrative hegemony and contexts for alternative or contesting histories in democratic states, as Filippucci's material on the Argonne makes clear. While the French state builds a national narrative around memories of loss, grief and suffering experienced during the First World War in this region, the local inhabitants often reject the mantle of a 'place of remembrance' and instead evoke images of an 'ordinary' pre-war past. Similarly, Pizza describes how the people who live in the area of southern Italy where tarantism was immortalised by anthropologists and film makers refuse the depiction of their locality as a 'valley of remorse' and instead develop a local narrative of revelation. Gay y Blasco, in her study of Madrid Roma, their mute relation

---

<sup>6</sup> See particularly "The image of Proust", "On some motifs in Baudelaire" and above all "Thesis on the Philosophy of History", all in the collection *Illuminations* (1968).

to their past, and their adoption of new evangelical religion, also focuses on loss and silence, but in a far more extreme and marginal situation. In each of these cases, memory is shown to be fluid and relational, a product of social interactions rather than an uncomplicated or static part of any individual psyche.

The detail provided in these chapters also reminds us that ethnography provides anthropologists with a powerful but delicate tool for untangling the different strands of these intricate and complex webs. In exploring the nuances of remembered pasts in the context of religion and politics, the authors show us that memory is just as contested as more impersonal forms of narrative. Richardson discusses how in post-Soviet Ukraine, memories transmitted by the family at home often provide the resources for students to challenge official history, and state and family discourses about the past interact in the schoolroom in complex ways that both undermine and reinforce one another. The material which Eidson presents from Germany and Haukanes from Czechoslovakia reveals similar processes in the recording of local histories. Memory is as selective as any other vehicle for talking about the past: indeed remembering should always be seen as only one part of a wider set of connected practices through which the past is understood and negotiated, as chapters by Vogelsang and Valtchinova, make particularly clear. Both politics and religion are fields in which different levels of narrative, from commemorative rituals to canonical texts and charters, to intimate personal stories, simultaneously challenge and complement each other at the local level.

The chapters intersect in various ways but three themes recur throughout the volume: the way in which history is contested and the past transmitted over time; the role of memory with respect to power, authority and ideology; and the contestation of memories through violence and silence. These themes provide the basic structure around which the chapters are grouped.

Part One examines two related issues: the contestation of official history through its articulation with local versions of the past, and the ways in which the past is transmitted. The chapters in this part show that local pasts are always more complex than the standardised and abstracted versions that filter 'down' and often provide a means for contesting or transforming national histories. The chapters also remind us that while history is significant in the maintenance and reproduction of states in more 'stable' periods (e.g. the French and German cases), official histories are most contested at times when the state is under threat (the Czechoslovakian case) or is being just established (the Ukrainian case).

Paola Filippucci (Chapter Two) focuses on the demographically and economically marginal French region of Argonne. She describes the destructive impact of the First World War in the area and how memories associated with the war were inscribed in the landscape by the state through memorials, burial sites and the restoration of wartime installations. But the war holds a largely national rather than local importance. Locally the past retains a more complex set of meanings, where the violence is remembered but is not a dominant memory; it is significant in terms of local evidence of survival in the face of extreme hardship and also serves to distinguish outsiders from locals. Memories of the First World War are thus 'strategically' remembered in order to problematise relations with the outside.

Memory as a resource claimed in different ways nationally and locally is also the central theme of the following chapter by John Eidson. He looks at how the Nazi period has been represented since the Second World War in the small town of Boppard, Germany. Interestingly, Eidson shows how engagement with the Nazi period in local history is shown to be a result of a 'filtering down' of national initiatives, in part through the return of well educated individuals to the region. But as in the French case above, Eidson also shows that national history takes on more contested and plural forms in the local setting. For Boppard citizens, the 'formative experience' was not so much the Holocaust but their exclusion from local public life on the basis of their Roman Catholic faith. Thus, Eidson concludes, some of the local avoidance or silences concerning the Nazi period are indicative of a preoccupation with other concerns, rather than a deliberate avoidance of sensitive national issues.

As with the German case, Haldis Haukanes (Chapter Four) focuses on the changing nature of local versions of history over time and their engagement with official versions, in the context of communist Czechoslovakia. The shift that she identifies from greater individual freedoms and plurality in the representation of local history to one that is being increasingly controlled and standardised by state influences is quite explicit in this socialist case. Haukanes shows how a local historian shaped his private written account of the village's history was influenced by a particular genre of official state writing. Thus state domination was reflected in adherence to official styles of writing. The eventual acquiescence of local historians to national history is attributed in part to real gains in standards of living during communist times that gave credence to socialist ideology, as well as to the success of the state in strengthening its control.

Both Eidson and Haukanes make reference to the importance of education in the transmission of a state approved past. In Chapter Five, Tanya Richardson gives central prominence to how the past is transmitted in

Ukrainian schools and families in the newly independent state. Identifying the importance of schools as a significant ‘point of contact’ between individuals and the state, Richardson examines how state sponsored history is disseminated through the educational system. By countering this with examples of how the past is also passed on through family memories, she shows that the situation is far more complicated, since there is an interplay of memory and history in the context of both the family and school. The latter, while a dominant site for state history, is by no means a hegemonic institution, memories are a force that can either undermine or reinforce this history.

Power, authority and ideology are the themes highlighted in Part Two of this volume. The chapters explore the role of the past in a number of ideological contexts and the use of the past for supporting or eroding power and authority. The opening chapter by Vlad Naumescu focuses on the changing fortunes of the Greek Catholic community in Romania, a minority church that was suppressed during socialist times but has reemerged since 1989. Its revival is discussed in terms of the (re)burial of two leading church figures, whose commemoration is in line with an ‘established culture of religious memories’ that also includes tomb sites and remembrances of martyrs and saints. Such collective memories were central to the survival of this religious community during socialist times. The reemergence of previously private memories into public space after 1989 confirms the legitimacy of the once exiled memories and at the same time publicly validates the religious community.

The following two chapters show that the relationship between the socialist state and religion was not always mutually exclusive and that memory sometimes enabled a merging of the two. Ina Vogelsang sets out in Chapter Seven to explain an apparent contradiction: religious practices were maintained under the Soviet regime in Crimea, and conversely a variety of Soviet festivities are still being celebrated after the fall of communism in 1991. She argues that both examples are acts of remembering that cross-cut ideological boundaries. Thus, in the absence of convincing Soviet rituals – e.g. to mark death or provide a satisfactory replacement for a religious notion of afterlife – religious practices were retained, while Soviet commemorations nowadays fill a moral void created by capitalism. Such commemorations are not necessarily expressions of opposition to the particular ideological context; rather they create a way of maintaining a sense of continuity through time.

In Chapter Eight, Galia Valtchinova also shows that religion was not necessarily opposed to state ideology during socialist times. Her chapter focuses on the case of a Bulgarian clairvoyant, Vanga Dimitrova, who gained such popularity that she became a nationally recognised prophetess and an employee of the socialist state. Throughout her career the seer ‘spoke

with the dead' – ordinary people, religious figures and nationally prominent historical figures alike. Through such engagements with the past she held privileged access to both the religious and the secular domains. In sanctioning and preserving the memory of both religious and historical figures, the seer merged religious memories and state histories in the name of a state-approved form of Bulgarian nationalism.

Memory is also important in understanding the power relations of other types of state. In Chapter Nine, Giovanni Pizza explores how the Salentine peninsula in southern Italy has become a 'memory site' for anthropologists. The site first became significant following de Martino's study of 'tarantismo' (1959), the spider bite possession ritual. Pizza shows how this study had considerable influence both inside and outside anthropology in the following decades. The site and the tarantismo ritual were also drawn into the discipline's memory, although not necessarily locally experienced or valued in the same way. This had long term consequences for local people: anthropologists, as part of an intellectual elite, have privileged control over the local memories that they have appropriated.

The chapters in Part Three explore the role of memory and forgetting in the context of war, persecution and conflict. They make it clear that while 'having' a past may be necessary to the very survival of a community, this past is constantly being reshaped, reinvented, renegotiated, forgotten or recovered. Thus memories are central to the process of social change, as well as to the maintenance of a group over time and through different political systems (as discussed in Part Two). Carolin Leutloff-Grandits provides a case study of postwar Knin, Croatia (Chapter Ten). She focuses on religious festivals in order to look at the current rebuilding of a mixed Croatian-Serbian community. These groups, Leutloff-Grandits tells us, have very different memories of both peaceful and violent periods. She takes four festivals (two Croatian and two Serbian) all of which have a long pre war history and shows how they are important commemorations and sites of memory in (re)establishing the community both in a local and national sense. In each festival, memories of the recent war and pre-war conditions are played out to create new community alliances and tensions.

In Chapter Eleven, Paloma Gay y Blasco takes us to another type of 'war' zone: to a group with a long history of being persecuted. She notes that while the Roma of the neighbourhood of Jarana in Madrid rarely discuss the past, it is nonetheless referenced through appropriate silences. For example all communal memories concerning their dead are erased, yet close kin maintain a set of practices that obliquely refer to the deceased in the form of private commemorations. This dual approach of 'containing' the past privately while obliterating it collectively is fundamental to the organisation of

contemporary social relations and a mechanism for the survival of the community in the context of enormous pressures to assimilate. At the same time a new model of Roma proposed by the rising importance of Evangelicalism is posing novel ways to think about and relate to the past (including the provision of a myth of origins and a sequential history). Since most families include both converts and non-converts, alternate ways of relating to the past coexist, and individuals find themselves having to negotiate daily between these.

From the building of a new state (Chapter 10) and the ongoing persecution of a stateless community (Chapter 11), the final chapter moves to a community seeking independence from its state. Susana Narotzky and Paz Moreno outline the political violence which has marked the Basques' quest for sovereignty in Spain and argue that the transition to democracy after Franco's death in 1975 required a silencing of the past. This silence was built into the new Spanish Constitution and continues today to shape the question of how the Basque organisation ETA is dealt with. The authors show that the survival of the current Spanish state depends on maintaining these silences which are (sometimes violently) contested by memories held by ETA members. In the end, memories and that which is forgotten or silenced are central both to the production of state hegemony and to forms of resistance.

### Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Catherine Alexander, Paola Filippucci, Chris Hann, and Michael Stewart for reading and commenting on earlier versions of this Introduction. We have benefited greatly from their insights and suggestions; the remaining deficiencies, of course, remain our own responsibility.

### References

- Antze, P., and M. Lambek (eds.). 1996. *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*. New York: Routledge.
- . 1996. Telling Stories, Making Selves: Memory and Identity in Multiple Personality Disorders. In P. Antze, and M. Lambek (eds.), *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*, pp. 3-24. New York: Routledge.
- Arendt, H. 1958 [1968]. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World.
- Assmann, J. 1995. Collective Memory and Cultural Identity. *New German Critique* 65: 125-133.

- Bahro, R. 1978. *The Alternative in Eastern Europe*. London: Verso.
- Bakhtin, M. M. 1984. *Rabelais and his World*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Bal, M. 1999. Introduction. In M. Bal, J. Crew, and L. Spitzer, *Acts of Memory. Cultural Recall in the Present*, pp. vii-xvii. Hanover: University Press of New England.
- , J. Crew, and L. Spitzer. (eds.). 1999. *Acts of Memory. Cultural Recall in the Present*. Hanover: University Press of New England.
- Benjamin, W. 1968. *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*. New York: Schocken Books.
- Binns, C. A. P. 1980. The Changing Face of Power: Revolution and Accommodation in the Development of the Soviet Ceremonial System. *Man* 15: 170-187.
- Bloch, M. 1989. *Ritual, History and Power: Selected Papers in Social Anthropology*. London: The Athlone Press.
- . 1995. People into Places: Zafimaniry Concepts of Clarity. In E. Hirsch, and M. O'Hanlon (eds.), *The Anthropology of Landscape: Perspectives on Place and Space*, pp. 63-77. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . 1996. Internal and External Memory: Different Ways of Being in History. In P. Antze, and M. Lambek (eds.), *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*, pp. 215-235. New York: Routledge.
- . 1998. How We Think They Think: Anthropological Approaches to Cognition, Memory, and Literacy. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Boyarin, J. (ed.). 1994. *Remapping Memory: The Politics of Timespace*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Burke, P. (ed.). 1991. *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Carsten, J. 1995. The Politics of Forgetting: Migration, Kinship and Memory on the Periphery of the Southeast Asian State. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (N.S.) 1: 317-335.
- Cole, J. 1998. The Work of Memory in Madagascar. *American Ethnologist* 25 (4): 610-633.
- . 2001. *Forget Colonialism? Sacrifice and the Art of Memory in Madagascar*. Berkeley: California University Press.
- Collard, A. 1989. Investigating 'Social Memory' in a Greek Context. In E. Tonkin, M. McDonald, and M. Chapman (eds.), *History and Ethnicity*, pp. 89-103. London: Routledge.
- Connerton, P. 1989. *How Societies Remember*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Creed, G. W. 2002. Economic Crisis and Ritual Decline in Eastern Europe. In C. M. Hann (ed.), *Postsocialism: Ideals, Ideologies and Practices in Eurasia*, pp. 57-73. London and New York: Routledge.
- Figes, O. 1996. A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution 1891-1924. London: Pimlico.
- George, G. 1996. Contested Meanings and Controversial Memories: Narratives of Sexual Abuse in Western Newfoundland. In P. Antze, and M. Lambek (eds.), *Tense Past. Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*, pp. 45-64. New York: Routledge.
- Gluckman, M. 1977. Politics, Law and Ritual in Tribal Society. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Hann, C. 1990. Socialism and King Stephen's Right Hand. *Religion in Communist Lands* 18 (1): 4-24.
- . (ed.) 2002. *Postsocialism. Ideals, Ideologies and Practices in Eurasia*. London: Routledge.
- Halbwachs, M. 1980 [1950]. *The Collective Memory*. (ed. by M. Douglas). New York: Harper & Row.
- . 1992. *On Collective Memory*. (ed. and transl. by L. A. Coser). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Hirsch, M. 1999. Projected Memory: Holocaust Photographs in Personal and Public Fantasy. In M. Bal, J. Crewe, and L. Spitzer (eds.), *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, pp. 3-23. Hanover: University Press of New England.
- Huyssen, A. 2003. Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Kaneff, D. 2004. Who Owns the Past? The Politics of Time in a 'Model' Bulgarian Village. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Kenney, M. G. 1996. Trauma, Time, Illness, and Culture: An Anthropological Approach to Traumatic Memory. In P. Antze, and M. Lambek (eds.), *Tense Past. Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*, pp. 151-171. New York: Routledge.
- Kertzer, D. I. 1991. The Role of Ritual in State-Formation. In E. R. Wolf (ed.), *Religious Regimes and State-Formation: Perspectives from European Ethnology*, pp. 85-104. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- King, D. 1997. The Commissar Vanishes: The Falsification of Photographs and Art in Stalin's Russia. New York: Metropolitan Books.
- Kligman, G. 1988. The Wedding of the Dead: Ritual, Politics, and Popular Culture in Transylvania. Berkeley: University of California Press.



- Kubik, J. 1994. *The Power of Symbols against the Symbols of Power: The Rise of Solidarity and the Fall of State Socialism in Poland*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Le Roy Ladurie, E. L. 1980. *Carnival: A People's Uprising at Romans 1579-1580*. London: Scholar Press.
- Lambek, M. 1996a. Forecasting Memory. In P. Antze, and M. Lambek (eds.), *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*, pp. xi-xxxviii. New York: Routledge.
- . 1996b. The Past Imperfect: Remembering as Moral Practice. In P. Antze, and M. Lambek (eds.), *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*, pp. 235-254. New York: Routledge.
- . 1998. The Process of History: Realizing the Past through Spirit Possession in Madagascar. *American Ethnologist* 25 (2): 106-127.
- Lane, C. 1981. *The Rites of Rulers. Ritual in Industrial Society – the Soviet Case*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Merridale, C. 2000. *Night of Stone: Death and Memory in Russia*. London: Granta Books.
- Nora, P. 1989. Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire (transl. by M. Roudebush). *Representations* 26: 7-25.
- Olick, J. K., and J. Robbins. 1998. Social Memory Studies: From 'Collective Memory' to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices. *Annual Review of Sociology* 24: 105-140.
- Passerini, L. (ed.). 1992. *Memory and Totalitarianism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pine, F. 2002. The Village, the City and the Outside World: Integration and Exclusion in two Regions of Rural Poland. In P. Leonard, and D. Kaneff (eds.), *Post-Social Peasant? Rural and Urban Constructions of Identity in eastern Europe, east Asia and the former Soviet Union*, pp. 160-179. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Skultans, V. 1998. *The Testimony of Lives: Narrative and Memory in Post-Soviet Latvia*. London: Routledge.
- Stewart, M. 2004. Remembering without Commemoration: The Mnemonics and Politics of Holocaust Memories among European Roma. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (N.S.) 10: 561-581.
- Tak, H. 2000. *South Italian Festivals: A Local History of Ritual and Change*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Verdery, K. 1999. *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies. Reburial and Postsocialist Change*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Vitebsky, P. 1993. *Dialogues with the Dead: The Discussion of Mortality among the Sora of eastern India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Wanner, C. 1998. *Burden of Dreams: History and Identity in Post-Soviet Ukraine*. University Park: Pennsylvania University Press.
- Watson, R. (ed). 1994. Memory, History and Opposition under State Socialism: An Introduction. In R. Watson (ed.), *Memory, History and Opposition under State Socialism*. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.
- . (ed.). 1994. *Memory, History and Opposition under State Socialism*. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.
- White, H. 1987. *The Content of the Form*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press.
- Winter, J. 1995. Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . (ed.). 1997. Review of Pierre Nora (ed.), *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past. Vol. 1: Conflicts and Divisions*. H-Net Reviews in the Humanities and Social Sciences.
- , and E. Sivan. (eds.). 1999. *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wolf, E. R. 1982. *Europe and the People without History*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Yates, F. 1966. *The Art of Memory*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Young, J. 2004. At Memory's Edge: After Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Young, A. 1996. Bodily Memory and Traumatic Memory. In P. Antze, and M. Lambek (eds.), *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*, pp. 89-102. New York: Routledge.
- Zemon Davis, N., and R. Starn. (eds.). 1989. Introduction. *Representations* (Special Issue) 26:1-6.



## PART I

---

### CONTESTING HISTORY AND TRANSMITTING THE PAST

---

History, as the authoritative, objectified version of the past (in contrast to memory, Antze and Lambek 1996: 242)<sup>1</sup>, is a crucial instrument in the legitimation and reproduction of the state, and in the creation of loyal citizens. If ‘States may be said to map history onto territory’ (Boyarin 1994: 16)<sup>2</sup>, then history can be seen as a tool used to define and legitimate the origins of a nation as well as a way to uphold and maintain the boundaries. The problem, inevitably, is how such national projects can be made relevant to and engage all citizens. The papers in this part explore the connection between national state histories and local versions of the past.

State history is transmitted/conveyed locally in numerous ways: the state’s history ‘reaches’ into people’s personal lives through objects in the environment – buildings, memorials and monuments – and even sometimes through transforming the actual landscape itself (see Chapter 2 where First World War forest battles are re-enacted on site). The sponsorship of festivals and other public commemorations is another method by which state history is represented locally and at the same time requires local engagement. And of course history is also transmitted through the production of written texts, studied in schools and informs activities throughout state organs. A state authorised past always carries the weight of the state apparatus behind it. Such histories need not always be presented as factual, objective and distant. On the contrary, in many cases, the transmission of state history is made into a ‘personal’ experience through sensual experiences of exhibitions which give the participant, for example, a taste of the pioneer’s life, or of a war battle. In this way state history may also become a personal memory, an individual experience with more force than a distant, objective history. Whatever the manifestation in their everyday world, citizens inevi-

---

<sup>1</sup> Antze, P., and M. Lambek (eds.). 1996. *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*. New York: Routledge.

<sup>2</sup> Boyarin, J. (ed.). 1994. *Remapping Memory: The Politics of Timespace*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

tably engage with state histories in a multitude of ways throughout their lives.

In focussing on local engagement with state history, the following set of papers suggests that local pasts are always more complex than the standardised and abstracted versions that filter ‘down’. Locally, national history takes on a more contested and plural form than its usually unproblematic presentation in official literature often suggests. Sometimes it is used strategically by locals for their own political purposes (e.g. Filippucci and Eidson). Even in the state controlled domains of schools, official history may be contested (Richardson), and in sites where the state has less influence – such as families, local neighbourhood organisations and associations – there is evidence of even more pluralism.

In situations where the state has succeeded in making dominant its version of history, alternate versions of the past – such as memories – are ‘forced’ into other domains of social life, for example, the family domain (see Haukanes chapter). Since the past is always selective, non-authorised versions of the past are inevitably exiled to spheres of social life that are less under the influence of state control.

From the papers which follow it is also clear that the relationship between national history and local versions of the past change over time (as the Czechoslovak and German cases show particularly well) – the ‘dialogue’ is ongoing.

History is most prominent and different versions most contested at times when the state is under threat or in its infancy.<sup>3</sup> The major rewriting of history that occurred across eastern Europe after 1989 and the (former) Soviet Union following 1991 (paralleling the rewritings that preceded 1945 and 1912, respectively) bears witness to this. But the creation of all European nation states has been accompanied by an elaborate writing and on occasions rewriting of history. Two of the papers – concerning the newly independent Ukraine state and Czechoslovakia after World War II – look at such instances where state and nation building is in progress. But history is also a central feature in less revolutionary times, when maintenance and reproduction of the status quo are required – such as present day France and Germany, discussed in the other two papers of this part. Significantly, in neither of the latter cases has memory of the world war (the First or the Second) been as pivotal or traumatic for the local populations as national historical narratives indicate. Nevertheless, through a variety of measures the

---

<sup>3</sup> Antze and Lambek 1996 make this point in respect to identity: ‘When their identity is taken for granted, the past is less of an issue’ (p. xxii). Antze, P., and M. Lambek (eds.). 1996. *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*. New York: Routledge.

states retain this history as of defining importance to the contemporary nation. In the process local pasts are overlooked.

Present claims and contestations surrounding the past, and local engagement with national versions of the past, help to create and maintain national identities – negotiating symbolic boundaries that map the nation as a whole as well as the parts within it. They are also fundamental in keeping particular pasts relevant in citizens minds, and thus the state, ‘alive’ – to adopt the body metaphor critically discussed by Boyarin (1994: chapter 1).<sup>4</sup> In short, contestations between different versions of the past ensure the very survival and reproduction of the state itself.

---

<sup>4</sup> Boyarin, J. (ed.). 1994. *Remapping Memory: The Politics of Timespace*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.



## ***Chapter 2***

### **Memory and Marginality: Remembrance of War in Argonne (France)**

Paola Filippucci

One realises that something huge occurred here, and that since then they have kept their distance from it, they look upon it as if it were at once close, and far (Olivier, local official, Argonne, 2001).

Here there is war remembrance but I am fed up with it [...] nothing wrong with it but the Argonne is not just that (Marie-Louise, tourist operator, Argonne, 2000).

Anthropologists have argued that social memory can be used to affirm identity, particularly when collectivities use it to resist dominant and oppressive representations of the past, and ‘remember what is meant to be forgotten’ to forge alternative or oppositional self-images (Watson 1994: 7). Others note that memory can also sometimes be an obstacle to self-identification, in cases when negative, destructive experiences or events inflict ‘trauma’ that hinders the normal course of remembrance and forgetting and may lead to identity disturbances, both at individual and at collective levels (see e.g. Antze and Lambek 1998). In this chapter I consider a case that does not fit neatly into either category, because it concerns a population forced to ‘remember’ a traumatic event that, three generations on, it is ready to forget. I shall argue that remembrance of this event, World War I, is imposed on the local population of the Argonne (Northern France) by the wider social memory of it in France. Now, as in the past, this memory gives a central commemorative role to the places where combat occurred, that at first were sites for mourning and now are used to authenticate and revive what is in effect a fading memory. In Argonne as elsewhere along the former frontline commemoration of the war focuses on the suffering of soldiers and on the national significance of the conflict, without addressing the impact of the event on local populations: however, as I shall show, it has a local impact by influencing how the places where combat occurred are regarded and



imagined, shaping their 'sense of place' to incorporate more or less explicitly the fact of war. This war-infused sense of place influences present-day local representations of the area, particularly in relation to its current economic and demographic marginality, which through reference to the war is presented as historical destiny rather than as contingent predicament. Although the war-centred image is not the only local representation of place and past, it is highly influential because it is validated by national memory, suggesting firstly that the local dynamics of remembrance are influenced by those of wider, non-local social memory, and secondly that the memory of a historical event may be as influential as the event itself in shaping geopolitical relations.

### **The Argonne**

The Argonne is a forested massif situated along the administrative border of the two French regions of Champagne and Lorraine.<sup>1</sup> The forest covers a ridge of high ground about 80 kilometres long, surrounded by gently rolling ploughland and pasture dotted with small villages. The local economy is mainly agricultural and based on cattle breeding and some cereal cultivation, with some wood production for export and a few small units of light industry. Local employment is scarce, partly because in order to be viable farms have to be large, averaging between 80 and 100 hectares, and heavily mechanised (see e.g. Hussenet 1982). The number of people employed in agriculture is relatively small, and most residents of the Argonne commute to work in nearby towns; many are also forced to move to other parts of France. Depopulation as a result of 'rural exodus', while not as dramatic as at other times in the recent past (notably in the early 1950s and in the late 1960s to mid-1970s), is nevertheless steady. Present-day villages are dominated by the elderly and retired, and the gradual loss of residents leads to a decline of shops and services, in turn encouraging further emigration. Nowadays the Argonne is a demographically and economically marginal area, classified as area of 'rural decline' by the EU.

This was not always the case: in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century the area was overpopulated (Hussenet 1982: 347), and around 50% of the population was employed in proto-industrial-scale manufacture of glass and ceramics that exploited local minerals, wood and water and had been present in the area on

---

<sup>1</sup> Fieldwork was conducted in 2000-1 with funding by the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (C.N.R.S.) for the project 'Une Politique de Valorisation du Patrimoine Paysager: le cas de l'Argonne' sponsored by the Ministère de l'Aménagement du Territoire et de l'Environnement, CEMAGREF and Université de Paris I (Sorbonne) and directed by Sander van der Leeuw.

and off since the Roman period. Economic and demographic decline began in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, as local industries were superseded by larger-scale production centres further to the East around Paris and to the West around Nancy and Strasbourg (see Hussenet 1982). At the same time, the Argonnais population and economy were damaged by wars. Situated a few miles west of Verdun, the fort built in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century against possible German invasions, the Argonne was between the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century a theatre of war three times: in 1870 (Franco-Prussian War); in 1940-45 (World War II) and most dramatically in 1914-18, during World War I.

In the Great War the Western front crossed the Argonne for four years, from 1914 to 1918; its Northern half was under German occupation. During this time, some 350,000 soldiers died there. The civil population of the area near the frontline on both sides fled or was evacuated by 1915, and on the German-occupied side some were deported to work in Germany. Villages on either side of the frontline were destroyed.<sup>2</sup> Large stretches of forest and farmland were also completely devastated and by the end of the conflict aerial photographs of the zone of the front show a totally bare surface, pockmarked with shell-holes and mine craters, upturned by trenches, tunnels and other military installations. This area was included in the so-called 'red zone' [zone rouge] comprising lands so damaged that they were expropriated by the state for later reclamation.<sup>3</sup> Most (though not all) villages were rebuilt during the 1920s, sometimes, depending on the level of damage, at some distance from their original site. Reconstruction was financed by German war reparations and by charity funds donated by municipalities and private donors from all over France, while state funding was negligible (see Clout 1996). Only just over half of the pre-war population returned to the area and capital was mostly reinvested elsewhere so that what was left of industrial and craft activity finally disappeared and the area became purely agricultural, cattle breeding and forestry replacing earlier wheat cultivation because of the deterioration of available land. However, postwar reconstruction during the 1920s and 1930s also attracted new residents, both French and foreign (including Italian builders, Spanish and Portuguese woodcutters, Polish farm labourers and Belgian farmers who took over abandoned farms). Most stayed on and their descendants make up a significant portion of the present-day population of the Argonne (see *Horizons d'Argonne* 1978).

---

<sup>2</sup> Those within five kilometres of the front on either side were destroyed by between 90 and 100%, those some 10 km away suffered 50 to 90% damage, including many that were burned at the German retreat; others north and south of this line suffered 20 to 50% damage (see Hussenet 1982: 311-39; Clout 1996).

<sup>3</sup> This occurred between the 1920s and the 1970s (see Clout 1996).

Like the rest of North-Eastern France the Argonne was again occupied by Germans during World War II, but with less dramatic damage to the economy and infrastructure (cf. Cobb 1983). In the postwar period local agriculture became mechanised and some industries were created in the area, so that living standards improved more or less in line with the rest of France. However, by the time of my fieldwork at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the local economy appeared weak compared to that of neighbouring areas like the Champagne.<sup>4</sup> The Argonne had fallen significantly behind neighbouring areas in terms of the number of inhabitants, jobs, services and infrastructure and was considered an area of 'rural marginality', or 'rural decline' in E.U. terminology (see Deroche 1999).

As in other such areas in Europe public policy efforts to improve the local economy include the promotion of tourism, specifically 'green' and agri-tourism and 'cultural' or heritage tourism, and the production of 'local products' [*produits du terroir*]. In practice, however, at the time of my fieldwork in the Argonne tourist facilities like hotels were few and relying on private investment, although in 2001 E.U. funds had been secured for a new hotel and tourist centre complex. The limited extent of tourist development mainly concerned World War I remains and sites. Parts of the forest containing the remains of trench systems, tunnels and other installations are now protected and valorised by a tourist itinerary with explanatory panels through the main sites and occasionally guided tours, and other sites have been restored by volunteer groups and are regularly opened to the public. These sites are included in 'battlefield tours' and itineraries centred on Verdun, and attract visitors from all over France and the region who also visit military cemeteries, ossuaries and other war memorials that dot the landscape of the Argonne. So, although as the tourist operator cited at the start of this paper put it 'the Argonne is not just the souvenir' of World War I, the latter continues to dominate its tourist image. This dominance goes beyond the spatial presence of the remains in the landscape, to influence the very image of this place in the eyes of outsiders and also, although they admit it less readily, of insiders.

---

<sup>4</sup> The latest available data show that in 1997 employment levels in the Argonne were lower than the French average (35.7% against 41.3%), with 44.5% working in industry, 58% in services and 30.8% in agriculture (Triche 1997: 26-7). However, most of the people employed in the secondary and tertiary sectors commute to towns up to 50 km away, as there are few services locally and only a handful of sizeable businesses (each employing less than 500 people).

## A Theatre of War

Between 1914 and 1918 the Argonne was included in the wider war theatre of Verdun, situated some 25 km to the East, and was the site of destructive and bloody combat and massive military casualties. The Argonne contains some of the key sites of the 1916 'battle of Verdun', that for the French is 'the peak of the war, its culmination and its very essence' because of the number of French casualties, the fact that the battle involved mainly French troops and most of the French army took part in it (Prost 1986: 136). For the French Verdun is the site that 'summarises' World War I, symbol of all its sacrifice, heroism, horror and misery (Prost 1986 *passim*; cf. Ferro 2002: 83-6). As part of the same war theatre the Argonne is part of the same symbolic landscape, and after the war became one of the high points of national memory. Cemeteries, memorials and monuments were built in various locations across the area, part of a wider landscape of mourning and remembrance stretching from the North Sea to the Italian Alps (e.g. Winter 1995; Roze 1998; Sherman 1999). These sites provided a location for private mourning and for public, state-sponsored ceremonies of commemoration (Sherman 1998: 454). Burial in the areas of combat was also encouraged by local authorities in the devastated areas that saw the potential for attracting tourism and so helping with economic reconstruction of these areas (Sherman 1998: 451). 'Battlefield tourism' was sponsored by the Touring Club de France as a way for visitors to learn 'the truth' about the war and derive valuable moral lessons 'by the very vision of things and remains' (1921 guidebook *cit.* by Sherman 1999: 36, 37-8). Soon the devastated areas including the Argonne were equipped with hotels, restaurants and transport for visitors, even as the reconstruction of settlements and other infrastructure lagged behind for lack of funds (see Clout 1996), and residents of devastated areas resented becoming a spectacle for curious strangers (see Sherman 1999: 38-9). This reluctance may have been a response to the enormity of destruction inflicted on the areas of combat.

## A Landscape of War

Abstract words such as glory, honour, courage or hallow were obscure beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates (quoted in Fussell 1975: 21; cf. Leed 1979: 209; and see Sherman 1999: 210, 281).

These poignant words of Ernest Hemingway refer to the Great War on the Italian front but could equally have been written about the Argonne. Here, as elsewhere in the areas of combat, the destructive impact of war radically

altered and remodelled physical and psychological landscapes, charging places and landmarks with new significance. The level of wartime destruction in parts of the area in 1914-18 is graphically illustrated by eyewitnesses:

Nothing left to orient oneself by, no more landmarks, no more trees: we thought we were lost in an immense desert, we could no longer judge where we were going or where we were coming from (from the diary of Louis Barthas, soldier in the French Army, 1916; Barthas 1987).

Arrival in Binarville as in all the devastated villages means a moment of dismay: where are we? No stone is left of the church, and only one house is still standing (written by a priest visiting Argonnais villages in 1920, cit. in Herbette 1966).

These descriptions give an impression of the damage and despoliation suffered by the Argonnais landscape and builtscapes in the conflict: it was in parts quite literally erased, completely deprived of recognisable features and landmarks. In the reconstruction that followed, two 'landscapes' were built, one of settlements, infrastructure and reclaimed land for the returning civilian population, and another of memorials and burial sites for the military victims of the conflict.

In the 'civilian' landscape most villages were rebuilt on the same site and locals say now that many rebuilt their house 'exactly as it was', 'à l'identique', identical: 'if before the war one had added on stairs or an extra room, one rebuilt it exactly as it had been' (cf. Clout 1996). At the very least the church was rebuilt as it once was, perhaps because the Church is the main landmark of a village, that which is visible from a distance and which identifies it and protects it through its patron saint (cf. Christian 1973). At the same time, many are said to have taken advantage of war reparations from Germany to build new, larger and more comfortable houses, in an act that is now described as 'making Germans pay' for the losses and pain inflicted. Villages were also sometimes modernised during reconstruction, for instance by relocating farms to the edges of the settlement, taking farmers nearer to fields and freeing the centre of the village from the dirt and traffic of farm-work (see Clout 1996: 189). Sometimes rebuilt houses were detached rather than terraced, to lessen the danger of destruction by fires. Villages that had been totally destroyed were sometimes moved to a new location, and former village sites turned into meadows covering the barest outline of foundations, used for pasture because the soil was too damaged and polluted to be cultivated. Some bear commemorative plaques with the name of the lost village and small monuments to the military dead. A more elaborate site is found at Vauquois, a hilltop where German and French

fought by exploding underground mines. Here the terrain is so riddled with tunnels and pitted with craters that after the war it was declared unfit for habitation and the village was rebuilt at some distance. Recently, tunnels and other installations have been restored by volunteers and have been opened to the public alongside a small museum dedicated to the 'war of mines'.

Sites like Vauquois are part of the second landscape built in Argonne in the years following the war, made of memorial monuments, ossuaries and French, German and American military cemeteries built in the immediate aftermath, as well as, more recently, the restored remains of wartime installations such as tunnels and trenches.<sup>5</sup> These memorial sites may be seen as part of a separate 'landscape' not only because they are generally set apart from inhabited areas and dedicated to the dead rather than the living, but also because they largely materialise a national rather than local narrative of the war, centred on the lives and deaths of soldiers and troops and investing parts of the Argonnais land with national and even international significance. In practice these sites symbolically co-opt the local landscape through monuments that celebrate the land as the site of suffering and object of the sacrifice: thus at Vauquois for instance the monument includes a miniature replica of the hill on and for which the soldiers died. Place-names are also often included in war memorials: for instance the U.S. War Memorial at Romagne is inscribed with names of nearby localities where American soldiers fought, forming a diagram that points towards these places, inviting the visitor to see the memorial in relation to the wider landscape of the area. At the same time both at Romagne and in German military cemeteries at various locations the local landscape is drawn into the memorial space, that is planted with tree varieties typical of the Argonnais forest and barely separated from its surrounding, non-memorial landscape. This blurs the boundaries between memorial and surrounding space, and encourages one to see the latter as itself a memorial to the war, turning the whole place into a memorial. This is particularly the case in relation to the forest. Although it was almost completely destroyed during the fighting<sup>6</sup>, the forest is the central image of war in Argonne, described both then and now as 'war in the forest'.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Such as communes and the National Forestry Service that now protects and opens to the public a site of 30 hectares of forest surrounding one of the main memorial monuments.

<sup>6</sup> Partly because it was considered strategically important as a barrier alongside that of man-made fortifications at Verdun (Amat 1987).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Amat 1987; see Mettavant et. al. 2000: 118 for a visual reference to the Argonnais forest; Sherman 1998: 454 for a mention of 'the forests of the Argonne' in a funerary speech for soldiers at the inauguration of a war memorial in Meuse in 1922.

The role of places and place names in remembering World War I has been linked to the uniqueness (and unique horror) of the combat experience, said to have silenced conventional narrative. The names that mattered were sometimes those of tiny landmarks and landforms that, in the Argonne forest as elsewhere, came to play a disproportionate tactical role during combat (cf. Prost 1986; Amat 1987). This, perhaps combined with the soldiers' need to identify and personalise the totally disorienting, bleak space of the frontline, led to a proliferation of evocative names, valorised by the soldiers as places of life and death and preserved in the later memorials. The centrality of place-names and the places of combat in the material elaboration of mourning and commemoration also reflects the fact that a huge number of remains could not be identified individually by name, only by the place where death had occurred, so that named locations were often all that mourners had to cherish (cf. Prost 1986; see Sherman 1998: 461).

So the landscape that was rebuilt after the war included new landmarks created for commemoration while old landmarks and named locations acquired new meaning in relation to the events of the war, becoming sites of pilgrimage and remembrance of soldierly valour and sacrifice. As a result outsiders looked upon the Argonne and visited it less to see a 'local', living place than to mourn and to validate their national identity, their Frenchness. Monuments and memorials were (and are) devoted to the fact that this land is filled with the blood and bodies of those who 'died for France' and other countries. While this makes the Argonne significant to the rest of the world it may also have made it harder to see it as a 'local' space, with a 'local' past.

The local civilian population suffered loss of life and property and physical (if temporary) displacement as a result of the war, but there is little or no record of this in the commemorative landscape. This matches the way the postwar reconstruction in the devastated areas was poorly documented and relatively neglected at the time by the French state and public in favour of the construction of memorials and cemeteries (see Clout 1996). Even at Vauquois there is little or no reference to the destroyed village in the monument and museum marking the site. Explicit reference to civilian losses is only found in one monument in a village where civilian casualties outstripped military ones (see Sherman 1999: 291-2). Accounts of harm done to civilian property and lives by the war were only oral, and are still to be found in Argonne in the form of received memories.

A 78 year old woman, Ginette, said of her parents' generation that 'they have lived of war [ils ont vécu de guerre]', in their 20s at World War I and in their 40s at World War II. Ginette's father was 20 in 1914 and his life was 'shattered by war' [brisée par la guerre]

because he was wounded and permanently disabled: so he had to become a shoe mender, instead of taking over his father's land and become a farmer. Ginette's father's father had been killed by shrapnel 'in his own backyard', in a village that was severely damaged although some miles behind the battle lines; however none of his sons was able to take over the land, because they all died or were permanently disabled in the war. Ginette's husband's parents too suffered in the war. His father lost his land because it was on the frontline and while he went to war his wife and children were evacuated: 'they said 'leave', and they all had to leave'. After the war, they could not retrieve the land because it was in the Red Zone and too damaged to farm. Ginette's husband's father had to relocate his farm to his wife's village, which was also nearly completely destroyed (only one house had been left standing). She concluded: 'my husband and I, we have heard the stories of our fathers, I was born in '25 and he in '22, we have grown up hearing about war'.

This kind of narrative suggests the severity of the impact of the war on the civilian population (Cobb 1983; cf. Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker 2002: 46 ff.). In spite of this, nowadays narratives like Ginette's are rarely heard, at any rate by relative outsiders like myself. Publicly at least there is now little explicit recollection of the war years; they tend to be summarised by a laconic 'all was destroyed', 'there was nothing left standing'. This reticence need not be interpreted as traumatised silence: other reasons for it can be found. Firstly, the impact of the war on civilians has not been part of the public history of the war (see Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker 2002: 46 ff.). Secondly, many present-day residents of the Argonne are postwar incomers or descended from those who have moved to the Argonne since the war, so that those with a long-term, family memory of the war years are relatively few. Thirdly, after three generations the Argonnais seem to have moved on, confining the wartime to a bygone part of the past that does not and should not influence their present. However, a 'memory' of war is imposed on the inhabitants of the Argonne by the dynamics of commemoration in wider French society, that nearly a century on still give a role to the sites and monuments of the former frontline.

### **War and Tourism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

For the French, the Argonne is a cold region [pays]. The war of '14, "oh yes, the battle of the Argonne, frozen feet, it's cold, it's damp". It's a very unattractive image. People want sun. It's necessary to change this image that sticks to the feet [like mud] and that endures in all the stories that can be told or written by historians and by peo-



ple who have narrated the war of '14, this image has endured of a cold region, where people have suffered enormously, it's difficult to make this image shift (Jacques, hôtelier, 2000).

As Jacques suggests, climate and weather play a central role in rendering the misery of the Great War in the imagination of the French. Mud and rain are leitmotifs in eyewitness testimonies and contemporary fiction about the war (so for instance one of the best known accounts of combat in Argonne and Verdun is called 'La Boue' ['Mud', Genevoix 1983]). Contemporary accounts may have focused on weather and climate partly because the other horrors and miseries of the war were so hard to express (see Desbois 1990: 128-31), or more simply because climate and weather so directly affected the daily lives of soldiers, their level of relative comfort or discomfort (Quaini 1982: 462). Whatever the case, this imagery has persisted; for instance in the 1970s a song about Verdun linked bad weather and the war experience<sup>8</sup> (cit. in Winter and Sivan 1999: 37-8) (cf. Fussell 1975: 47-8; Desbois 1990). In practice this imagery associates a historical event with a specific place or places characterised by and through their landscape and climate, that objectify the event and some of its connotations. Nearly a century on, as memories and mourning fade, this association may have become central to the social memory of this event in French society.

Present-day visitors to the war sites often know of relatives who died in the war and the monuments continue to be the locations for official commemorations of this and of later wars, but monuments and graves rarely now elicit intense or personalised feelings of loss. This is not to say that the Great War is forgotten in France: here as in the other countries involved it is still known as one of the defining moments of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and in the wake of the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the war there has been a surge of public interest with new fiction and non-fiction, feature films and TV documentaries, museums and exhibitions dedicated to it across Europe (see Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker 2002; Winter 2000; Joly 2000). This surge of interest coincides with the disappearance of survivors and may mark and indeed partly effect the war's transition from lived memory to historical event. At the same time, many of these recent representations centre on recapturing the immediacy of the war experience through the perspective of soldiers (cf. Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker 2002). This aspect is also found in recent examples of the 'valorisation' of war sites along the Western Front, that centre on archaeological excavations and the restoration of wartime sites and remains (Boura 1997; cf. Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker 2002: 5). Both in Verdun and in Argonne since the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the battle of Verdun in 1996 several installa-

---

<sup>8</sup> The song says: *'I have seen Verdun in the rain, and I, who do not really like that old veterans' line, now I understand it'*.

tions and wartime remains (tunnels, camps and trenches) have been restored and are open to the public sometimes with costume re-enactments of war-time activities. Visitors are also invited to focus on the experiences and emotions of soldiers and get in touch with the 'authentic' experience of war.

A recently inaugurated World War I walk in Argonne is entitled 'follow in the footsteps of the soldiers' [sur les pas des poilus] and consists of a tour along the route that took the soldiers from a village in the rear up to the frontline, then 'over the top' and onto the other side. Visitors are led along the remains of communication trenches in which are displayed rusty remains of barbed wire, ammunition, weapons and other tools and other remains retrieved in the vicinity. They then go 'behind enemy lines' to visit the remains of a German rest camp and a tunnel; then back again to the frontline where a trench and frontline firing post have been reconstructed; and finally go 'over the top' crossing the former no-man's land, now under cover of trees but still badly pitted by shell holes and littered with barbed wire, shrapnel, shell-cases and other metal debris and fallen, shrapnel-ridden tree trunks. An optional extra is a meal in a reconstructed hut at one of the rest camps in the rear of the front. The commentary that accompanies the walk touches briefly on the events and dates of the war, but overwhelmingly concerns living conditions, the movements and feelings of soldiers at specific moments and points in space, for instance as they walked towards the frontline. A feeling of intimacy and even communion with the soldiers is fostered by the use of the nickname 'poilu' instead of the more formal 'soldat', and by evoking the soldiers' bodily experience for instance by burning some powder extracted from a shell ('authentic, not bought') so that visitors can smell the 'same' smell as the poilus ('of course then it was combined with that of corpses'). In fairly gruesome and shocking detail, the tour guides also evoke the enormity of losses, and the suffering of victims of combat.

This is one of several initiatives in Argonne that focus the attention of visitors on the conditions of soldiers' lives, inviting visitors to sample the damp and mud inside tunnels, to have a taste of the sort of food that the soldiers would have eaten, and to imagine soldiers' feelings and thoughts as they moved across the wartime landscape. The people who visit these sites today or take part in and watch re-enactments were not touched directly by the war but, as many would say explicitly, what they are doing or seeing brings to life what up to then they had known only in an abstract, lifeless way ('through history books'). In other words, even as direct, personalised memories of World War I fade, these evocations of the war *in situ* revitalise the image of the war by lending realism to it and eliciting emotive responses.

Authenticity is a key concern in those involved locally in the conservation of war sites in the Argonne. Efforts are made to reconstruct the sites

‘exactly as they were’ by using old photographs and plans and to furnish them with period objects. The touchstone of this authenticity is the material evidence of individual presence and experience in the past: so one of the volunteers described to me finding ‘a pickaxe still stuck in the bedrock’ in a tunnel he excavated, and struggled to express his and his team’s emotion at finding ‘a bottle with a parchment with the names of the soldiers that worked at the tunnel in 1916’: ‘it’s sentimental value and historical value’. Authenticity is also presented as the distinguishing quality of the Argonnais sites: in Argonne, many say, ‘one sees the war as it was’, in its ‘natural’ ambience of the forest and through its ‘actual’ remains. This is often contrasted by locals with the ‘formality’ and artificiality of sites at Verdun, indicating a local pride in ‘our’ remains even though they refer to the experience of soldiers, most of whom were not local. In the same vein today’s inhabitants of the Argonne sometimes proudly praise ‘their’ military cemeteries, said to be prettier than those of other locations. More generally, many locals, especially men, are knowledgeable if not keenly interested in local wartime remains, they collect militaria and scour the area with metal detectors in the search for wartime debris and remains. Many also contribute to or attend open days and re-enactments at the sites. In other words many locals are both interested in and knowledgeable about the military side of the war and not only are they familiar with the national narrative and imagery of World War I, but they appropriate it as a ‘local’ asset, as something that makes the Argonne particular and attractive to tourists and visitors. This attitude is not universal: some locals remark on, and decry, the way that wartime remains and the remembrance of war seem to dominate the image of the Argonne:

Here there is war remembrance [souvenir] but I am fed up with it [...] nothing wrong with it but the Argonne is not just that (Marie-Louise, tourist operator, 2000).

It would be better to forget, because as long as one remembers one cannot forgive. One must know so as not to repeat, but enough with commemorations! (Guy, hôtelier, 2000).

Both interest in and appropriation of the public, soldier-centred remembrance of the war and impatience toward remembering the war at all seem to have largely replaced personal and family recollections of the events from a local ‘civilian’ standpoint and suggest that the trauma of the conflict has been overcome in Argonnais consciousness. However, the activities and initiatives surrounding the tourist promotion of the war in present-day Argonne also continually reinscribe on the local space the image of a war that has connotations of extreme violence, death and loss (cf. Coleman and Crang 2002: 1). In the context of the national dynamics of remembrance, this place of combat is used for a new phase of commemoration aimed at revitalising

and repersonalising a fading memory. While this is at first sight positive for the Argonne, giving it a marketable extra-local profile, it also reiterates the association of this place with a brutal, pain-filled event and indeed its identification with it. As Jacques points out, this unattractive image is hard to shake off, as sticky as the famous mud because in its very climate and landscape the Argonne materialises that horror: the war, in other words, is 'in the landscape' and this, as I shall show, inflects conceptions of place in the Argonne even at a time when the inhabitants are apparently no longer haunted by memories of the impact of war on local society.

### **War in the Landscape**

One realises that something huge occurred here, and that since then they have kept their distance from it, they look upon it as if it were at once close, and far (Olivier, local official, Argonne, 2001).

This striking, rather romantic image of the presence of World War I in the Argonne was expressed by a young local authority official recently arrived in the area. It implicitly denies that contemporary Argonnais could 'remember' the war in the way of other French and European populations, as a gripping tale of combat and military courage that is now far in the past, unrelated to their present and future. Instead it assumes that the Argonne and its inhabitants have been so deeply marked by this war that, for them, it lingers on unspoken but hauntingly present. This assumption is often made especially by outsiders, or by those who want to position themselves as outsiders.

There have been three wars and for this reason there is little energy here, people from here are afraid of the new, they close in upon themselves, upon the things that they know (Louis, artisan, 2000).

It's a region that has suffered from wars, areas that have been destabilised each time [there was a war] and each time have had to start over ... when they get you once you close in on yourself, when they get you twice you close in even more and you try to hoard, to prepare for the future. I think that it's a reflex that makes people's mentality like that here. It's not a defect but if it could change it would be great (George, tourist operator, 2000).

Both men have lived in Argonne for some time and indeed George was born there, but of Belgian parents as he was keen to specify. Both professed to love the area but also contrasted their own attitudes and efforts to run businesses to those of 'people from here', positioning themselves as outsiders. In distancing themselves, they invoked the war as the point of difference between their own attitude, open and dynamic, and that of 'the Argonnais', said to be 'closed' and fatalistic. They thus brought up the war to explain the

Argonne's current situation of economic stagnation, essentialising the area's predicament by referring to a putative local 'character' formed by the area's past. People who define themselves as 'Argonnais' instead usually dismiss the war as an explanation for present problems.

During a walk in the forest, I questioned Juliette, a woman in her forties born in Argonne but now resident in Paris, about the origin of a ditch and a bank visible in the undergrowth: 'they are trenches, they are everywhere'. I commented that I found the traces of war in the forest very moving and she replied that it's only outsiders [*gens de l'extérieur*] who always see the Argonne through the filter of the war: 'for me, they are part of the landscape, I don't think "war of '14" when I see them'. She added that the war has not 'marked' [*marqué*] the Argonne as much as Alsace and those parts of Lorraine that were occupied by Germans: 'here people have stayed on, war has left us a sense of uncertainty [*précarité*, lit. precariousness], because [it came] in [18]70, then in 1918, then again in 1940 ... but nevertheless people have stayed on – because here it is a frontier region, a region of battles'. Back home, I checked on a map and realised that the feature that Juliette had called 'trenches' was in fact the boundary of the state-owned forest.

Juliette says that she is fiercely attached to the Argonne and expresses her insiderhood by saying that for her the war is 'part of the landscape' to mean that it is a dimension of local reality that she takes for granted but, like the landscape is an inert backdrop to present life. Many others locally said that they do not particularly 'feel' [*ressent*] this part of the past: 'even at the Gruerie [a wood along the former frontline full of war remains] all I ever think about is mushrooms' (Jerôme, retired solicitor, 2000). Denying that the war matters now may be a way to reclaim a 'local' perspective against the way that the war turns the Argonne into a national heartland. However Juliette's case suggests another way in which the war is 'part of the landscape': when she mistakes a forest boundary for a war relic, much like the outsiders she decried she uses this war as the main filter through which to interpret local reality. Similarly while saying that the war had not 'marked' the Argonnais she remarks that it has been formative of local character, like George referring to an abiding sense of uncertainty among local populations. This rather contradictory stance, simultaneously denying and assuming the local (as distinct from the national) impact and significance of the war, is pervasive in Argonne. As indicated, while many people in Argonne are interested in and knowledgeable about the military events of the war, it is not common to hear accounts of the effect of the war on local populations, while some express impatience with anything to do with World War I. At the same time, the local impact of the war is incorporated in present-day local consciousness as a fact of geography, through the way place is represented.

The most common way of characterising the Argonne is as a 'region frontière', a 'frontier region'. This phrase is used to refer to the position of the Argonne massif today, on the administrative boundary between 'two regions and three departments', and to the historical role of the Argonne as a political border, some say between the Kingdom of France and the Holy Roman Empire, others between the Kingdom of France and the Duchy of Lorraine. The two are often elided so that for instance in describing problems in policy management present-day administrative boundaries are described as though they were impenetrable political frontiers:

The Argonne forest is between three departments and two regions, the Biesme stream is the former frontier between the Duchy of Lorraine and the Kingdom of France, and I assure you that this frontier is very alive [*vivante*] still, not only among forestry guards but also in the spirit of the people who live in Argonne. There are personal relations among forestry guards [working in the forest for different departmental branches] and broad management directives are the same, but there are differences for instance at the level of [the management of] tourism, there is no co-operation, not only at the level of the Forestry Agency but also at the level of communes, of departments ... on the Argonne massif there aren't the means for bringing people together to formulate a common project (Forestry Agency Manager, Department of Marne, 2001).

The boundary is often described as having once been 'the border between France and Germany', in spite of the fact that the Argonne was never on a political border between these two countries.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, in current French usage the word for political (and indeed administrative) border is usually 'limite', a term meaning a fixed borderline and so 'belonging to the register of peace' and established right (Nordman 1986: 49). Until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century *frontière* referred instead to a fluctuating line, a space that shifts with the vagaries of conflict and so 'belongs to the register of aggression' and of 'passions and claims', '[carrying] within itself images of fortresses and conflicts' (Nordman 1986: 58). This usage faded with the consolidation of the French nation/state during the 19<sup>th</sup> century but was resurrected during World War I to denote the area, comprising the Argonne, that was not considered firmly attached to France or Germany (1986: 49). At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the term was applied to the system of fortifications built in Eastern France against German attack (see Nordman 1986: 56; Amat 1987). So, by calling the area a *frontière*, present-day Argonnais characterises theirs

---

<sup>9</sup> The German occupation of the Lorraine between 1870 and 1918 did not include the Meuse, the department that comprises the Argonne.

as a disputed land, implicitly referring to its role as a *military* border and battlefield at various times in the past. This is often made explicit:

In the past we were frontier villages, invasions were always a possibility, for this reason the houses are all joined up [terraced] so that there was always the possibility of communicating between houses around the back, for escaping if attacked. We are areas where the houses are truly against one another for defence against invasions. Because it's true that we were in the frontiers, there were wars all the time (Aline, retired farmer, 2000).

As this quote suggests, local people see the landscape and builtscapes of the area as moulded by this troubled history.

This is an area that was always open to enemies, for this reason there are no scattered farms as in the Massif Central, houses are clustered together. Here we are not as rooted [enracinés] as they are over there, there are no old stones, because everything was destroyed and rebuilt, destroyed and rebuilt each time. I don't even know whether we are ... Franks or rather Saxons ... the only thing we are not is Saracens [i.e. Southerners]! (Pierre, a farmer in his forties).

This suggests that the link between people and place in Argonne is unstable and never secure: however, it may be more accurate to say that the Argonnais centre their representations of place around the idea of uncertainty and instability. So the themes of geopolitical impermanence and liminality that colour the image of the Argonne as a military frontier also infuse descriptions of the Argonne as a physical milieu.

The distinctiveness of the Argonne is often said to have a physical basis: the massif is made of 'gaize', a particular kind of limestone apparently only found in one or two other places in the world. The boundaries of the outcrop of gaize are frequently cited as the boundaries of the Argonne: 'where the gaize is, there is the Argonne'. Resting the uniqueness of the Argonne on a rock appears to give it substance and stability: however, one is also told that the gaize is a friable, porous stone, that decays quickly when exposed to wind and rain, both said to be typical of the harsh, damp, cold and windy climate. So the massif is eroded by elements on its surface and tunnelled by underground water, the gaize dissolving into the other typical element, mud: 'the Argonne is wood, water, mud'. Water and mud are ever present because 'it rains all the time', so that the rock turns into fluid, unstable, penetrant substances that cross and defy boundaries: 'here the mud is everywhere'. The instability of the gaize and mud (clay and daub) is extended to the traditional builtscapes, so that its older, pre-World War I housing stock is subject to rapid decay. Overall, the image is of a physical substratum that is unstable and unreliable a climate that is characterised and

sometimes explicitly described as harsh and inhospitable. Both images problematise the relationship between people and land as precarious in the face of hostile forces, extending to the natural world the image of a place where human presence and habitation are never secure. These representations may be seen as evidence of how the Argonnais wrangle with the fact of World War I in their past. At issue is less how to deal with a traumatic past than how to deal with present assumptions that this past was traumatic and determines who and what the Argonne is and can be in the present and future.

### **Holding On**

The image of an unstable, embattled place is used selectively by the Argonnais, who are as likely to call the area beautiful and say that ‘we live well here’, expressing positive attachment to and appreciation of ‘their’ place. Negative imagery about place, that in my view incorporates and ‘remembers’ war and World War I in particular, is used most often in expressing that attachment in an exclusive way, against threats posed by the outside world contextually represented by tourists, urbanites, or public officials of the French state. So the idea that ‘there are no old stones’ is often brought up to claim that ‘here there is nothing to see’ for tourists, and the fact that here ‘it rains all the time’ and ‘there’s mud everywhere’ are mentioned to ask why ever anyone should want to spend their time here. Conversely, insiders or ‘true Argonnais’ are those who can ‘resister’ [hold on, resist] in the ‘hard’ [durs] winters, described as ‘long and dark, with constant rain and no one in the street from morning to night’. Mud and damp are also associated with the forest, once ‘impenetrable’ because ‘there were no paths’ and enemy armies got bogged down and died of cold and pneumonia. Even now the forest is said to be forbidding and inhospitable: ‘the forest here is nature a bit wild [la nature un peu sauvage]’; ‘I am afraid to go to certain parts of the forest on my own’. This wilderness is deployed against new kinds of ‘invading armies’: ‘The forest, it’s a complete mess [le bazaar], there shouldn’t be too many paths, too many signs or too many people would come: it’s people from the cities who expect the forest to be tidy and clean like a public park’. Others decry proposals by ‘ecologists from the cities’ to turn the forest into a nature reserve<sup>10</sup>: ‘you might as well make a reserve, fence us in, and have them come feed us peanuts’. These remarks express ambivalence bordering on hostility towards the presence of tourists and more generally towards tourism as a solution to the area’s problems, and it is in this context that

---

<sup>10</sup> The Argonne forest is also one of the areas identified by the E.U. as a nature reserve under the Natura 2000 programme.



imagery of an inhospitable climate and landscape and of past destruction is now used to draw a sharp line between insiders and outsiders and to claim locals' exclusive control over 'their' space.

This is part of a wider local disaffection with public and E.U. policies proposing tourism and 'heritage' [*patrimoine*] development as practicable means of reviving a failing economy and population (see Filippucci 2004). Tourists and tourism are resented because their temporary, at best seasonal presence is seen as an inadequate antidote to the leaching of 'life' from villages and so, ultimately, to the perceived threat of the demise of inhabited, lived 'place' in this area. Local ideas of a viable and sustainable place centre instead on the long-term continuity and social integrity of villages, imagined as fully functioning units of people living in productive communion with their territory, epitomised by farming as the core of the area's true identity: 'here we are in the countryside' [*ici, on est à la campagne*]. This is an alternative image of a stable, settled place that is itself elaborated by referring to the past but one explicitly excluding the war.

The idea of the integrity of villages is reiterated in today's Argonne by reference to postcard photographs of Argonnais villages at various times from around 1900, seen everywhere in Argonne displayed in houses and public buildings, printed in books and more or less avidly and systematically collected by private individuals shown to anyone expressing an interest in the local past. They sometimes have been passed down as heirlooms from kin and sometimes acquired by touring antique markets and shops, as collectors say, 'all over France', retrieving postcards 'sent away by soldiers in the war of '14'. Partly because of their cost, that can be considerable, most people collect only postcards of their own village of origin and/or residence, but some have large collections comprising images from all over the Argonne. Whatever their actual date, these images are invariably said to depict Argonnais villages 'before '14', and used to make 'before and after' comparisons across the divide of the war, for instance to point out the accuracy of post-World War I reconstruction and so the continuity between before '14 and now: 'it was all rebuilt identical, the only change is that now there are cars'. People dwell on topographical detail to note similarities between the picture and the aspect of the village today: 'you see this building here? It's the same one you see looking out of this window'; 'this here is the bridge that you drove over as you came'. As well as topographical continuity, people use these images to assert social continuity, describing familiarly the usage of village space a century ago: 'that's where we used to take the animals to drink as there was no water in the stables'. Images from 'before '14' are thus used to establish continuity across the gap of war and even, if one listens to collectors' claim to be reassembling images dispersed by

soldiers at the war, to symbolically recompose a local physical and social landscape shattered by the conflict.

However, discontinuity is also stressed: people comment on how much more activity and bustle is seen in these pictures than in today's villages: 'that's the High Street, look how many people there were then'; 'look what crowds used to go to church'. Although these images depict villages that were already in full economic and demographic decline, they are now shown to evoke a more prosperous and buoyant phase in the area's history. They thus embody a selective version of the past that must be related to present-day local concerns and indeed fears about the 'emptying out' of villages and their loss of 'life' with a lack of jobs and the gradual demise of services like shops, schools, medical care and so on, that force villagers to commute to school, work and entertainment and eventually, in many cases, to leave for good. This may be nostalgia for a better time but it is also a form of 'practical nostalgia' (Battaglia 1995) using the past to open up in the present a sense of possibility. As one collector put it, through these images 'one retrieves the villages' [*on retrouve les villages*] and this, in the words of another informant, can help not so much 'to go back in time [*pour faire a retour en arriere*]', as 'to open up some space in people's minds' about what things could be like. Meanwhile, by focusing on villages visually and topographically through these images, locals may claim possession of land and landscape against perceived threats by encroaching outsiders.

So in sum present-day Argonnais hold different images of place that incorporate different aspects of the local past, and both are used to address their present predicament. An image of peaceful, lively, busy villages is used to make an argument about what ought to be. War-infused imagery of an unstable, unfriendly, inhospitable place serves, on the one hand, to claim localness as an exclusive ability to keep going in adverse conditions; on the other hand it serves to oppose polemically locals and outsiders in terms of their opposed interests. Thus World War I, largely forgotten by present-day Argonnais, is 'remembered' strategically in and through an image of place that is used to problematise relations with the outside world, for instance to claim that the French state and public agencies are incapable of seeing, addressing and resolving local needs and problems. However this has the unintended consequence of making those problems and needs harder to see and resolve, because it confirms and reinforces 'outside' perceptions of this area as inexorably and inescapably marked by its role in one of the most violent, grim and tragic conflicts in recent history, contributing to turn present-day marginality from structural problem into historical destiny.

## Conclusions

The Argonnais today perhaps along with the inhabitants of other areas along the former Western Front form one of the world's 'accidental communities of memory', people brought together by catastrophe (Malkki 1997: 91). However the 'memory' that brings them together and defines who they are is not or not explicitly their own recollection of the traumas that the war inflicted on local places and people. Today's Argonnais largely recollect the war as a military, national event without reference to its local repercussions. However, the area is 'traumatised' indirectly by the memory of the war cultivated in wider French society, centred on the military dead and on the national significance and impact of the event and using the former battlefields as sites of mourning and, increasingly now, as sites for refreshing the memory of the war at a time when it is turning into 'history', perhaps evidence of 'unfinished mourning' for this most violent and disruptive event in French history (Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker 2000: 7-9). The former battlefields are now the stage of initiatives aimed at recapturing the 'war experience', part of a wider fad in Europe for 'historic re-enactments' but also bid to authenticate and revitalise, by repersonalising it, the fading memory of the conflict. This reinscribes onto these areas the negativity of that distant event, and indeed I have suggested that the area comes to embody that negativity, its climate and landscape materialising the pain and misery of the war. This focuses public attention on this particular part of the past of the former battlefield areas and sustains an assumption that these are places indelibly 'marked' by war and defined by it. It is this assumption that weighs upon the Argonne today rather (or more) than the actual trauma of war on local people and place by filtering non-local interpretations of local reality and investing the area's current economic and demographic predicament with an air of inevitability. This negative perception is reinforced by the use of war-related imagery by the Argonnais themselves as they characterise their place and landscape, especially in expressing and claiming a mismatch between local and non-local interests. Thus in coping with their present predicament the Argonnais are simultaneously struggling against and polemically appropriating a negative image of place and so of who 'they' are, rooted in a particular version of their past or more precisely on the role that 'their' place has in the social memory of a particular part of the past.

This case suggests that to say that the process of remembrance is 'social' is to say that it involves diverse collectivities or groups with differentiated interests: thus, 'social' memory is inherently political. Indeed, memory may be seen as a resource in the ongoing definition of these interests and in the social production and maintenance of relations of difference and inequality. In the case considered here, the memory of a specific event plays a part

in the construction of geographical difference and inequality. It is called upon in marking and polemically opposing local and non-local but also, by helping to explain the present economic and demographic decline in terms of a traumatic past, it contributes to justify and naturalise a relationship of territorial inequality between a locality and the outside world. It is not simply the case that local dynamics of remembrance are influenced by those of wider, non-local social memory, but also that remembrance plays a part in the creation and articulation of geopolitical relations.

## References

- Amat, J.-P. 1987. Guerre et Milieux Naturels: Les Forêts Meurtries de l'est de la France, 70 ans après Verdun. *L'Espace Géographique* 3: 217-233.
- Antze, P., and M. Lambek. 1996. *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*. New York: Routledge
- Audoin-Rouzeau, S., and A. Becker (eds.). 2002. *1914-1918: Understanding the Great War*. London: Profile Books.
- Barthas, L. 1987. Les Carnets de Guerre de Louis Barthas, Tonnelier, 1914-1918. Paris: La Découverte.
- Battaglia, D. 1995. On Practical Nostalgia. In D. Battaglia (ed.), *The Rhetorics of Self-Making*, pp. 77-120. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Boura, F. 1997. Le Poids des Morts ou Comment s'en Débarasser. *Les Nouvelles de l'Archéologie* 70: 15-21.
- Christian, W. 1972. *Person and God in a Spanish Valley*. New York: Seminar Press.
- Clout, H. 1996. *After the Ruins: Restoring the Countryside of Northern France after the Great War*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press.
- Cobb, R. 1983. *French and Germans, Germans and French: A Personal Interpretation of France under Two Occupations 1914-1918/ 1940-1944*. Hanover: University Press of New England.
- Coleman, S., and M. Crang. (eds.). 2002. *Tourism: Between Place and Performance*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- Deroche, G. 1999. L'Argonne, Exemple de la Marginalité Rurale. *Horizons d'Argonne* 76: 143-156.
- Ferro, M. 2002. *The Great War 1914-1918*. London: Routledge.
- Filippucci, P. 2004. A French Place without a Cheese: Problems with Heritage and Identity in North-East France. *Focaal-European Journal of Anthropology*, 44.

- Fussell, P. 1975. *The Great War and Modern Memory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Génévoix, M. 1983. *Ceux de 14*. Paris: Flammarion.
- Herbette, A. 1966. La Situation dans l'Argonne Dévastée en 1920. *Horizons d'Argonne* 3: 17-20.
- Horizons d'Argonne. 1978. Les Étrangers dans Nos Villages. *Horizons d'Argonne* 36.
- Hussenet, J. 1982. *Argonne 1630-1980*. Reims: Cendrée.
- Joly, M.-H. 2000. War Museums in France. In S. Blowen et. al. (eds.), *Recollections of France*, pp. 33-51. Oxford: Berghahn.
- Leed, E. J. 1979. *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Malkki, L. 1997. News and Culture: Transitory Phenomena and the Fieldwork Tradition. In A. Gupta, and J. Ferguson (eds.), *Anthropological Locations*, pp. 86-101. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Mettavant, F. et. al. 2000. *Mémoire en Images: L'Argonne, Les Cantons de Clermont et Varennes*. Joué-lès-Tours: Alan Sutton.
- Nordman, D. 1986. Des Limites d'état aux Frontières Nationales. In P. Nora, *Les Lieux de Mémoire*, Vol. II, La Nation 2, pp. 35-61. Paris: Gallimard.
- Prost, A. 1984. Les Monuments aux Morts. In P. Nora, *Les Lieux de Mémoire*, Vol. I, La République, pp. 195-225. Paris: Gallimard.
- . 1986. Verdun. In P. Nora, *Les Lieux de Mémoire*, Vol. II, La Nation 2, pp. 111-141. Paris: Gallimard.
- Quaini, M. 1982. "Brutti Posti" Contro "Valli Ridenti": La Percezione del Paesaggio nei Soldati e negli Ufficiali della Grande Guerra. *Movimento Operaio e Socialista* 5 (3): 461-470.
- Roze, A. 1998. *Les Champs de la Mémoire*. Paris: Éditions du Chêne.
- Sherman, D. J. 1998. Bodies and Names: The Emergence of Commemoration in Interwar France. *American Historical Review* 103 (2): 443-466.
- . 1999. *The Construction of Memory in Interwar France*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Triche, S. 1997. Pays d'Argonne: Diagnostic et Propositions pour le Développement des Ses Activités Economiques et Touristiques. Reims: Direction Départementale de l'Équipement.
- Watson, R. 1994. *Memory, History and Opposition: Under State Socialism*. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.
- Winter, J. M. 1995. *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- , and E. Sivan (eds.). 1999. *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



## ***Chapter 3***

### **From Avoidance to Engagement?**

### **Coming to Terms with the Nazi Past in a German Home Town**

John R. Eidson

#### **Towards an Ethnography of “Coming to terms with the past”**

In classic functionalist terms, representations of a common past serve to create feelings of belonging, to justify relations of authority and to provide models for appropriate behaviour. What can be done, however, when people are held together by shared memories of crime, degradation and catastrophe, as has so often been the case in the last century? This was the situation in which Germans found themselves in May 1945, when the National Socialist régime collapsed and the results of its murderous policies began to be publicised more widely.<sup>1</sup> Germans stood accused of having supported a government that initiated a war of aggression and pursued genocidal policies causing the devastation of extensive territories and the death of millions of people. The necessity of proceeding from this new point of departure at mid-century and the inevitability of referring back to the events leading up to it, presented Germans – and others too, of course – with practical, political and moral dilemmas of tremendous proportions. In this chapter, I shall address especially the moral dilemmas that have arisen when referring to the past for orientation in the present. How have Germans attempted to come to terms with the past – or not, as the case may be?<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> In this paper, the terms “Nazi”, “National Socialism” and “National Socialist” refer to the *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (NSDAP), or National Socialist German Workers’ Party. The common expression “Nazi” is an abbreviation of “National Socialist”, which was, incidentally, used only by critics or opponents of the party in question.

<sup>2</sup> There are various German expressions for engagement or confrontation with the Nazi past, including most frequently *Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit* (reappraisal or critical incorporation of the past) and *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (dealing or coping with, managing, overcoming or getting over the past). While some authors have argued that the first expression is preferable to the second (e.g. Hartman 1986: 114 and Ten Dyke 2001: 267, 271), their arguments seem to be based only on a combination of etymological analysis and philosophi-



“Coming to terms with the past” in postwar Germany is a complex and sprawling topic, but, with some simplification, it is possible to distinguish five general approaches in the secondary literature. The first category includes sociologically and psychoanalytically based critiques of German politicians and German citizens, charging that – especially in the first decades after World War II – they failed in their responsibility to confront the past directly and instead sought to avoid and repress its traumatic contents (e.g. Adorno 1959; Mitscherlich and Mitscherlich 1967).<sup>3</sup> Typical of a second approach are surveys gauging the political attitudes, inclinations and behaviours of German citizens as they develop over time. Through statistical analyses of responses to questionnaires, political scientists and public opinion experts provide evidence of dramatic changes in what is often termed the “political culture” of Germans over the course of the second half of the twentieth century (e.g. Conradt 1989). Historical studies of societal developments since the end of the war are similar in intent to the opinion surveys just mentioned, but their dissimilar methods justify assigning them to a third group (e.g. Herbert 2002b). The fourth, admittedly quite heterogeneous category in this brief review of the secondary literature includes studies of the direct confrontation with the Nazi past in the courts and the national legislature (Reichel 2001), in government policy (Frei 1996), in the mass media (Krause 2002), in public commemoration (Reichel 1999), in historiography (Maier 1997), in the cinema (Kaes 1987), in school books (Jacobmeyer 1986) and so on. Of course, the manner in which the Nazi past was “directly confronted” in these various settings was and remains controversial, providing ample opportunity for criticism of its inadequacy.

Common to all of these approaches to the topic of coming to terms with the Nazi past is the desire to put one’s finger on the pulse of the nation in an attempt to make a general assessment of how or whether the Germans are progressing. Even in the specialised studies just cited, particular aspects of government or society are typically understood as indices of the general state of the nation, despite the widely shared perception that different indices often lead to different conclusions (Berghoff 1998: 99).

For anthropologists, this concern for the general condition of larger abstractions such as the German nation, German society, or the German

---

cal reflection. An adequate semantic analysis of these terms would have to take a survey of their use in various discourses and in corresponding social and historical contexts as its point of departure. In employing the English expression, “coming to terms with the past”, I follow Hartman (1986) and Lüdtke (1993).

<sup>3</sup> For the purposes of this review, studies devoted to difficulties in communication between the generation of perpetrators or “fellow travellers” and their children may be seen as a subset of this first category (e.g. Bude 1998).

people might indicate that the topic of “coming to terms with the Nazi past” is ripe for a more ethnographic approach, one which shifts attention away from institutions and events in the national spotlight toward the circumstantiality and variation of everyday life. The path leading in this direction has been well prepared by advocates of a fifth approach to the topic, namely, the oral historians of the Nazi and postwar eras, who have combined historical reconstruction of personal experiences with reflection on the subjectivity of their interview partners, both as actors in the past and narrators in the present.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, there are still many aspects of coming to terms with the past which are accessible only through ethnographic methods.

Ironically, however, there are few contributions by anthropologists working in Germany that go beyond the analysis of symbols and discourses to examine their significance for people in concrete social situations.<sup>5</sup> Even more actor-oriented approaches are often limited to life-history materials, which are not ethnographic in a strict sense of word, as, for example, in John Borneman’s analysis of how “personal narrative histories” of Berliners have corresponded to “the state’s version of history” in both East and West Germany during the so-called Cold War and thereafter (Borneman 1992: 32; cf. Faubion 1996). In this sense, anthropologists have retained the general orientation toward the “German question”, focusing either on political semantics or on individuals involved in agonistic struggles with larger abstractions, such as the state, society, or power (see Sangren 1995).

What is largely missing from the secondary literature on coming to terms with the Nazi past is an examination of the institutional settings for the articulation of varying forms of collective memory in the sprawling middle ground between “society” and “the individual”. One way to characterise this middle ground is to supplement the word “society” with the adjective “civil” – a minor but significant change. I am not using the term “civil society” in a normative sense to conjure up a pluralist utopia found only in liberal ideologies. I do want to point out as emphatically as possible, however, that individuals often participate in groups or organisations which may be local, regional, national, or international in scope but which are neither identical with nor perfectly opposed to the state or society as a whole. In my experience as an ethnographer in Germany, it is in the context of such groups or organisations that individuals often concern themselves with history and give expression to forms of popular memory. What is more, these forms of popu-

---

<sup>4</sup> See the discussion in Niethammer (1985), who also provides detailed citations of the oral history literature.

<sup>5</sup> For examples of anthropological studies that are largely restricted to the analysis of contemporary symbols or discourses pertaining to the National Socialist era, see Bunzel (1995), Linke (1999) and Feldman (2000).

lar memory are plural and contested, depending upon a whole series of variables that cannot be deduced from studies in which individuals are viewed only as state subjects or members of national society.

In German communities, civic organisations are among the most important institutional settings for what Hermann Bausinger (1990: 82-87) has called “the presentation of the historical”. This refers to the common practice of invoking personalities, events, or conventions of bygone eras in the context of contemporary public ceremonies or celebrations. While Bausinger emphasises the peculiarly reified and alienated character of public representations of history, beginning especially in the nineteenth century, I understand them to be consistent with the functions that rhetoricians have ascribed to *historia* since antiquity: to advise, convince, explain, advocate and render comprehensible (Harth 1996: 832).<sup>6</sup> In Germany, at least, it is useful to distinguish three kinds of activities through which history is displayed in present-day communities: cultural preservation, cultural performances and local historical writing. The preservationist efforts of state agencies, local government and voluntary associations, which are directed toward architectural structures, townscapes or cityscapes and surrounding landscapes, are rife with allusions to local, territorial and sometimes national history (Kosher 1998). Cultural performances such as festivals, dedicatory ceremonies and anniversary celebrations often have a historicising aspect (Schneider 1995). Finally, local historical writing represents a special case, since it provides discursive elaboration of and commentary on all historicising activities in communities and in wider regions (Eidson 1993, 1995, 2000).

The term “local historical writing” refers both to relatively naïve compositions by amateurs, usually concerning organisations to which they belong and to more ambitious works by those amateurs or semi-professionals who seek public recognition as authoritative local historians. Since the nineteenth century, towns, cities and even villages throughout Germany have been the home of dilettante archaeologists and historians, who have typically founded local or regional societies and proceeded to set themselves up as local experts on all things old and new (Pabst 1986). In a recent review of the literature on postwar attitudes toward the National Socialist era, Hartmut Berghoff (1998: 100) calls the writings of local historians “a seldom used means of access to historical-political consciousness”. “Even though they are composed of individual teachers, pastors and local enthusiasts”, the same

---

<sup>6</sup> Substantialism, essentialism and reification are time-honoured traditions in historical representation and are by no means peculiarly modern (Collingwood 1956: 42-5). What was new in the nineteenth century was, perhaps, the transference of reifying approaches to history from the power centres of the early modern period, especially, princely, judicial, ecclesiastical and municipal institutions, to the bourgeois public sphere.

author continues, “they reflect what is thought at the grass roots” (Berghoff 1998: 100).<sup>7</sup> For reasons which will become evident below, I suggest qualifying this statement as follows: To understand “what is thought at the grass roots”, the works of local historians, who are usually members of the local bourgeoisie, must be viewed together with simple organisational chronicles, leisure-time journalism and various kinds of cultural performances, for which members of all social strata are responsible.<sup>8</sup> Even this expanded conception of local historical representations leaves out many things that should be included in a comprehensive ethnography of attitudes toward the past, for example, narrative traditions within families or among friends; nevertheless, representations of local history that are produced for public consumption are important and neglected aspects of the larger picture.

This chapter examines local representations of local history – especially in amateur and semi-professional historical writing – in the contexts in which they are produced and consumed, asking whether and to what degree they may be understood as efforts to come to terms with the Nazi past. This requires a review of local genres or types of publications in which National Socialism has been or might be expected to be mentioned. Once this requirement has been fulfilled, the various ways in which National Socialism has been treated or ignored in local historical writing will be evaluated with reference to a typology that was developed in the process of text analysis. Before that is possible, however, it is necessary to provide a sketch of the local context in which the “presentation of the historical” takes place.

## The Field Site

The field site is Boppard, a small town on the banks of the Rhine, approximately 20 kilometers south of Coblenz.<sup>9</sup> In this general area, known as the Middle Rhine Valley, the river winds through a narrow gap with steep inclines rising from the banks to wooded and thinly populated plateaus to the

---

<sup>7</sup> This translation from the German original and all subsequent translations from German sources are by the author.

<sup>8</sup> I call some local historians not amateurs but “semi-professionals”, because they are holders of advanced university degrees, e.g. doctoral degrees in geography or history, but are not employed as practitioners of the disciplines in which they earned their degree. Journalists, who are responsible for much local historical writing, must sometimes be considered “amateurs” or “semi-professionals”, because those working for small local newspapers include volunteers who take up journalism in their spare time or after retiring from other professions.

<sup>9</sup> Fieldwork in Boppard was carried out from 1979 to 1981 and supplemented by shorter visits in 1990, 1993 and 2003. Unless otherwise noted, all statements regarding the field site are based on data gathered during these visits. See also Eidson (1990, 1993, 1994, 1995 and 2000).

east and west. Boppard is wedged into a small alluvial plain where a number of streams flow from the hills into the river.

As a township within the Electorate of Trier, Boppard remained Roman Catholic during the Reformation, and its population is still predominantly Roman Catholic today.<sup>10</sup> Since the Middle Ages, however, religious diversity had been ensured by the presence of a small Jewish community, the members of which felt compelled to emigrate or were systematically arrested and forcibly evacuated during the National Socialist era (Burkard and Thill 1996). The first Protestants entered Boppard shortly after the dissolution of the Electorate in 1794, when the French army took most of the territories west of the Rhine. Then, after the defeat of Napoleon and the allocation of the Rhenish territories to Prussia in 1815, the number of Protestant residents rose steadily. In 1825 there were 3,365 residents in Boppard, of whom 3,269 were Roman Catholic, 34 were Protestant and 62 were Jewish. By 1925, there were 6,546 residents, of whom 5,601 were Roman Catholic, 839 Protestant and 94 Jewish. Thus, in the years preceding the Nazi seizure of power in 1933, almost 86% of all residents were Roman Catholic, while nearly 13% were Protestant and less than 1.5% were Jewish (Schüller 1925: 40; Burkard and Thill 1996: 51, 72).

The significance of religious confession in local social life is only evident, however, when the class structure of the local population, together with the geographic origin and the various political tendencies of its members, is taken into account. After the incorporation of the Rhineland into the Prussian state, new Protestant residents were strongly represented in the administrative, commercial and political elite. Those Roman Catholics who were integrated into the power structure of the Prussian Rhineland were typically from a relatively small group of political liberals, representing the portion of the Catholic bourgeoisie that had more in common with Protestant allies than with the majority of orthodox Roman Catholics. In the modern era, members of the local Jewish population were involved in the trading of textiles, cattle and agricultural products in Boppard and its hinterland (Burkard 1994: 218). All evidence indicates that Jewish household heads were disproportionately represented among the more prosperous merchants and Jewish children in the higher schools (Burkard and Thill 1996: 51-75, 141-73).

In Boppard, as in much of the Rhineland, the great social divide during the nineteenth century was between a small elite, made up of Protestant, liberal Catholics and some Jews, on one hand, and the majority of Roman

---

<sup>10</sup> The Electorate of Trier was an archbishopric, which was also an independent principality within the Holy Roman Empire. On the history of Boppard, see the three volume series edited by Mißling (1994, 1997, 2001).

Catholics on the other.<sup>11</sup> It is one of history's minor ironies that the liberals benefited from illiberal election laws: the so-called three-class system of local elections granted a disproportionately large number of seats in local governing councils to those few in the highest tax bracket, namely members of the educated and property-holding bourgeoisie (Lademacher 1976: 513-8). In Boppard, it was not until 1888 that the fledgling Roman Catholic party gained a majority in the town council and not until 1918, with the introduction of universal suffrage, that the Roman Catholics began to control local politics to a degree consistent with their demographic predominance (Korn 1994: 142, 163-6).

In the Weimar Republic (1918-1932), local government in Boppard was firmly in the hands of the *Zentrum*, or Centre Party, which was, essentially, the political party of Roman Catholics. Even in the crucial Reichstag election of the 31<sup>st</sup> of July, 1932, when the NSDAP received just over 37% of the vote nationwide, the Centre Party received 48% of the local vote, while the NSDAP received 25%.<sup>12</sup> In elections for the town council and the county council, local preferences for the Centre Party over the NSDAP and other parties were even more pronounced. For example, even in March 1933, after the Nazi seizure of power, the Centre Party won eight of 18 seats in the town council, while the NSDAP won only three (*Bopparder Zeitung*, 16<sup>th</sup> of March, 1933).<sup>13</sup>

During the first year of Hitler's chancellorship, all political parties other than the NSDAP were disbanded, laws were enacted allowing the Nazis to purge the civil service of actual and ostensible enemies, and the systematic persecution of Jews began. In Boppard, this meant that Centre Party members were expelled from office, except in those few cases where they were successful in their attempts to switch to the NSDAP. Members of

---

<sup>11</sup> In Boppard, for example, the rabbi is reported to have been a member of the Casino, the social club of the liberal elite, in the late nineteenth century (see the excerpt from a text by Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl in *Rund um Boppard – Journal*, 14<sup>th</sup> of May, 1983.). Similarly, there was at least one Jewish member from the Liberal Party in the town council during this same period (Burkard and Thill 1996: 161). On the social history of the Rhineland in the modern era, see Lademacher (1976).

<sup>12</sup> In this same election, the Communist Party (KPD) received 11% of the local vote, the two bourgeois parties (DVP and DNVP) received 10% and the Social Democratic Party (SPD) 4%. In the German Reich as a whole, the Centre Party received only 12% of the vote and the NSDAP 37.3%. The significance of the electoral behaviour of Boppard's burghers should neither be underestimated nor overestimated. Local support for the Nazi party was significantly less than the national average but still relatively strong. Still, it is not possible to make inferences about other aspects of behaviour on the basis of voting behaviour alone. Not voting for the Nazis does not necessarily mean that one did not support aspects of Nazi policy, nor does voting for the Nazis necessarily imply enthusiasm for all of their policies.

<sup>13</sup> The *Bopparder Zeitung* was a daily newspaper published from 1866 to 1937.

small local Communist and Social Democratic party organs were persecuted, and, indeed, a leading Social Democrat was shot fatally in broad daylight by an SA member, who only served six months of a four year sentence under the Nazi system of justice (Thul 1970: 92-3). Residents of Jewish faith or heritage were subjected to repressive ordinances, boycotts, harassment, brutality, arrest and expropriation. Therefore, many emigrated in the mid-1930s, often sacrificing their property in the process. Those who remained in town until the nation-wide pogrom of the 10<sup>th</sup> of November, 1938 (*Reichskristallnacht*) found it difficult if not impossible to escape with their lives. The destruction of the synagogue on the 10<sup>th</sup> and on the 12<sup>th</sup> of November was accompanied by the arrest of all Jewish men and the public beating of Jews and alleged philo-Semites. Finally, the last of the remaining members of the Jewish community – approximately one third of the original population – were taken to regional gathering points and transported to Dachau, Theresienstadt, Auschwitz, or Bergen-Belsen in the early 1940s. Only a very few returned to Boppard after the war (Burkard 1994).

Once the occupying forces allowed the reestablishment of political parties in late 1945, former Centre Party members founded a local organ of the Christian Democratic Union and regained control of local politics (Mißling 2001: 57-66). The CDU was, however, no longer a confessional party, at least not to the same degree, and with the arrival of many new residents in this era of greater mobility, it became the meeting ground for political conservatives of both Christian denominations. Together, Roman Catholics and conservative Protestants dominated local politics for over three decades. Reflecting a nationwide process of liberalisation, however, the Social Democratic Party, including newcomers of all social classes and a small group of native Bopparders, gradually grew in strength, gaining control of the town council in 1979 and having a mayor elected from its ranks in 1987.

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, adult members of a population of circa 8,000 are employed in tourism, public administration, small business, manufacturing, schools, wine-making and the liberal professions. Many residents commute to jobs in nearby towns, especially to Coblenz, a provincial centre with just over 100,000 inhabitants. Despite the reshuffling of the population in the decades following World War II, typical social tensions continue to exist among groups differing by confession, level of education, political affiliation and geographic origin. In local stereotypes, which correspond only obliquely to social reality, the typical native of Boppard is a Roman Catholic with a vocational education, while a typical newcomer may be either a Protestant or Catholic, often with a university education.

The dynamics of local public life in the half century since the end of World War II may be described briefly as follows. On the basis of the social similarities and differences cited in the preceding paragraph, local factions have often coalesced or regrouped informally, then made their presence known through coordinated efforts, singly or in coalitions with other factions, in local government, the churches, schools, local businesses, political parties and leading civic organisations. What counts as a “leading” civic organisation has been subject to change over time, and much of the analysis in my previous publications has been devoted to showing how local groups that were previously excluded from public life have organised themselves in voluntary associations in order to take on public roles and gain recognition in the local public sphere (Eidson 1990, 1994). Typical forms of reputation making and reputation management often include contributing to cultural preservation, staging cultural performances, or promoting “historical consciousness”. In fact, public events of different kinds are often accompanied by historicising gestures and presided over by local historians, that is, librarians, teachers, school directors, civil servants and priests who research and write about local history in their leisure time or after retiring. Local historians are organised in local committees, in state commissions for public history and in regional historical societies, where they are influenced by professional historians with positions in federal and provincial archives.

### **Texts and Procedures of Text Analysis**

The historicising rhetoric employed by participants in the public sphere of local communities in Germany – politicians, club spokespersons, journalists and local historians – usually conforms to an established set of conventions that developed over the last century and a half.<sup>14</sup> There are typical genres of local historical writing that are published on typical occasions. The occasions that most commonly require allusions to local history include the founding, dedication, or anniversary of particular local institutions. The institution in question may be a voluntary association, a neighbourhood organisation, a school, a business, or the parish church. Often, an institutional chronicle is printed in a *Festschrift*, which is distributed at the corresponding celebration, and the text is sometimes delivered in a speech on this same occasion. Chronicles are frequently composed by institutional spokespersons with no special claim to expertise, such as club secretaries; but the

---

<sup>14</sup> My observations on the local conventions governing representations of local history have been pieced together with reference to fieldwork data and scattered published materials too numerous to cite. For an in-depth discussion with the relevant citations, see Eidson (1995).



greater the prestige of an institution or its members, the more likely it is that a reputable local historian will be commissioned to fulfil this function.

The celebration of local institutions is characteristic not only of the chronicle but of other local historical genres as well. One especially prominent example is the *Heimatbuch*, a book about the home town or home region, the publication of which often coincides with an important date in the administrative history of a town or a county (Eidson 1995). The Heimat book is a familiar genre in twentieth century Germany – though it is more accurate to describe it as a combination of genres, since it includes chapters on geography, history and folklore, along with etchings by local artists and examples of popular tales and dialect poetry.

The Heimat book usually represents a joint effort by members of a historical society or an ad hoc committee on local history, which is often also responsible for special series featuring works on selected topics. Recent examples from Boppard include a history of the parish church and a history of local neighbourhood organisations, both of which were planned by committees consisting of local historians and interested parties.

Perhaps the most ambitious genre of local historical writing is the town history, which often covers the full temporal range, from what Germans refer to jocularly as the *Urschleim* (primordial soup) until the present day. In Boppard, only two town histories have been published so far, one in 1909 and a three-volume edition in 1994, 1997 and 2001. The first was written by a local school teacher and published by the town book store, and the second was a production of a regional historical society, which is centred in Coblenz but chaired by a school director residing in Boppard.

In addition, various texts on local history are also published in local newspapers, in guide books for tourists, in regional periodicals and, most recently, in Internet websites.

In examples of local historical writing published in Boppard after 1945, is there anything that might be understood as an attempt to “come to terms” with the Nazi past? If so, how are National Socialists and the National Socialist era represented? What positions do authors adopt with respect to these topics, and what can this tell us about the attitudes of their auditors or of local residents in general? In fact, a review of the texts in question reveals that very few refer directly to National Socialism. Moreover, those that do so often approach the topic indirectly. Beginning in the early 1990s, however, there is an observable trend toward increasing readiness to address the topic of National Socialism, at least in selected genres.

How can the initial neglect of National Socialism by local historians and their recent interest in this topic be explained? The existing secondary literature is of little help, because most historians, with the exception of

those working in public archives, have shown little or no interest in what they regard as an inferior version of their own enterprise (Klueting 1991). With the critical renewal of the human sciences in Germany, beginning in the late 1960s, students of folklore and popular culture rediscovered local conventions of historical representation but tended to view them as expressions of bourgeois ideology or as symptoms of trauma and suppressed guilt (Jeggle 1970, 1987). While such explanations cannot be dismissed out of hand, their validity is limited by the tendency of these scholars to view randomly selected local materials independently of the contexts in which they are produced and consumed (e.g. Jeggle 1987: 503). To date, there has been no systematic attempt to examine the works of local historians and their treatment of the topic of National Socialism from an ethnographic perspective.

Admittedly, formulating an ethnographic approach to local historical writing about the National Socialist era is inherently problematic, since it often means employing criteria that are foreign to the intentions of authors and the expectations of their readers. “Coming to terms with the past” was, initially, a category of the national political class which was imposed upon local communities from the outside (Hanusch 1999).<sup>15</sup> Therefore, using this category in the analysis of local representations may create distortions, which, in turn, provide the basis for misinterpretations. I suggest, however, that it is possible to correct for possible errors, first, by taking variation in local genres into account, as in the preceding paragraphs, and, second, by situating texts in local contexts, as I do in the concluding section of the chapter. Now, however, it is time to examine some of the intrinsic properties of the texts themselves.

For the purposes of text analysis, I have drawn on examples of various genres, all of which refer to the twelve-year period when Hitler was in power. In the following, however, I present the results of my analysis not according to genre but according to the rhetorical stance that the author or authors adopt vis-à-vis National Socialism and the National Socialist era. Presenting my analysis in terms of the rhetorical properties of texts involves mixing heterogeneous genres, but it does have one clear advantage: it allows for a roughly chronological presentation of materials, since texts written at about the same time are often similar rhetorically, despite generic differences.

---

<sup>15</sup> The reference here and throughout this chapter is to “coming to terms with the past” as an explicit and self-conscious discursive convention in postwar Germany. Other, more tacit forms of learning from past experiences and communicating the lessons learned to others, while no less important, are not necessarily included in this formulation.

When asking about the rhetorical stance of authors addressing the years between 1933 and 1945, I seek to determine, first, whether they have chosen to include or exclude references to National Socialism, and, if they include them, what sort of treatment this topic receives. I distinguish three basis rhetorical stances, namely, *avoidance*, *dissociation* and *engagement*. Dissociation, in turn, comes in different varieties, including *externalisation*, *alterity*, *incomprehension* and *apology*.<sup>16</sup> I arrived at these terms through a combination of deduction and induction. Variant approaches to the topic of National Socialism may be arranged between two logical extremes, avoidance and engagement. While avoidance results from conscious or unconscious steps taken to prevent contact with the topic, engagement results from conscious efforts to initiate contact. Dissociation is an intermediary term, referring to various ways of attenuating contact with the topic, once it occurs. The four types or aspects of dissociation cited above emerged directly from work with texts themselves.

It is important to emphasise that these terms – avoidance, dissociation, engagement, etc. – are not intended to provide the basis for the definitive classification of particular texts. Rather, they should be understood as contrasting dimensions of an analytical framework, which, when imposed upon the texts, reveals aspects that might otherwise have been overlooked. Terms such as “dissociation” and “engagement” or “externalisation” and “alterity” are not necessarily mutually exclusive, since even texts that strike us as trivial often defy reduction to a single category. What is more, viewing texts in terms of the proffered terminological scheme is only the first step in an analysis that must, in each particular case, take contextual information into account.

## **Rhetorical Stances Toward National Socialism in Local Historical Writing**

### ***Avoidance***

Avoidance of the topic of National Socialism is characteristic of the various editions of the Heimat book of the town of Boppard, which were published

---

<sup>16</sup> Two other authors who have reflected on the treatment of Nazism in local historical writing arrange their comments under headings displaying some similarities with mine. Jeggle's (1987) headings are, however, quite heterogeneous and make systematic analysis difficult: (1) Where does National Socialism come from?, (2) Who were the local Nazis?, (3) the end of the war, and (4) obfuscating memories. The headings favoured by Berghoff (1998: 100-1) correspond more closely to mine, which were, however, conceived before reading his text: (1) omitting the Nazi régime, (2) taking refuge in empty rhetoric, (3) representing Nazism as something imposed from outside, and (4) treating the topic with clarity.

in 1953, 1968 and 1977. Even in the third edition, the Third Reich is alluded to only briefly in references to the nearby Hunsrück Highway, which was built between 1936 and 1939 (Stollenwerk 1977: 137, 145). Similarly, World War II is mentioned only in formulations such as “following the Second World War” (Stollenwerk 1977: 25).

In the *Heimat* book, avoidance of the topic of National Socialism is consistent with the general tendency to focus on the cultural history of the pre-modern era, but references to the Nazis are often absent even in those rare works of local history that deal with the central events of the twentieth century. For example, in the first quarter of the year 1955, under the heading “Ten Years Ago”, the local weekly newspaper published excerpts from the journal of a prominent citizen documenting local events during the last months of World War II (*Rund um Boppard*, 15<sup>th</sup> of January to 7<sup>th</sup> of May, 1955).<sup>17</sup> A typical daily entry includes brief information on weather conditions, air raids in Boppard, the number of hours spent in air raid shelters, the availability of food and bombing raids in other German cities. While German and American soldiers are occasionally mentioned in the featured journal excerpts, there is no mention, either in the journal or in the introductory remarks by the newspaper editor, of the Nazis or their victims.

While avoidance is implicit in the *Heimat* book and the newspaper feature on the end of the war in Boppard, it is explicit in other cases, insofar as authors announce the fact that they are avoiding National Socialism or the National Socialist era. An example is the text from a speech that was made by a historian from the federal archive in Coblenz on the occasion of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the county in which Boppard was located (prior to the administrative reform of 1969) – a speech which was later published as a booklet in a local series on local history. After beginning with the pre-Roman era and tracing local history over the course of the millennia, the archivist finally arrives, at the end of his speech, in the modern times, but he alludes only briefly to the events of the twentieth century as follows:

The First World War, defeat, occupation, the separatists, the liberation of the Rhineland, the Third Reich, and war and defeat once more – we would like to remain silent about these years (Heyen 1966a).

Avoidance of National Socialism and related topics was typical of almost all local historical writing for over four decades after the end of World War II. Thereafter, the wall of silence began to crumble, but only for younger local historians and for leading members of the older generation. Established local

---

<sup>17</sup> The *Rund um Boppard* has been published since 1954 by the *Verkehrs- und Verschönerungsverein* (Society for Tourism and Beautification), a leading civic organisation, with financial support from the town administration.

historians of secondary rank still tend to avoid any mention of the Nazis or their victims to the present day.<sup>18</sup>

### *Dissociation*

The tendency to use rhetorical means to dissociate oneself or one's topic from National Socialism may be illustrated with reference to institutional chronicles. The purpose of the chronicle is to demonstrate the antiquity and continuity of a particular local institution or civic organisation, from its founding to the present day, and to celebrate the "highlights" of its history. In such cases, it is difficult simply to skip over the twelve years of National Socialist rule. It is possible, however, to remove National Socialism and all that was associated with it to a safer distance through *externalisation*, that is, by depicting these phenomena as having no intrinsic connection to the institution or organisation in question. National Socialism is treated as if it originated outside of local organisations and impinged upon them in a way that threatened their activities and even their very existence. The implication is that, once the Nazis went away, the organisations were able to return to their normal patterns. Since examples of this way of treating National Socialism may be found in almost all institutional chronicles in a practically invariant form, a few examples may suffice.

With great enthusiasm, he [the director] devoted himself to the organisation of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the club's founding, which was held on the 5<sup>th</sup> of July, 1936 and was attended by no less than 18 other choral societies. Then, however, dark and fateful times – the years 1939 to 1948 – hindered the cultural activities of the organisation (*Festschrift* of a men's choral group, 1961).

During both world wars, the hostilities and their aftermath hindered the activities of this 'High Street association' but could not bring them to a halt (from the *Festschrift* of a second men's choral group, 1976).

---

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Bopparder VVV-Heft Nr. 9 (1998), which is entitled *50 Jahre Bopparder Stadt-Chronik 1945-1995*. The term "VVV-Heft" refers to a booklet in a numbered series put out by the Society for Tourism and Beautification (see note 16). These booklets are not publications in a strict sense of the word; rather, they are produced through cutting and pasting and reproduced using a photocopy-machine. Booklet 9 in this series, which includes reproductions of various older chronicles, begins with the pronouncement that "history should not be forgotten but should serve as a warning and admonishment against extreme nationalism, the yearning for a 'great man', military arrogance and ideological blindness and stupidity". Then, however, a brief chronicle of events during the first half of the twentieth century is presented in which, for the 1930s, only the dedication in 1936 of the war memorial in the park on the Rhine is mentioned.

These examples show that dissociation through externalisation is often combined with euphemism, that is, with avoidance of the direct mention of National Socialism and its consequences.

Another form of dissociation is *alterity*, by which I mean making reference to opponents or victims of the National Socialist régime in a way which allows the author and his or her readers to identify with them. This has the effect of creating, rhetorically, an “us” which is different from “them” and, thus, of construing authors and readers as something other than and morally distinct from Nazism. Régime opponents are sometimes stylised as famous sons or daughters of the town, even if they pursued their oppositional activities long after having left the local community. In Boppard, the known régime opponents to whom townspersons are able to establish some kind of link are Maria Terwiel and Franz Büchner. Terwiel was born in Boppard in 1910 while her father taught briefly at the local Catholic teachers’ college, but she left with her parents while still an infant. Later, as a young adult, she became involved in resistance activities in Berlin, where she was arrested in 1942 and executed in 1943 (*Rund um Boppard*, 13<sup>th</sup> of January, 1959). Büchner was the son of a local school teacher who later became a successful pathologist, taking a public stance against euthanasia during the Third Reich. He survived the National Socialist era and went on to have a successful career after the war (*Rund um Boppard*, 6<sup>th</sup> of January, 1973).

Both Terwiel and Büchner are celebrated in the local newspaper as opponents of the Nazi régime, whose resistance was motivated largely by their Roman Catholic faith.<sup>19</sup> In a similar vein, some texts on local history emphasise the opposition of local Roman Catholics to the National Socialist authorities and the persecution of Roman Catholics by the Nazis. Thus, in his history of the local parish church, a well-known local historian includes excerpts from the chronicle of the parish priest, which document the harassment, arrest and interrogation of Roman Catholic clergymen and the confiscation of church property (Pauly 1987: 155-65). Similarly, in the chapter on the Nazi era in the new history of Boppard, a whole section is devoted to “The NSDAP and the Catholic Church” (Korn 1994: 212-8). The author notes that “from the reports of the representative of the [Nazi] Security Service in Boppard, one gains the impression that he was largely preoccu-

---

<sup>19</sup> What one does not learn from local sources is that Terwiel’s mother was Jewish (but a convert to Christianity) and her father a Social Democrat. Nevertheless, scholarship has confirmed the image of Maria Terwiel as a devout Roman Catholic whose resistance activities were motivated by religious convictions (Tuchel 1994). The attribution of religious motives to Büchner may be justified with reference to his own statements, which are paraphrased in the cited article.

pied with the observation of church activities” (Korn 1994: 212). In this sense, the treatment of Terwiel and Büchner in local historical studies may be seen as an example of a more general phenomenon, namely, the insistence of a clear distinction between the National Socialist state and the Roman Catholic Church. In all of Germany, the opposition of the Catholic Church to Nazism and its victimisation by the Nazis were standard features of postwar discussions, but subsequent research, focusing on the role of the Vatican during Hitler’s reign (Lewy 1964), on anti-Semitism among Catholics (Blaschke 1999) and on the support of some Catholics for the NSDAP (Hastings 2003), especially in the early years, suggests that this relationship was complex and problematic.

A third way of dissociating the author and his or her readers from the Nazis and their deeds might be called *incomprehension*. An example may be found in a newspaper report about a lecture on the topic of National Socialism in the Rhineland, which was held by a federal archivist in Lingerhahn, a village in the rural highlands west of the Rhine, and attended by members of the regional historical society. The lecture began with a showing of a documentary film of Hitler’s notorious speech about the Saarland, which was held on the 26<sup>th</sup> of August, 1934 in Ehrenbreitstein, near Coblenz.<sup>20</sup> The unidentified author of the report about this lecture writes as follows:

It was astounding and for us today almost incomprehensible how the powerful voice of the speaker aroused the enthusiasm of the masses.

At times, the speech of Adolf Hitler was drowned out by the approving screams of the crowd (*Rund um Boppard*, 25<sup>th</sup> of October, 1969).

Nevertheless, it is clear from the report that at least some of the people attending the lecture of the historical society were old enough to remember the years of the Third Reich. In such cases, it was, at least in part, a reflection on their own personal experiences which evoked incomprehension. Of course, this lecture must also be viewed as an example of direct engagement with the topic of National Socialism; but this early example of engagement is characterised not only by rhetorical dissociation within the newspaper report but also by the social, institutional and geographical dissociation in the staging of this act of engagement: neither the speaker nor the setting were familiar to most of those who attended the lecture or read the newspaper report about it, whether in Boppard or in other locales in the county.

Among the various approaches to the topic of National Socialism, *apology* occupies an intermediary area between engagement and dissociation. On one hand, the author addresses the issue directly; and, on the other, he or she qualifies his or her relationship to it and lessens his or her respon-

---

<sup>20</sup> Ehrenbreitstein is a large and very impressive fortress, which sits atop a cliff overlooking the confluence of the Rhine and the Moselle.

sibility for it. With reference to very different materials, Erving Goffman has defined “apology” as “a gesture through which an individual splits himself into two parts, the part that is guilty of an offence and the part that dissociates itself from the delict and affirms a belief in the offended rule” (Goffman 1971: 113). The most common form of apology is related to what I have called alterity, since it involves, first, a distinction between the guilty and the innocent and, second, the identification of the author and the readers with the latter. The way in which guilty and innocent parties are conceived, however, is subject to variation. The three alternatives that may be found in the local literature on local history include, first, the distinction between Nazi criminals and innocent Germans, second, the distinction between “big Nazis”, who were responsible for crimes, and “little Nazis”, who were not, and, third, the distinction between positive and negative aspects of behaviour, whereby the former are often attributed to the individual personality and the latter to generic traits of all humans.

The Christian Democratic politician who served as mayor of Boppard from 1949 to 1965 wrote weekly “open letters” which were published in the local newspaper. In one of these, he provided an early and especially blatant form of apology – one which would probably have caused a scandal, had it been published a few decades later. The occasion of the letter was the beginning of the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Israel in 1961, an event which aroused much public discussion of Nazi crimes, particularly of the Holocaust, not only in Germany but internationally (Novick 2001; Krause 2002). After expressing his fears that the Eichmann trial would provoke anti-German sentiment throughout the world, Boppard’s mayor wrote as follows:

But we are all innocent of these things. Only a very few people in Germany participated in these atrocities and abominations. Who among us even knew, as the war ended, what had happened in the concentration camps? Who among us even knew the names of the concentration camps, with the exception of the camp in Dachau? But all of that will not help us. The people of the world will cry out once more and will make all Germans responsible for the horrible things that happened under Nazi rule (*Rund um Boppard*, 15<sup>th</sup> of April, 1961).

The question of what and how much the German population knew about Nazi crimes has been controversial, not only among scholars (see Laqueur 1980) but also among parental and successor generations in German society itself (Bude 1998). Clearly, however, the mayor’s statement is such an extreme formulation of the innocence of bystanders and “fellow travellers” as to render it unacceptable by today’s standards, especially in light of recent research showing that the popular influence of Nazi ideology and the general



acceptance of Nazi policies has hitherto been underestimated (Herbert 2002a: 15).

An example of the second type of apology may be found in the text by the archivist on the history of the county, which was already cited in the discussion of avoidance. In the following passage, the author provides a justification for his decision to avoid the topic of National Socialism:

We would also like to remain silent on the years of the Third Reich, because we as a people, as Germans, know that we are culpable and that only time can grant us forgiveness; and because each individual knows that he is without guilt objectively and, therefore, not punishable by law, but that he failed subjectively, because he watched it all happen and went along. Still, there were no big criminals in St. Goar County during those years, just the average party member, whom we all know only too well (Heyen 1966a: 21).

Finally, there is a form of apology which accounts for the passivity of the Bopparders and others in the face of Nazi crimes with reference to the weaknesses that are part and parcel of human nature. In terms of Goffman's definition of apology, one might say that human nature is divided into typical strengths and weaknesses, with only the latter being made responsible for failings, especially for sins of omission. Simultaneously, there seems to be a tendency to separate typical weaknesses from the individual personality and to assimilate them to the generic traits of all human beings. An example may be found in a work of local historiography about Boppard's eleven organised neighbourhood associations, which, however, is also notable for being the first history of these institutions to treat the Nazi era in any detail at all. When, in 1935, the Nazi authorities demanded that Jews be expelled from the neighbourhoods, the neighbourhood assemblies voted to comply, despite the reservations of some members. The author attributes this behaviour to traits shared by "most people", implying, perhaps, that failings of this sort can be detached from the individual personality and reduced to impersonal averages:

Most people are neither heroes nor born resistance fighters. No records were made about those members of the neighborhood who were ashamed of themselves in 1935 for not having been able to do more (Pauly 1990: 65).

### ***Engagement***

In Boppard and vicinity, early examples of engagement with topics such as National Socialism and anti-Semitism emerged from the federal and provincial archives in Coblenz and from the various *Gymnasien*, or college preparatory high schools. A volume published on the occasion of the 150<sup>th</sup>

anniversary of the county, edited by the archivist cited above (Heyen 1966b), includes chapters on the history of the county administration (Böhn 1966) and the Jewish population (Kahlenberg 1966), both of which cover the period from 1933 to 1945, if only briefly. What is more, this same archivist published an annotated collection of documents pertaining to the activities of the NSDAP and the politics of the Nazi era in and around Coblenz, Trier, and Mainz (Heyen 1967). It was not until the early 1980s, however, that pupils in the higher schools of the area, at the urging of teachers who had chosen to participate in nation-wide initiatives promoting critical local history, began researching and writing papers on the subject of “National Socialism in my home town”.<sup>21</sup> Both of these examples illustrate the importance of a new generation of mobile professionals – in this case, archivists and history teachers, trained according to the standards of the postwar republic – in influencing the conventions governing discourse about local history.

Amateur and semi-professional local historians first confronted the topic of National Socialism directly in the 1990s, when three important contributions, which were also written or edited by members of a new generation, appeared in close succession: a series of works on the history of the local Jewish community, a new guide book for tourists and a new history of the town. Furthermore, in a project combining local historical studies with preservationist efforts, an optician opened a memorial, art gallery and cultural centre on the site of the former synagogue in 1994.

The first historian to concentrate on the topic of the Jewish population in Boppard was a young Ph.D. associated with the periodical *Sachor*, which is published in a town near the state capital and devoted to the history of Jewish people in the lands that now make up the federal state of Rhineland-Palatinate. In 1996, he and a colleague published a full-length study of the history of the Jewish community in Boppard, from the medieval to the postwar era, which appeared under the auspices of the regional historical society of Coblenz and vicinity (Burkard and Thrill 1996). Individual sections of this book were published separately in local newspapers and in other publications in the region, beginning in 1992.

The two editions of the guide to Boppard, which appeared in 1978 and 1993, respectively, were both produced by the chairman of the regional historical society, but a comparison of their contents reveals a significant difference in the depiction of the fate of the Jews under National Socialist rule. In the earlier edition, there is a brief and very general reference to the “suffering” of the Jews (Mißling 1978: 27); but the latter edition includes

---

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, Dittmer (1998) on the *Schülerwettbewerb Deutsche Geschichte* (Pupils’ Competition for German History), which was an initiative of the German federal president in 1973. “National Socialism in my home town” was the suggested topic for 1980 and 1981.

more specific statements about the pogrom of 1938 and the arrest of Jewish residents (Mißling 1993: 26). Since the information in the new guide book corresponds point for point with that provided in recent articles about the history of the local Jewish population, it seems clear that the chairman of the regional historical society was influenced by the young historian whom his organisation was sponsoring.

No less significantly, the second volume of the new three-volume history of the town of Boppard, which was also sponsored by the regional historical society and under the general editorship of its chairman, includes well-researched chapters on the town under National Socialist rule (Korn 1994: 197-218) and on the often fatal consequences for the local Jewish population (Burkard 1994: 218-31). There is no doubt that, with the new town history, the chairman and his staff – under the influence of a new generation of archivists in Coblenz and other young activists in the region – were intent upon overcoming the deficits of previous works, including the avoidance or the inappropriate treatment of National Socialism and its anti-Semitic policies at the local level. In light of developments in the wider society, including a general trend toward liberalisation and openness in confronting the past, earlier approaches to the topic of National Socialism were, by the 1990s, no longer acceptable among established local and regional historians, at least in their most important publications.

The final example of the new engagement with the topics of National Socialism and anti-Semitism is located at the intersection between local historical writing and cultural preservation. In 1990, an optician who was born in Boppard but who left to pursue his studies and his career, returned in order to buy the site of the former synagogue. It was the ambition of this returning native son, a Roman Catholic, to create on this site not only an optician's shop but also an art gallery, a cultural centre and a memorial to the local Jewish population. The so-called Opti-Art Gallery in the Old Synagogue was opened in 1994 and expanded in 2000. In order to convey the intentions and personal style of this historically minded optician, I shall quote at length from the Opti-Art website.

The Opti-Art Gallery is described in the website as “a unique combination of art and eyeglasses, the likes of which have never been seen before” ([www.optiker-holz.de](http://www.optiker-holz.de)). Its location in the Old Synagogue is explained as follows:

In 1990, the master optician, R.H., bought the building ... that served as the Jewish place of worship from 1867 until its destruction. Using only his own financial means, he renovated and restored it with reference to old documents ... and with insight, skill and a feeling for the history of the house ... In restoring the synagogue

building, it was important to Mr. H. that its original function be recognisable. While it was not possible to recreate the original appearance in its entirety, visual allusions to the past were, nevertheless, skillfully incorporated. These include the use of glass in the recreation of the characteristic arches of the three main windows, the chiselled keystones with the Star of David, the year of the dedication and of the destruction of the synagogue [carved in stone], and the menorah over the contemporary windows of the gallery. More crudely renovated fragments allude subtly to the earlier destruction [of the synagogue] ([www.optiker-holz.de](http://www.optiker-holz.de)).

The website also includes information on the “Old Synagogue of Boppard”, the “destruction of the synagogue from 10 to 12 November 1938” (an excerpt from Burkard 1994) and the “gallery in the Old Synagogue”. The texts and photographs included in the website are of interest, not only because of their content but because they document the increasing acceptance of this new monument by some sectors of the public, especially by prominent figures such as the mayor, the county executive and the chairman of the regional historical society. On one occasion, for example, the current mayor expressed the opinion that the Old Synagogue should finally be recognised as a cultural monument, since “The Old Synagogue is inseparably linked with the history of Boppard” ([www.optiker-holz.de](http://www.optiker-holz.de)).

### **Text and Context**

There is much evidence to support the conclusion that there has been a progressive trend in local representations of local history, from the 1950s until today, from the avoidance of National Socialism and related topics to open engagement with them. Moreover, our confidence in the reality of this trend can be strengthened with reference to parallel developments throughout Germany. Thus, with reference to the secondary literature on coming to terms with the Nazi past, one can discern a gradual liberalisation of the political attitudes of German citizens over time (Conradt 1989; Herbert 2002b). It is also possible to identify specific events which allow us to divide the years since 1945 into successive periods of increasing engagement with the Nazi past – e.g. war crime trials and their public reception in the 1960s (Krause 2002), political scandals involving former Nazis in the 1970s (Evans 1989), the opening of (urban) local history workshops and the rediscovery of concentration camps and their auxiliaries in the late 1970s and 1980s (Lüdtké 1993) and the memorialisation of former synagogues, beginning especially on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Nazi pogrom in 1988 (Jeggler 1997), to cite only a few prominent examples. Note that with each step of this process, remembrance and commemoration have moved “closer to home”, out of

federal courts and major newspapers and into urban neighbourhoods or local communities where the physical remnants of Nazi crimes can be experienced directly.

Although similar developments are observable in Boppard for roughly the same periods, materials from this field site also give us occasion for questioning oversimplified notions of an inevitable and unambiguous progression from avoidance of the Nazi past to engagement with it. Recent examples of local historical writing include not only the glossy publications of the regional historical society but mimeographed or photo-copied texts produced by those who still cling to older forms of avoidance or dissociation. For example, a pamphlet prepared by the chairman of a prominent civic organisation on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War II contains no allusion to Nazi crimes and quotes uncritically from members of an SS unit who were involved in the last desperate efforts to stop the advance of American troops to the Rhine.<sup>22</sup>

It is, however, not the persistence of avoidance that poses the greatest challenge to the idea that the Germans have made progress in their attempts to come to terms with the past but the ambiguity of the very terms “avoidance” and “engagement”. Not only in German studies but in memory studies generally, it is often assumed that avoidance is an expression of the repression of memories of traumatic experiences and that engagement is a sign of having overcome the neurotic need to repress. In some instances, these assumptions are appropriate, but it is doubtful that they are always appropriate, especially when applied to the changing attitudes of a whole population. Therefore, I shall examine, in conclusion, the categories upon which I have hitherto relied, in order to show that they may mask a wide range of underlying variation. For the purposes of the preceding analysis, the terms “avoidance” and “engagement” are adequate for revealing important aspects of the existing texts, but they are not always adequate for determining the meaning that the texts have for actors in local contexts. Moreover, since avoidance and engagement do not always mean the same thing, it is not always possible to ascribe a consistent moral value to various instances of avoidance or engagement.

Saying that a particular author has, in a particular text, “avoided” the topic of National Socialism might seem to imply that he or she should have “engaged” in this topic but has failed to do so. In fact, the scholars who have devoted most attention to this issue do make this assumption. Writing in the tradition of Adorno, Utz Jeggle (1987) sees the horrors of the National Socialist era as an *Urerfahrung*, or formative experience, for those who lived

---

<sup>22</sup> Bopparder VVV-Heft Nr. 5 (1995): *Kriegsende vor 50 Jahren in Boppard* (compare note 18).

through it (Richarz 1999: 12). For perpetrators, accomplices and bystanders, this experience involved transgression, trauma and guilt, which resulted in psychological disequilibrium and, therefore, requires a psychoanalytic process of “working through” (see also Feldman 2000). Failure to work through trauma and guilt result in repression and denial and bring with them the danger of future outbreaks of repressed contents (Jeggle 1987: 514). Since he assumes that local historical writing should engage with the topic of National Socialism, Jeggle concludes that texts that do not do so are pure obfuscation, lacking in substance entirely. In his assessment, local historical writing concerns itself with “historical trivialities”, it presents a “harmonious” view of the locale, a “history without sharp edges, which causes offense to the least number of people” (Jeggle 1987: 498, 502-3).

Jeggle’s conclusions about local historical writing are, paradoxically, based upon unfamiliarity with the very materials he claims to be examining. Since he had already decided at the beginning of his project to view locally produced texts as indices of the psychological condition of a whole class of persons, or even of a whole national community, he evidently did not find it necessary to reconstruct the local world of variation in social relations, discourses and expressive forms in which National Socialism might have become a topic. There is, in Jeggle’s analysis, no acknowledgment of the variation in local genres of historical writing or of the changing standards governing particular genres over time, as in the case of the new town history of Boppard, which was produced in cooperation with professional historians and conforms closely to academic models. More significantly, however, Jeggle’s criticism is not always applicable even to the most trivial genres of local historical writing, for example, the institutional chronicle. Because of their unabashedly laudatory and affirmative character, such chronicles may seem to be harmonious in tone, but this is an illusion. In fact, chronicles do not tell us that all local institutions are equally good; rather, they tell us that each individual institution is the best of its kind. What we have here is not “a chorus of harmony”, to cite Edmund Leach’s famous phrase, but “a language of argument”, from which, however, the derogation of one’s opponents has been omitted and in which, as a consequence, only self-promotion remains.<sup>23</sup>

Elsewhere, I have argued that local historians often try to strike a harmonious chord but that beneath the sentimental tones one may discover various and contested versions of local history (Eidson 1993, 1995, 2000). Far from being without real substance and merely diversionary, even the earliest forms of local historical writing were motivated by underlying social

---

<sup>23</sup> Leach 1965: 278. It must be added, of course, that while derogation of opponents has been omitted from most local historical writing, it is not absent from local discourse altogether but instead finds expression in oral genres such as gossip.

conflict. In this Catholic town in the Prussian Rhineland, however, the *Urerfahrung*, or formative experience, was not the Holocaust but the *Kulturkampf*, or the “struggle for [liberal] culture”, that is, the attempt of the Prussian state and its liberal constituents of the late nineteenth century to reduce the influence of the Roman Catholic clergy in public life (Lademacher 1976: 604-17). By mobilising symbols in preservationist efforts, in cultural performances and in local historical writing, local Catholics claimed their right to participation and recognition in local public life in the face of the powerful minority of the liberal bourgeoisie (Eidson 1990, 2000). The historical representations that emerged in this connection were affirmative, even celebratory, but this judgment alone tells us very little. It is important to specify what it was, precisely, that they affirmed, namely, the heritage or invented traditions of the suppressed Roman Catholic majority, rather than those of the dominant liberal elite (see Hobsbawm and Ranger 1984; Lowenthal 1998).

Representations emphasising the originality, continuity and subsequent violation of the institutions of local Roman Catholics contributed to their success in asserting their rights in the local public sphere, which – in Boppard, as in much of the Rhineland – were consolidated after World War I. Of course, we might wish that in their struggle for inclusion in local public life, the Roman Catholics had exhibited more concern for the inclusion of local citizens of Jewish heritage as well. The fact remains, however, that avoidance of some topics was at least partially determined by the conscious decision to choose others. Roman Catholics were not merely excluding Jews, they were fighting against the liberals to secure their own inclusion. After World War II, established forms of affirmative history were catalysed anew by variations on old local rivalries, this time between newcomers with academic degrees and natives with vocational training, or between natives who sided with newcomers in the Christian Democratic Party and natives who were aligned instead with the Social Democrats.

It is in this context that some recent texts displaying typical forms of avoidance or dissociation vis-à-vis National Socialism must be understood. The following example is from a *Festschrift*, published in 2001 on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of a men’s vocal group – one of the same ones that provided an example of externalisation in the *Festschrift* for its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. In his introductory salutation, the chairperson expressed his satisfaction that the choral group survived “even in difficult times, such as the period between the two World Wars”. Similarly, in a congratulatory note, a representative of the state government noted that the group had been strong enough to “weather all of the trials and tribulations of these 100 years” (from the *Festschrift* of a men’s choral group, 2001).

Clearly, expressions such as “difficult times” and “trials and tribulations” are inadequate glosses for local experiences during the Third Reich. Still, any evaluation of the texts in question must also take into account the conventional constraints imposed by the genre and the social situation. Not all genres and not all social situations lend themselves equally to making meaningful statements about the Nazi past. Avoiding the topic of National Socialism in brief salutations and congratulatory statements on the occasion of an anniversary celebration, must therefore be assessed in a broader context, which includes the full range of local genres and occasions. As has been shown above, the conventional constraints imposed by genre and social situation have, over the last twenty years, been subject to significant changes, which are probably irreversible. This is especially true of the most important publications by the most prestigious local historians.

If it is not always clear what avoidance of National Socialism as a topic for local history means, then understanding engagement is no less problematic. Clearly, criticism of the tendency to avoid writing about the Nazis, to hold them at a safe distance, to apologise for the behaviour of many Germans, or to explain away unpleasant facts is based on a moral position, which is humanitarian in orientation but which is also characterised by vigilance and discrimination. While there is no reason to doubt the sincerity of those advocating this position, it is also clear that it is difficult to maintain moral vigilance permanently, and it seems evident that discrimination is often subject to routinisation. Thus, at the other extreme, criticism of avoidance and advocacy of engagement can become aspects of “distinction”, in Bourdieu’s (1984) sense, conventional markers of membership in a select group, characterised by specific social origins, educational pathways, or acquired tastes and habits. If this is so, then advocacy of engagement with the Nazi past on the part of contemporary Germans should be assessed with reference to membership in social groups, participation in social fields, access to social capital and power relations in particular social situations.<sup>24</sup> Pursuing this research strategy would probably lead us to conclude that the gradual progress from avoidance to engagement, viewed as a nation-wide process in German public life, has several meanings simultaneously. It could mean, for example, that Germans as a nation are facing up to the responsibility entailed in their shared history, thereby developing a more open, democratic approach to past failings; or it could also mean that more and more Germans are assimilating to attitudes, tastes and gestures that originated among the educated bourgeoisie of the postwar era. It could also mean both things simultaneously, and several other things as well. My criticism is not

---

<sup>24</sup> This is the subject of a manuscript that I am currently preparing under the working title *Thrice Told Tales*.



directed against this mixing of motives – which is probably inevitable – but against those who expect that motives are or should be pure. If, as I have suggested, processes of political liberalisation are linked to processes of cultural embourgeoisement, then understanding this connection is vital for assessing the possibilities and limits of coming to terms with the Nazi past.<sup>25</sup>

I conclude with an example from a visit to the field site in June 2003, during which I witnessed a clash between tendencies to avoid and engage in the topic of National Socialism. The occasion was the 675<sup>th</sup> anniversary of one of eleven local neighbourhood organisations, which I shall call the High Street Neighbourhood. On the first evening of this four-day festival, in a large tent occupied by an estimated 350 people, the chairman of the regional historical society held a speech about the history of the neighbourhood organisation. The speaker was the same person who had been largely responsible for introducing the new era of engagement into local historical writing (see my comments on the guide to the town and the new town history). In his speech, the historical society chairman departed from established conventions of affirmative history by talking about the Nazi era and quoting statements in support of Hitler from the neighbourhood protocol book. How did the audience respond? Most sat quietly and clapped at the end of the speech. Some seemed to be listening attentively, and others seemed to be uninterested or preoccupied with ordering drinks or engaging quietly in private conversation. For most, apparently, addressing the topic of National Socialism in an overview of the history of the neighbourhood organisation in the twentieth century seemed appropriate or routine. Yet one member of the neighbourhood organisation, who was sitting next to me, complained loudly during the speech that the Nazis had nothing to do with the things he and the other neighbours had achieved in the 1970s and 1980s. “Why doesn’t he talk about that”, instead of about the Nazis, he asked me?

I understood this man’s question with reference to my knowledge of local social and political relations. The historical society chairman, who was criticised by the man sitting next to me, had been a younger member of the rather stodgy local historical establishment of the 1980s. Then, in the 1990s, he took a leading role in liberalising local historical studies in conformity

---

<sup>25</sup> By writing of the embourgeoisement and liberalisation of German society, I do not mean to imply that there are no serious differences of opinion among educated Germans with regard to the Nazi past or other aspects of modern history. The *Historikerstreit* or historians’ debate, of 1986 is only the best known example of fundamental disagreements over how to interpret and evaluate the National Socialist era in the context of German history. Still, as Maier (1998) points out, all participants in such debates agree on certain points, such as the criminal nature of the anti-Semitic and genocidal policies of the Nazis. Differences of opinion concern mainly the degree to which the Nazis may be identified with and, thus, allowed to contaminate the idea of the nation.

with the changing standards of professional historians and the changing climate in society at large. At the same time, however, he is implicated in the force field of local political relations in ways making the situation considerably more complex. He is a Rhinelander but not a native of Boppard – hence, a “newcomer” in local parlance – who, as a doctor of philosophy, a school director, a devout Roman Catholic and parish elder, a Christian Democratic politician, and historical society chairman, has played a leading role in the local community and the region. In contrast, the High Street neighbours, who are prototypical “natives” of Boppard, are of relatively humble social origins (artisans, workers and employees) and have among them a disproportionate number of local Social Democrats. The father of the man who complained about the historical society chairman’s speech was a Social Democrat, who, reportedly, was against the Nazis; whereas the chairman stems, presumably, from a family of Centre Party supporters. Today, both Social Democrats and Christian Democrats tend to argue that their forebears, as either socialists or Roman Catholics, were the *real* opponents of the Nazis – though they are often sceptical of each other’s claims. Therefore, regardless of the true motives of the historical society chairman, his speech during the anniversary celebration of the High Street Neighbourhood could be seen as an attempt by a member of the educated elite to make public the Nazi links of a working class or lower middle class group that includes many of his political opponents. This, then, is “engagement” in the year 2003: no doubt better than it was, but thoroughly ambivalent in its social meaning.

### **Between Aporia and Apology**

The historian Dan Diner (1987) has suggested that any attempt to historicise the Holocaust ends either in apology or aporia. The same might be said of attempts to assess coming to terms with the past in postwar Germany. Insofar as it is directed toward comprehending the behaviour of those who have *not* openly engaged with the past, my enterprise might be judged to be apologetic. This is, however, a risk I have had to take, since there is no safe path through these issues. Arguably, taking this risk has been worthwhile, especially if it has yielded analytical tools that can be applied beyond the particular case study in which they were developed. For example, the position of psychoanalytically oriented critics of those who repress the Nazi past could also be interpreted as a kind of dissociation through alterity, based on the distinction between a healthy and an unhealthy self, or between the psychologically sound analyst and the psychologically unsound patient. Similarly, those who advocate engagement with the Nazi past often express their incomprehension of perpetrators and guilty bystanders, which, as I have

shown, might be seen as another way of dissociating oneself from Nazi crimes. Of course, various cases of incomprehension must be judged differently, depending upon whether the person announcing his or her inability to comprehend can be seen as a perpetrator or a victim. Even this distinction becomes muddled with the passage of time, however, since commentators on the Holocaust are made up increasingly of people who did not experience it.

My point is not to criticise critics of those who refuse to remember but to show that stances toward the past such as avoidance, dissociation and engagement cannot be used automatically to categorise persons who articulate narratives or arguments and to judge them on the basis of this categorisation. Reflection on crimes on the scale of the persecution and murder of Jews, Sinti and Roma, socialists, communists, some Christians, homosexuals and other real or ostensible opponents of the Nazi régime is necessarily a moral act. It is also fraught with pitfalls. One of the dangers is that, in our haste to distance ourselves from these crimes, we succumb to the temptation of cutting ties to others, who, regardless of their guilt or innocence, might possibly be perceived as a threat to our own claims to moral superiority. Another danger is that, in attempting to understand a phenomenon, we fail to make our condemnation of it clear enough. An adequate ethnography of coming to terms with the Nazi past must be based on the commitment to brave these dangers.

### Acknowledgements

Research for this paper was supported by the German Academic Exchange Service, the University of Leipzig and the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology. Thanks to Chris Hann, Lale Yalçın-Heckmann and the editors of this volume for comments on various drafts.

### References

- Adorno, T. W. [1959] 1996. *Was bedeutet: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit? Eingriffe: neun kritische Modelle*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Bausinger, H. [1961, 1971] 1990. *Folk Culture in a World of Technology*. (Elke Dettmer, translator). Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press.
- Berghoff, H. 1998. Zwischen Verdrängung und Aufarbeitung. *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 49 (2): 96-114.
- Blaschke, O. 1999. *Katholizismus und Antisemitismus im Deutschen Kaiserreich*. 2nd ed. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

- Böhn, G. F. 1966. Verwaltungsgeschichte des Landeskreises 1816-1945. In F. J. Heyen (ed.), *Zwischen Rhein und Mosel: Der Kreis Sankt Goar*, pp. 123-177. Boppard: Harold Boldt.
- Borneman, J. 1992. *Belonging in the Two Berlins: Kin, State, Nation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. [1979] 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. (Richard Nice, translator). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bude, H. 1998. Die Erinnerung der Generationen. In H. König, M. Kohlstruck, and A. Wolf (eds.), *Vergangenheitsbewältigung am Ende des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts*, pp. 69-85. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag.
- Bunzl, M. 1995. On the Politics and Semantics of Austrian Memory: Vienna's Monument against War and Fascism. *History and Memory* 7 (2): 7-40.
- Burkard, K.-J. 1994. Die nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung. In B. Korn, *Boppard: Geschichte einer Stadt am Mittelrhein. Vol. II. Von der Französischen Revolution bis zum Ende des Zweiten Weltkrieges (1789-1945)*, pp. 218-231. Boppard: Dausner Verlag.
- , and H.-H. Thill. 1996. *Unter den Juden: Achthundert Jahre Juden in Boppard*. Boppard: Dausner.
- Collingwood, R. G. [1946] 1956. *The Idea of History*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Conradt, D. P. [1980] 1989. Changing German Political Culture. In G. A. Almond, and S. Verba (eds.), *The Civic Culture Revisited*. 2nd ed., pp. 212-272. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.
- Diner, D. 1987. Zwischen Aporie und Apologie? In D. Diner (ed.), *Ist der Nationalsozialismus Geschichte? Zu Historisierung und Historikerstreit*, pp. 62-73. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag.
- Dittmer, L. (ed.). 1998. *Spuren suchen – Spezial: 25 Jahre Schülerwettbewerb Deutsche Geschichte um den Preis des Bundespräsidenten, 1973-1998*. Hamburg: Körber-Stiftung.
- Eidson, J. R. 1990. German Club Life as a Local Cultural System. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 32 (2): 357-382.
- . 1993. German Local History as Metaphor and Sanction. *Anthropological Quarterly* 66 (3): 134-148.
- . 1994. The Ethnographic Study of Club Life in a Rhenish Community – a Methodological Retrospective. *Kulturosoziologie* 3 (4): 31-46.
- . 1995. Die Heimatforschung als lokale Identitätspolitik. *Kulturosoziologie* 4 (2): 27-63.

- . 2000. Which Past for Whom? Local Memory in a German Community during the Era of Nation Building. *Ethos* 28 (4): 575-607.
- Evans, R. J. 1989. *In Hitler's Shadow: West German Historians and the Attempt to Escape from the Nazi Past*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Faubion, J. D. 1996. Kinship is Dead, Long Live Kinship! *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 38: 67-91
- Feldman, R. 2000. Encountering the Trauma of the Holocaust: Dialogue and Its Discontents in the Broszat-Friedlander Exchanges of Letters. *Ethos* 28 (4): 551-574.
- Frei, N. 1996. *Vergangenheitspolitik: Die Anfänge der Bundesrepublik und die NS-Vergangenheit*. München: Beck.
- Goffman, E. 1971. *Relations in Public*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Harth, D. 1996. Geschichtsschreibung. In G. Ueding (ed.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik*, vol. 3, pp. 832-870. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.
- Hartman, G. H. (ed.). 1986. *Bitburg in Moral and Political Perspective*. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press.
- Hastings, D. 2003. How "Catholic" Was the Early Nazi Movement? Religion, Race, and Culture in Munich, 1919-1924. *Central European History* 36 (3): 383-433.
- Herbert, U. 2002a. Liberalisierung als Lernprozeß: Die Bundesrepublik in der deutschen Geschichte – eine Skizze. In U. Herbert (ed.), *Wandlungsprozesse in Westdeutschland: Belastung, Integration, Liberalisierung 1945-1980*, pp. 7-49. Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag.
- . (ed.). 2002b. *Wandlungsprozesse in Westdeutschland: Belastung, Integration, Liberalisierung 1945-1980*. Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag.
- Heyen, F. J. 1966a. *Die Geschichte des Kreises St. Goar als Aufgabe der Gegenwart*. Boppard: Keil's Buchhandlung.
- . 1967. *Nationalsozialismus im Alltag: Quellen zur Geschichte des Nationalsozialismus vornehmlich im Raum Mainz-Koblenz-Trier*. Boppard: Harald Boldt.
- . (ed.). 1966b. *Zwischen Rhein und Mosel: Der Kreis Sankt Goar*. Boppard: Harald Boldt.
- Hobsbawm, E., and T. Ranger (eds.). 1984. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jacobmeyer, W. (ed.). 1986. *Deutschlandbild und Deutsche Frage*. Braunschweig: Georg-Eckert-Institut für internationale Schulbuchforschung.

- Jeggle, U. 1970. Wertebedingungen der Volkskunde. In K. Geiger, U. Jeggle, and G. Korff (eds.), *Abschied vom Volksleben*, pp. 11-36. Tübingen: Tübinger Vereinigung für Volkskunde e.V.
- . 1987. Heimatkunde und Nationalsozialismus. In R. Erb, and M. Schmidt (eds.), *Antisemitismus und jüdische Geschichte: Studien zu Ehren von Herbert A. Strauss*, pp. 495-514. Berlin: Wissenschaftlicher Autorenverlag.
- . 1997. Phasen der Erinnerungsarbeit: Zur Entstehung des Gedächtnisses über die NS-Zeit. *Geschichtswerkstatt* 29: 70-82.
- Kaes, A. 1987. *Deutschlandbilder: Die Wiederkehr der Geschichte als Film*. München: edition text + kritik.
- Kahlenberg, F. P. 1966. Jüdische Gemeinden am Mittelrhein. In F.-J. Heyen, (ed.), *Zwischen Rhein und Mosel: Der Kreis Sankt Goar*, pp. 359-372. Boppard: Harald Boldt.
- Klueting, H. 1991. Rückwärtigkeit des Örtlichen – Individualisierung des Allgemeinen: Heimatgeschichtsschreibung (Historische Heimatkunde) als unprofessionelle Lokalgeschichtsschreibung neben der professionellen Geschichtswissenschaft. In E. Klueting (ed.), *Antimodernismus und Reform: Zur Geschichte der deutschen Heimatbewegung*, pp. 50-89. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.
- Korn, B. 1994. *Boppard: Geschichte einer Stadt am Mittelrhein. Vol. II. Von der Französischen Revolution bis zum Ende des Zweiten Weltkrieges (1789-1945)*. Boppard: Dausner Verlag.
- Koshar, R. 1998. *Germany's Transient Pasts: Preservation and National Memory in the Twentieth Century*. Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press.
- Krause, P. 2002. *Der Eichmann-Prozess in der deutschen Presse*. Frankfurt am Main: Campus.
- Lademacher, H. 1976. Die nördlichen Rheinlande von der Rheinprovinz bis zur Bildung des Landschaftsverbandes Rheinland (1815-1953). In F. Petri, and G. Droege (eds.), *Rheinische Geschichte*, vol. II, pp. 475-866. Düsseldorf: Schwann.
- Laqueur, W. 1980. *The Terrible Secret: Suppression of the Truth about Hitler's "Final Solution"*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
- Leach, E. R. [1954] 1964. *Political Systems of Highland Burma*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Lewy, G. 1964. *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Linke, U. 1999. *German Bodies: Race and Representation after Hitler*. New York: Routledge.

- Lowenthal, D. 1998. *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lüdtke, A. 1993. "Coming to Terms with the Past": Illusions of Remembering, Ways of Forgetting Nazism in West Germany. *Journal of Modern History* 65: 542-572.
- Maier, C. 1997. *The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust, and German National Identity*. 2nd ed. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Mißling, H. E. (ed.). 1978. *Boppard. Ein Stadtführer*. Boppard: Keil's Buchhandlung.
- . 1993. *Boppard: Ein Führer durch die Stadt*. Boppard: Dausner Verlag.
- . (ed.). 1994, 1997, 2001. *Boppard: Geschichte einer Stadt am Mittelrhein*. Three volumes. Boppard: Dausner Verlag.
- Mitscherlich, A., and M. Mitscherlich. [1967] 1991. *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern: Grundlagen kollektiven Verhaltens*. München: Piper.
- Niethammer, L. 1985. Fragen – Antworten – Fragen: Methodische Erfahrungen und Erwägungen zur Oral History. In L. Niethammer, and A. von Plato (eds.), „Wir kriegen jetzt andere Zeiten“: *Auf der Suche nach der Erfahrung des Volkes in nachfaschistischen Ländern*, pp. 392-445. Berlin: Dietz.
- Novick, P. [1999] 2001. *The Holocaust and Collective Memory: The American Experience*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Pabst, K. 1986. Historische Vereine und Kommissionen in Deutschland bis 1914. In F. Seibt (ed.), *Vereinswesen und Geschichtspflege in den böhmischen Ländern*, pp. 13-38. München: R. Oldenbourg.
- Pauly, F. 1987. *Boppard – St. Severus: Beiträge zur Geschichte der Pfarrei*. Boppard: Rheindruck.
- . 1990. *Die Nachbarschaften. Beiträge zur Geschichte der Stadt Boppard*, Vol. 2. Boppard: Rheindruck.
- Reichel, P. 1999. *Politik mit der Erinnerung: Gedächtnisorte im Streit um die nationalsozialistische Vergangenheit*. 2nd ed. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuchverlag.
- . 2001. *Vergangenheitsbewältigung in Deutschland: Die Auseinandersetzung mit der NS-Diktatur von 1945 bis heute*. München: C. H. Beck.
- Richarz, M. 1999. Die Nachtseite der Heimat: Vorwort zur Neuauflage. In U. Jeggle, *Judendörfer in Württemberg*. 2nd ed., pp. 11-15. Tübingen: Tübinger Vereinigung für Volkskunde e.V.
- Sangren, P. S. 1995. "Power" against Ideology: A Critique of Foucaultian Usage. *Cultural Anthropology* 10 (1): 3-40.

- Schneider, U. 1995. *Politische Festkultur im 19. Jahrhundert: Die Rheinprovinz von der französischen Zeit bis zum Ende des Ersten Weltkrieges (1806-1918)*. Essen: Klartext-Verlag.
- Schüller, A. 1925. Das geschichtliche Werden des Kreises St. Goar. In P. J. Kreuzberg (ed.), *Der Kreis St. Goar: Ein Heimatbuch*, pp. 13-41. Boppard: Alfred Zimmermann.
- Stollenwerk, A. (ed.). 1977. *Boppard am Rhein: Ein Heimatbuch*. Boppard: Stadtverwaltung.
- Ten Dyke, E. A. 2001. *Dresden: Paradoxes of Memory in History*. London: Routledge.
- Thul, E. J. 1970. Das Landgericht Koblenz im nationalsozialistischen Unrechtsstaat. In Landgericht Koblenz und die Landeskundliche Arbeitsgemeinschaft im Regierungsbezirk Koblenz e.V. (ed.), *150 Jahre Landgericht Koblenz*, pp. 63-134. Boppard: Harald Boldt.
- Tuchel, J. 1994. Maria Terwiel und Helmut Himpel: Christen in der Roten Kapelle. In H. Coppi, J. Danyel, and J. Tuchel (eds.), *Die Rote Kapelle im Widerstand gegen den Nationalsozialismus*, pp. 213-225. Berlin: Edition Hentrich.





## ***Chapter 4***

### **The Power of Genre:**

### **Local History-Writing in Communist Czechoslovakia**

Haldis Haukanes

#### **Introduction**

The relation between official historical accounts and local versions of past events is an intriguing one. Very often discrepancies are found between the two levels: between “textbook” and experts’ accounts and accounts recollected by non-professionals through writings or orally transmitted memories. Among anthropologists of history and memory there has been a tendency to analyse such discrepancies within the framework of “resistance”, i.e. to search for opposition against power-holders, and “hidden transcripts” of various kinds in the local narratives (Humphrey 1994). “Resistance” may not always provide a fruitful approach, however. Studying history as it is written and told by persons situated far away from the centre where official history is being moulded, may – whether to our liking or not – just as often reveal how official versions of history are penetrating the local ones. This is particularly the case when studying processes over an extended period of time. While moments of historical breaks often are moments of real and open confrontation between new and old versions of history, of private and official accounts, a long term perspective may reveal how private narratives change in the course of time and accommodate to official versions of the past.

This paper deals with such long-term processes of interaction between local and state versions of history, as I have found them in village history-writings in two areas in the Czech Republic (formerly Czechoslovakia). The time span covered is the period from 1948 – the communist takeover – until the late 1970s. I have studied chronicles from four different villages, one from Strakonice district in South Bohemia, and three from the Břeclav region in South Moravia. Here I will focus in particular on the works of one local historian from the village of Šitbořice in South Moravia and his changing interpretations of national and local historical events over time.

Studying the relation between national and local versions of history raises the question of power – the national authorities’ attempts at and means of impregnating society with certain versions of the past while silencing others. State power as such may at one end of the continuum imply naked force, implemented through various institutions of the state apparatus. At the other end of the continuum state power means domination by consensus, or legitimacy in the Weberian sense (Weber 1971; Nagengast 1991: 21n). The struggle for consensus and/or hegemony implies the use of symbolic-ideological strategies of domination; in Katherine Verdery’s terms defined as “value-laden exhortations, as well as attempts to saturate consciousness with certain symbols and ideological premises to which subsequent exhortation may be addressed” (1991: 428).

The communist regimes of eastern and east central Europe of course relied heavily on coercive strategies of dominance (involving the much feared State security police) for the compliance of their citizens, but symbolic-ideological strategies of domination were equally important. As Verdery has pointed out:

For a party bent on transforming consciousness, control over language is vital ... Through discourse, rather than through practice, they [the rulers] may hope to constitute consciousness, social objects, social life itself (1991: 430).

In this process the control of history became of key importance as the ideological legitimation of the socialist regimes was grounded on a specific historical development in the relations of production, leading to socialism. Or, as Rubie Watson has noted:

Under state socialism, Marxism-Leninism was not one ideology or political economy among many, but rather was the inevitable and glorious outcome of a discernible historical process (1994: 1).

The historical metanarratives were therefore carefully constructed in order to make empirical realities fit the law-bound march towards communism, and the control with history-writing was strict. But how strict? To what extent were the communist rulers successful in controlling history written by lay people? Did they try and if so, what were their means of control? In this chapter I will argue that the eventual achievement of control and dominance in some fields of local history-writing – or should we say the gradual adjustment to the socialist framework of interpretation made by local historians – is to be found not only in the regime’s enforced interpretations of particular events. It should also be sought in the establishment of certain genres of history-writing – genre in the sense of an organising model for communication differing from other models in style, composition and thematic focus (Heggli 2002: 62n). In this context two important and related questions are

necessary to keep in mind when examining the local texts: to what extent is the authors' personality and individuality reflected in various kinds of manuscripts, and which are the ideal models of writing to which they adhere?

As argued by Mikhail Bakhtin, different (speech) genres allow for different levels of individuality to be expressed (Bakhtin 1998[1979]). On the other hand, an author's text is not produced in a vacuum. It clearly stands in – again in the words of Bakhtin – a dialogical relation with other texts, incorporating elements from different kinds of genres. As will be demonstrated below, some genres are more “open” than others to let the voices of the authors come through. The author's adherence to or choice of genre/s also influences what can be expressed and what has to remain tacit. Moreover, the genres themselves are not constant; they change over time in terms of both style, composition and thematic focus.

### **Chronicles and Chroniclers**

The material on which I base the main part of my examination are village chronicles, written by lay people, i.e. people without any particular education in the field of history. In 1920 a law was issued in Czechoslovakia called the “Law on municipal chronicles”, which obliged all municipalities, both towns and villages, to appoint their own chronicler who was to write down the most important events in the municipality each year. This does not mean that there had been no chronicles in Czech villages before that date (for example church chronicles and school chronicles), but from then on the writing down of events and happenings in the village was made compulsory and regulated by law.

I know little about the reasons that this law appeared, but I assume it to be part of the nation building effort of the leaders of the new Czechoslovak state – to document life in the new state even from the very smallest village's point of view. Although varying in detail and accuracy the chronicles are very rich sources, giving an impression of the writer, of village life itself, and of the villages' relations with the larger society. All the municipal chronicles that I have seen (from now on termed ‘village chronicles’), are carefully written documents. Sometimes, if the writer has had the necessary artistic skills, they are illustrated with drawings.

The first instructions for chronicle-writing are short and not very detailed and leave the author considerable freedom in his or her work. In a decree of 1932<sup>1</sup> it is mentioned that the chronicler shall make mention of

---

<sup>1</sup> “Directions for the writing of commemorative books” (*Návod k vedení pamětních knih*, Kazimour 1932).

local happenings in the fields of economy, culture, religion and public health. It is also mentioned that national or regional happenings shall only be mentioned to the extent that they have an effect on local life. This directive seems to have been interpreted rather freely by the local chroniclers. All the chronicles I have seen have noted major national events (for example, the death of President Masaryk in 1937, the inauguration of the new regime in 1948, the devaluation in 1953 etc.); such information was often included in an introductory note to the year in question. Generally, but not always, the paragraph on such events would include a point on local consequences of the event and/or the villagers' opinions on what happened. The decree of 1932 did not make any requirements for a person's eligibility for becoming a chronicler. It is only stated that "everyone who has understanding for and inclination to the work of chronicles" can be a chronicler. Some education was nevertheless presupposed, and teachers were suggested as particularly suited for the task.

### **New Rulers – New Rules**

The imposition of communist rule in 1948 did not break the tradition of *kronikářství* – chronicle-writing – in Czech villages, nor did the communist regime, to my knowledge, change the law of 1920. However, new directives were issued in 1956. These new directives were not completely different from the preceding ones, although some new points had been added. Among the additions were the requirements that the chronicler should be politically credible and mature, that state secrets should not be revealed in the chronicles, and that the chronicler should be guided by higher authorities<sup>2</sup>. In addition, a new measure of control was introduced, as the chronicles from then on were to be approved by the local municipal board, which in turn would present them to the regional authorities. The chroniclers now had a new audience for their writings. In pre-communist times they probably wrote first and foremost for other villagers<sup>3</sup>, but with communist rule the chroniclers also had to have the controlling authorities in mind when formulating their rendering of local and national events.

In 1959 a handbook for chroniclers, *Píšeme kroniku* ("We write chronicles"), was published, written by the head of the Prague Institute for Ethnography and Folklore, Antonín Robek, and his colleague Václav Pubal

---

<sup>2</sup> In my material – both from pre- and postwar Czechoslovakia – the majority of chroniclers are/were teachers at the local village school; a few others were full- or part-time librarians, and two or three "ordinary" people with a particular interest in local history.

<sup>3</sup> I am not fully informed about the use of chronicles in villages, but I know that in some, at certain festive occasions, they were exhibited for people to have a look at them.

(Pubal and Robek 1963). The book gives detailed instructions regarding the correct way of writing chronicles, both in general (methods, organisation of material, etc.) and for specific types of chronicles (for villages, towns and enterprises). In the introduction to the book it is made clear that writing chronicles in the new order of socialism is something very different from what it had been during the First Republic; a chronicle writer was no longer simply a person writing down his own thoughts, but should become “an interpreter of the collective feelings of his fellow-citizens in the new socialist environment” (ibid.: 5). More indirectly, the book provides a framework laying out how and through which concepts to interpret Czechoslovak history, presenting official versions of phenomena such as the collectivisation of agriculture and the role of the Communist Party in village society. The new chroniclers were even explicitly encouraged to go through old chronicles and correct them. In particular they were to pay attention to what had been written about the first years after the Second World War (including 1948), when “the chronicle-writer might not have had the right opinions” (Pubal and Robek 1963: 35, my translation).

The communist authorities made an effort from the 1950s on to control the writings of the chroniclers, both in terms of selecting the right person to perform the task and in terms of controlling the vocabulary used. But were they successful? To what extent was uniformity achieved, in accordance with “the Party line”? How “loyal” were the writers to the regime’s vocabulary and to their accounts of events? How much room was there for personal interpretations and opinions? The chronicles were written at the end of each year, often before “official truths” about what had happened were established. What happened when official opinion on a matter changed? In my examination of the chronicles I will focus on two important events in Czech history: The socialisation of agriculture in the 1950s and the invasion by Warsaw Pact troops in 1968.

### **Socialisation in the 1950s – Victory and Class Struggle or Coup and Painful Losses?**

If 1948 was the year the communists managed to push all their opponents out of politics, the 1950s saw the full implementation of socialist policy. While the pre-1948 Gottwald government had tried to pursue a Czech road to socialism, the post-1948 one soon gave in to Soviet pressure and started to implement the Stalinist model of political organisation, and social and economic transformation (Myant 1981: 137; Wolchik 1991: 22). Within the three first years of communist rule an expropriation programme was brutally implemented, and hit not only big capitalists, but also petty business, the

church and village landowners. The collectivisation of agriculture started with the Land Act of 1949. Land and property were confiscated, first from the church, and later from rich farmers. In addition, major pressure was applied to make smaller farmers give up their land voluntarily. From the beginning of the 1950s until the major wave of collectivisation in 1957, all peasants, large and small, were forced to deliver large portions of their crops for redistribution to towns and cities. Wealthier peasants who resisted collectivisation were given extra large quotas to deliver. When they failed to meet the quotas, they were condemned for not fulfilling their duties, which often resulted in the confiscation of all their land and in some cases also their relocation to another part of the country.

Common communist phraseology represented the fight to get rid of private farming, and particularly of the wealthier farmers, as a class struggle between rich capitalists and hard-working small-holders. Efforts to convince people to join cooperative farms were often described as “a struggle with people’s thought to achieve the socialist rebuilding of the village” (*socialistická přestavba vesnice*). And finally, the relation between large and small farmers was seen as one of exploitation (*vykořisťování*) (Janda, Kotrba and Moravec 1963; Pubal and Robek 1963: 9).

When examining “my” local chronicles, I find that the authors differ considerably with respect to how they refer both to the national events installing communism and to the local collectivisation of agriculture. None of the persons writing seem themselves to have been directly *in opposition* to what happened on the national level. Of the four chroniclers at least one was a Party member already in 1948. Two others were directly involved in the founding of the cooperative in their respective villages in 1957, one as a member of the board of the cooperative and the other as a member of the revision committee.<sup>4</sup>

The four villages involved in my study are Lipina<sup>5</sup> (situated in Strakonice district of South Bohemia) and Boleradice, Nicolčice and Šitbořice (neighbouring villages, situated in Břeclav district in South Moravia). The Lipina chronicler is the one who writes the least detailed reports of the collectivisation. The person writing in this period was Jaroslav Vanečka, headmaster of the local school. He mentioned the 5-year plan of 1949, of which collectivisation was an element, as “one that will have consequences also in the countryside” and it was added that “the farmers show little understanding of the socialist questions”. In 1949 mention was also made of the

---

<sup>4</sup> This does not necessarily imply that they were in favour of it from the beginning. In the context of what happened during the 1950s it was indeed very difficult to resist cooperating with the cooperatives.

<sup>5</sup> Lipina is a pseudonym, as are the names of the chroniclers writing from this village.

fact that the properties of the church had been parcelled out, and that the large estate in the neighbouring village had been subdivided. For the years between 1949 and 1957 nothing in particular was written about collectivisation. In 1957, when the local cooperative was founded, the chronicler commented: “Ever more farmers are convinced about the advantages of cooperative farming”.

In Boleradice, the chronicle was written by Karel Kučera from 1945 until the 1970s. Kučera was a smaller farmer (*rolník*, owning 5 hectares of land), and did not to my knowledge have any particular official functions in the village until 1953, when he was elected a member of the agricultural committee of the municipal council. He does, however, seem sympathetic to both the February events in 1948 (i.e. the instalment of communist rule) and what followed. Kučera introduced the year 1948 by characterising it as a year of jubilees, pointing out that it was 30 years since the founding of the republic and 100 years since manorial labour (*roboty*) was abolished in the Czech countryside. The national events, “political February happenings”, were described in four pages, in which Kučera writes both about the change in government and about various local actions. As for the collectivisation of agriculture, it was described in “neutral” terms, i.e. without employing a terminology of pain and loss, and without discussing local conflicts or protests. The compulsory delivery of various agricultural products was described in detail for each year, and the names of those who did not fulfil their duties were mentioned, but no commentary was made about how people felt about having to give up large portions of their crops. Under the subtitle “The socialisation of our village” (“*Socializace naší vesnice*”), Kučera described the agitation campaigns to enter the cooperative and how these were unsuccessful at first, but said little about the content of the local objections to the cooperative. When the campaigns were intensified in the 1950s, Kučera wrote:

Workers and members of the intelligentsia in the months of August and September visited our privately run farms and patiently, in pairs, always in the evening hours, convinced the farmers, explaining to them the rise in the living standard of our people, as it is in the programme of our government.

The only place in Kučera’s presentation where there was any trace of resistance towards the policy was in the very last sentences of his paragraph on the socialisation of villages:

The entry to JZD [the cooperative farm] was not so easy for our farmers; it took a lot of conversations and pondering, and in the end they had to move to the decisive step ... with this decision the people of Boleradice joined the big family of cooperative farmers.



The chronicler of Nikolčice for the whole period from 1945 to 1970 was Rudolf Kolínský, the headmaster of the local school. He was an immigrant to the village and an active member of the Communist Party until 1969. Unlike Kučera, Kolínský did not describe the “February events” in detail; the years 1948-52 were treated together in one chapter. He allowed space, however, for people’s reactions to the events:

If I am to use the correct words I have to say that people were intimidated, and the greatest fear ... they expressed was about the church and religion.

He then went on to write about the founding of the Communist Party in Nikolčice, and described how badly it functioned as an organisation. “People are not interested in political work, they are more interested in religion and in the Voice of America”, he wrote, assuming that the work of the few Party functionaries would not show positive results in Nikolčice for a long time. As for collectivisation, he wrote about a meeting which took place in the early 1950s, where the first attempt to establish a local cooperative was made. Regional Party functionaries were present, but the locals made a lot of noise, “the negotiations did not have anything in common with comradeship”, Kolínský ironically commented. In 1953, when writing about the compulsory delivery of agricultural products, he used the following words: “All the craziness and fuss in the village connected to the question of delivery, food coupons etc. does not have anything in common with a class struggle”, at which he went on to describe the fight to get the village rich to deliver their quotas. In 1956 he referred to a meeting in the local municipal council where nobody seemed to believe that it would be possible to found a local cooperative. “The only positive thing was that one started to talk about cooperatives at all”. He then went on to describe the confiscation of the belongings of a large-scale farmer, Jan Matýšek, who refused to enter the cooperative and lost all his land. “But he was by no means harmed”, Kolínský wrote, “together with his wife he received a good pension, and his sons got a job at [Trkmanec] state farm” (the farm to which the whole family were sent).

The Šitbořice chronicler, František Zelinka, was the only chronicler to write in a manner which makes it possible to understand the pain many people must have felt about the implementation of socialist policy in the countryside. For example, in 1953 he wrote:

In these times there is great misery (*bída*) among people. Bread, flour and meat can be bought freely (not using food coupons). For meat there are long queues; they sell it from 6 o’clock in the morning, but people go there to wait from 3 o’clock. Several farmers are confined to prison for not meeting the deliveries of eggs and other

things. We don't even know who. They go away and you don't see them for a couple of days. Afterwards when you talk to them they boast that they have been on holiday ("*na rekreaci*"), as they jokingly call this confinement.

In 1953 he wrote about 130 families that neither received food coupons, nor were allowed to slaughter a pig. "People are threatened that if they don't fulfil their delivery of milk, their cows will be taken away from them", he wrote, and went on to mention a car that drove around the village, announcing for everybody to hear the names of those who were "good citizens" fulfilling their duties, and those who were not. "People are very negative to all the happenings in culture as well as in politics in the community", he wrote. "When an official meeting, a lecture or a party is held, only a few people take part".

In 1957, a cooperative, based on an already existing smaller cooperative, was founded in Šitbořice and all but 5 farmers joined. Zelinka described the means by which it became a reality as follows: "On every person a different method is used, but the result is the same: entry into the cooperative". He continued: "Some people are happy that in Germany Adenauer's party wins, so that something will happen here too. Others say that there will be hunger and poor crops, and later revolution or war. Naive persons think that there will be a world war only to prevent a cooperative from being established in Šitbořice". Zelinka went on to describe how Party officials came to convince people of the advantages of cooperative farming – every evening 45-60 people who had been bussed in from the nearest town walked from house to house agitating the cause of collectivisation.

People try to defend themselves with arguments, others hide so as not to meet the agitators; some swear, others, mainly women, cry but in the end everyone joins.

These four chronicles provide us with very different pictures of the events of socialisation of the countryside. There is no reason to believe that this difference in the rendering of the events is due to major differences among the respective villages with regard to the course of events themselves. Collectivisation was implemented employing the same means all over the country: through agitation, compulsory deliveries and even imprisonment more and more pressure was put on private farmers, until the final blow was delivered 1957/58. From other sources I know that there were conflicts, fights and resistance to cooperatives in all four villages. But the degree to which this is reflected in the chronicles does indeed vary a lot. In the first two, the ones from Lipina and Boleradice, one has to read very carefully between the lines to see the fights, fears and conflicts; they are almost invisible. The third chronicler, Mr. Kolínský from Nikolčice, is much more open about the

problems the socialisation caused, and described the resistance in the countryside. On the other hand, he appears to be the one who was most directly supportive of the regime; what he saw in Nikolčice was an example of the right ideology but wrong practice. The difference in the rendering of events thus seems to relate to the individual chronicler's attitudes towards what was happening. Both Kučera from Boleradice and Kolínský from Nikolčice seem to be supporting the new regime and its politics while the Šitbořice chronicler, František Zelinka, seems to be far less sympathetic to the regime than the others. He seems instead to write in the voice of the abused farmers who had to give up their land to the cooperatives. What the other three shares with Zelinka is a resistance to fully employing the vocabulary of the regime. Although some references to the official definitions are found (for example, when Kučera writes about "socialisation of our village"), typical expressions such as "class conflict", "exploitation" and "comrade" are found only a few times, and the rhetoric about the victory of working people over the bourgeoisie and capitalism is barely present at all.

Here we see a situation where plurality is still possible in presentations; total control has not been achieved with regards to ways of rendering and phrasing what happens. At this point of time chronicles as a *genre* – a model for history-writing – is in itself rather open; the chronicles do not appear to be uniform, neither in what they include of local events, nor in their presentations of them. So far, the genre thus allows for the individuality of the chronicler to be expressed and for the demonstration of personal opinions and evaluations, be they pro- or contra-regime.

### **1968 – Invasion or Help from Friends?**

The Prague Spring and the August events of 1968 were extremely dramatic for Czech society, and not surprisingly, all the chroniclers made mention of what happened. Two of them, the ones from Lipina and Boleradice, discussed the events quite briefly and in neutral terms. Mr Kolínský from Nikolčice described the events more thoroughly but seemed rather sceptical about what was happening; among other things, he described pro-Dubcek demonstrations as "having the character of being anti-socialist" rather than supporting the regime. Nevertheless it seems likely that he was on the side of the reformers, politically, for in 1969 he was thrown out of the Party and he left the village in disappointment and anger. Before leaving, he wrote a kind of testimony in the chronicle, giving his own life-history and explaining how he now felt deserted by his former friends, who seemed to hate him. He noted, rather ironically, that expulsion from the Party was the "pay" he received for his long-time engagement as a school-master and in various public posts. Mr Kolínský's testimony was not torn from or even crossed out

of the chronicle by the local or regional authorities, but was commented upon and corrected by the former, who informed future readers of the chronicle that the act of writing a personal testimony in a municipal chronicle was very improper, and that the reason that Kolínský lost his Party membership was not “pay”, but the fact that he did not take a strong stand and support the right political side in the “August crisis”.

The Šitbořice chronicler, František Zelinka, was the only one who overtly expressed joy over the “Prague spring” and the installation of Dubcek as General Secretary of the Party. He also described the happiness of the village people: “All are struck by a feeling of freedom and relief, and one can feel that people are more frank with each other, and that they help each other more”. As for the August occupation, he condemned it in hard words, calling the invaders enemies and reporting that people now began to hate the Soviet Union.

A year later, in 1969, Zelinka told a new and somewhat changed version of the story, under the heading “Political events towards the end of 1969”. There he wrote that opinions on what had happened had changed.

As conditions are settling in the government and in the Party, the opinions of the people change too ..., and in the end, they wonder how they could have let themselves get so confused. They no longer regard the entry of the united army as an occupation, but as a necessity to secure the Republic against counter-revolution.

In this version Zelinka adhered to the official view of the events. But his adoption of the post-1968 regime’s version was not enough to convince the archival authorities of his right-mindedness as a chronicler, nor did they dare to leave his writings without comments. In 1971 Zelinka was forced to correct his own (first) version of the events of 1968 in the following manner: in all cases where he had written the word “*okupace*” he had to substitute the word “*obsazení*”.<sup>6</sup> At the bottom of the page where he had described the invasion, he added the following comment: “our people became victims of propaganda from the mass-media, and did not understand the occupation (*obsazení*) of Czechoslovakia correctly. ... The people are now ashamed that they believed in it”.

Reading about 1968 in Zelinka’s and Kolinsky’s chronicles leaves one with a very different impression from that evoked by the accounts from the 1950s. The will of the state is now visible in a very concrete way, as the controlling authorities have added to and commented upon the original texts. In the 1950s the presence of the authorities was only there in the form of a stamp saying that the chronicle has been controlled. In the years following

---

<sup>6</sup> *Obsazení* can also be translated as occupation, but as a concept it has more general and somewhat milder connotations; it can refer to any kind of occupation, not only military.

August 1968, after the reformists had lost their struggle, it really became important for the winning part to control and shape the accounts of what had happened that year, to the extent that they bothered to examine and correct village chronicles.

My material from the 1970s and 1980s is much more limited, but what I have seen bears witness to a larger degree of the standardisation of chronicles than was the case in the earlier writings. The chroniclers write systematically about the local events as they have been instructed to do, and do not evaluate national events or record divergent opinions and local protests. From the side of the state, more energy is put into the education of chroniclers through arranging courses at regional archives, competitions between chroniclers etc. Nineteen sixty eight seems to mark a turning point in the control of chronicles, after which the “correct version” of history, both in content and in words, was forced on those who did not write in accordance with the regime’s interpretations of the events.

As a genre, a model for rendering local historical events, the chronicles through this process seem to become less open and more rule-defined; there is less space for individual variety and few opportunities to express personal opinions of any kind.

### **Private Writing in a Public Genre**

The lessons learned by the local actors involved in this process may have been painful, at least for people like Mr. Zelinka. According to his son, whom I met several times during fieldwork in Šitbořice, he had felt both humiliated and discouraged by the corrections he had to make to his own writing, and he never forgot about it. The office of chronicler was not taken away from him, however, and he continued the yearly reports from Šitbořice, although in a much less elaborate way than before. In 1979 he started writing his private chronicle, “The past and present of the municipality” (*Minulost i přítomnost obce*). This book covers the ancient history of the village and the First and Second World Wars, and includes a long chapter on both the agricultural cooperative and the Communist Party (from the first pioneers in the village to the current role of the Party). It is interesting to note that, when writing about both the Party and the cooperative, his language corresponds much more closely to that of the communist regime than it had in the 1950s; he very often uses expressions commonly employed in communist history-writing. For example, he presents the failure to establish a Communist Party in the 1920s in terms of the agricultural workers’ lack of “political consciousness”. When writing about the collectivisation of agriculture he calls this a fight about socialisation, which ended in victory only in 1957. Moreover, he talks about it as a class-struggle, he mentions the “liqui-

dation of the capitalist order”, and writes that victory was achieved through a “fight with people’s thoughts”; 1968 is treated only in a few lines, in the section in which he is dealing with the Communist Party. “The years of crisis (*krisová léta*) 1968-69, also affected the party here. The great majority of members stood firmly behind the leadership of the party”.

So in this private chronicle no traces are found either of the happiness and subsequent disappointment in 1968, or of the sympathy with those who cried at the loss of their land in 1950. Why is that? What had happened?

By 1979 like all other local historians, Zelinka had been inculcated with the correct version of postwar Czechoslovak history in a manner that made it inescapable when writing for *the public*. As other local officials under socialism, local historians had gradually learned to operate the language of the rulers, a necessary skill to be able to perform on public arenas. If “The Past and Present of the Municipality” had been a book intended for publication, or if it had been a book which was to be presented to a wider public in the village, its composition, thematic focus and linguistic style would have been easy to understand. Mr Zelinka’s “The Past and Present of the Municipality” was a private chronicle, however, which he kept in his home for himself and his family and which was not subject to any inspection from above. It is possible that he was still afraid of being compromised, or that he feared that his family would be compromised if the book was found after his death. But if he did not believe in what he wrote, why did he bother to write it, in such beautiful handwriting, and to draw meticulously detailed maps of the village to be enclosed in an appendix?

One interpretation is that Mr Zelinka’s conceptions of the village history had really been changed during the 1970s. At the time when he wrote his private chronicle, the regime’s version of history had become dominant, in the sense that it was indisputable and inescapable. The fact that the material conditions for most people in the countryside had really improved during the 1960s and 1970s, may have helped him to accept the regime’s version of the collectivisation of agriculture and other post-1948 events. Drawing on Foucault, we could say that the discursive conditions of possibility, material and linguistic, had been effectively changed, ruling out certain versions of history and leaving others to dominate the field (cf. McHoul and Grace 1995: 34). Initially the “correct” version of history was forced on Mr Zelinka, but later this version achieves a naturalised status for him and becomes the one which he adheres to even when writing his private village chronicle.

I am not convinced if this is the whole explanation, however, and here I would like to return to the concept of genre, introduced in the beginning of the paper. Although both books Mr Zelinka wrote – the official village chronicle and the private “The Past and Present of the Municipality” – are

called chronicles, there are important differences between them. The village chronicles are written in the end of each year and give a summary of what had happened during that year, while the private chronicle represents an attempt to give us the whole picture of the village's history from its origin until today. "The past and present of the municipality" thus represents a different genre of historical accounts from the village chronicles. Although it is a private chronicle, it is far from a "personal memory book". Quite the contrary; the book is full of facts; about the number of inhabitants, land-ownership, a list of the oldest names in the village etc. My hypothesis is that his model for this book is that of "village history books", of which many had been published in communist Czechoslovakia, one even coming from a neighbouring village to Šitbořice (Vermouzek 1975)<sup>7</sup>. These books are hardback publications, written by professional or semi-professional historians, containing documentations, pictures, maps etc. Although varying slightly among themselves, on the whole their outline compares quite well with Mr Zelinka's book; starting with the oldest history, moving on to feudalism and its abolishment, the foundation of the First Republic, the Second World War etc., and they all have sections on the Communist Party in the village and socialisation of agriculture. The dialogical relation in operation is thus not between Mr Zelinka's own former writings of village chronicles and his present book about the village's history. Mr Zelinka is rather connecting to "utterances" made within a genre which is formalised and state controlled, and hence which by and large adheres to state history. The language and terminology he uses and the choice of topics he makes are those of public history-writing, officially sanctioned by the authorities. If the "Past and Present of the Municipality" had related to more private genres, as for example the diary, it is likely that Zelinka would have chosen to express himself in a more private kind of language, too, allowing him to be much more open about his own observations of and feelings towards different historical events. The genre of village history books, which is his ideal model, does not allow for such utterances to be made, and therefore part of what he knows is left out.

## Final Remarks

In terms of power, the analysis of this historical material from Czech villages demonstrates first of all the eagerness and efforts of the communist regime to achieve symbolic-ideological domination, in terms of the homogenisation of and control over historical accounts. The means by which they tried to establish such control were both direct and indirect. In the 1950s the means

---

<sup>7</sup> For other examples see Čapka et. al. 1987, Hajný et. al. 1979.

employed were first and foremost indirect; through guidebooks and directives a framework was laid for the interpretation and rendering of local events, but no measures were taken to stop personal and/or subversive utterances. In the years following 1968 the control became more direct, forcing the individual chronicler to adjust to the state's version of what had happened. By the late 1970s it may seem that the desired domination and control had been achieved, at least that is the impression we are left with after reading Mr Zelinka's private chronicle. As argued above, the adherence to state history found in this work is not to be explained in terms of his total subordination to state versions of history, or that the state versions had moved to a doxic level of consciousness where he could not explicitly address or criticise them. Rather I would suggest that his changing accounts should be seen in the light of his moving between genres, letting himself be inspired by a certain genre of village history books when writing his own. From the state's point of view, the establishment of such a genre thus works as indirect means of domination on a level with more formalised directives and guidelines. For Mr Zelinka it probably meant that the memories of brutal collectivisation in the 1950s and his own pain from 1968 and the following years were moved into a more private realm, into accounts told by him to his children, for example. But it is important to see Zelinka as an agent with his own agenda, which is demonstrated in what he does when he writes his private village history book. It is obvious that it has little to do with resistance; he is not motivated by an aim to subvert the official accounts prevalent at that time. His motivation is to be found, I believe, in his love and deep attachment to the village of Šitbořice, the place where he had lived all his life and in which he was thoroughly engaged until his death.

## References

- Bakhtin, M. 1998 [1979]. *Spørsmålet om talegenrane*. Oslo: Ariadne Forlag
- Čapka, F. et. al. 1987. *Diváky. Z dějin Habrůvky Bratří Mrštíků*. Brno: Muzejní a vlastivědná společnost v Brně.
- Hajný, S. et. al. 1979. *600 let Ruda, Okres Rakovník*. Slaný: Středočeské tiskárny.
- Heggli, G. 2002. *Skoledagboken: En Folkloristisk Studie av Unge Jenters Skrivehandlinger*. Oslo: Unipub.
- Humphrey, C. 1994. Remembering an "Enemy". The Bogd Kahn in Twentieth-Century Mongolia. In R. S. Watson (ed.), *Memory, History and Opposition under State Socialism*, pp. 21-44. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.



- Janda, J., M. Kotrba, and B. Moravec. 1963. *Nová Vesnice a Podíl Akce z Na její Vystavbě*. Praha: Statní zemědělské nakladatelství.
- Kazimour, J. 1932. *Návod k Vedení Pamtních Knich*. Praha: Rolnické Tiskárny.
- McHoul, A. W., and W. Grace. 1995. *Discourse, Power and the Subject. A Foucault Primer*. London: UCL Press Limited.
- Myant, M. R. 1981. *Socialism and Democracy in Czechoslovakia 1945-1948*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nagengast, C. 1991. *Reluctant Socialists, Rural Entrepreneurs. Class, Culture and the Polish state*. Oxford: Westview Press.
- Obecní kroniky, Boleradice, 1926-1970. (unpublished village chronicle)
- Obecní kroniky, Nikolčice, 1927-1971. (unpublished village chronicle)
- Obecní kroniky, Šitbořice, 1927-1974 and 1991-93. (unpublished village chronicle)
- Obecní kroniky, "Lipina", 1920s-1993. (unpublished village chronicle)
- Pubal, V., and A. Robek. 1963. *Píšeme kroniku*. Praha: Orbis.
- Verdery, K. 1991. Theorizing Socialism: A Prologue to the "Transition". *American Ethnologist* 18 (3): 419-39.
- Vermouzek, R. 1975. *Těšany. Od Nejstarších Pramenů k Socialistickému Dnešku*. Brno: Musejní spolek v Brně.
- Watson, R. S. (ed.). 1994. *Memory, History and Opposition under State Socialism*. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.
- Weber, M. 1971. *Makt og Byråkrati. Essays om Politikk og Klasse, Samfunnsforskning og Verdier*. Oslo: Gyldendal norsk forlag.
- Wolchik, S. 1991. *Czechoslovakia in Transition. Politics, Economics and Society*. London: Pinter Publishers.
- Zelinká, F. 1979. *Minulost i Přítomnost Obce* (Past and Present of the Municipality). (unpublished private chronicle)

## ***Chapter 5***

# **Disciplining the Past in Post-Soviet Ukraine: Memory and History in Schools and Families**

Tanya Richardson

### **Introduction**

Many scholars have demonstrated the significant role representations of the past play in the imagination and re-imagination of political communities (Alonso 1988; Anderson 1991; Boyarin 1994; Wanner 1998). Precisely because Ukrainian lands have been split among numerous states for centuries, history takes on added importance in laying claims to territory, forging a nation and asserting the right to an independent state.<sup>1</sup> Yet, as a consequence of this predicament, Ukraine's citizens have divergent – often diametrically opposed – views, not only on the interpretation of the tumultuous historical events that have taken place on its territories, but also, as a result, on how Ukraine should be defined as a political community.

While representations of the past figure prominently in symbolising political community, schools – as one of the most significant points of contact between individuals and state – are critical sites for the transmission of knowledge deemed essential for reproducing the community. Whereas in the Soviet Union the educational system played a critical role in attempting to create “Homo Sovieticus”, in Ukraine it has been (and continues to be) transformed to produce loyal Ukrainian citizens. Often scholars who have

---

<sup>1</sup> Although there have been various autonomous and semi-autonomous political formations on Ukrainian territory, prior to independence in 1991 “Ukraine” never really had extended periods of statehood with the exception of the medieval kingdom of Kievan Rus, a state from which both Russia and Ukraine claim descent in their respective historiographies. From the late 18<sup>th</sup> century until the end of the First World War, Ukrainian lands were divided between the Austro-Hungarian Empire (and within the empire were part of different provinces) and the Russian Empire. In the aftermath of World War I and the revolution, despite a protracted campaign to establish an independent state, Ukrainian territories became part of the Soviet Union, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Romania. After World War II eastern and western Ukrainian lands were united in the Ukrainian SSR and in 1954 Khrushchev “gave” Crimea to the republic. With a population of 49 million, Ukraine is ethnically and religiously diverse, possessing one of the largest Russian minorities of all former Soviet republics.

addressed the relationship between history education and state-sponsored identities have focused on analysing official, academic or popular texts about history, yet failed to attend to the ways in which teachers and students engage with this new knowledge (Honcharenko 1998; Wilson 1998a; Lisovskaya and Karpov 1999). Drawing on interviews with teachers and students conducted in December 1999 for an MPhil. dissertation, in this chapter I examine micro-processes through which state sponsored identity is imposed, engaged with, accepted or rejected.<sup>2</sup>

Events that have taken place on Ukrainian territories since World War I and the decades-long silences surrounding them during the Soviet period pose a particular challenge for Ukrainians in generating consensus around a

---

<sup>2</sup> During one month of fieldwork, I visited three cities: Kharkiv – a city in eastern Ukraine, Lviv – a city in western Ukraine, and Kyiv – the capital. I conducted semi-structured interviews with teachers (whose role is to transmit knowledge), grade eleven students (who are on the receiving end of the transmission and must negotiate versions of the past encountered at home and school), historians (as producers of historical knowledge), and ministry officials (as decision-makers on what knowledge to transmit). In addition, teachers, historians, friends and the current head of the Ministry of Education's history department kindly donated school history curricula and textbooks published during the Soviet period as well as after 1991.

Altogether I interviewed 22 teachers – sometimes one on one, sometimes in groups of two or three – for the most part at their workplace. My meetings with them were arranged through friends and contacts I knew from having worked in Kyiv during the period 1995-1999. I met four groups of grade eleven students (age 16-17) in Lviv and Kharkiv but not Kyiv because students were already on their winter vacation when I arrived there. My discussions with these young people took place in a classroom setting with their teacher. It would, of course, have been valuable to meet students individually as well as their parents and grandparents but because of limited time, circumstances did not permit this. I chose to meet with grade eleven students because they were studying the history of the twentieth century. I decided to focus on this period first, because it is considered the most controversial period, and second, individuals who participated in these events, possibly students' own grandparents, are still living. With one exception, the teachers interviewed taught in the public school system. All groups of students were studying in public schools. There are a variety of types of schools in the public system including lycées, gymnasiums, specialised schools and normal schools. The history of Ukraine and world history are required subjects in all schools from grades 5 to 11.

The majority of individuals I interviewed were ethnic Ukrainians or Russians; I was unable to meet teachers representative of other minority groups such as Tatars, Jews, Bulgarians, Poles, Slovaks, Belarussians, Romanians, Hungarians, Roma, or Greeks – to name some of the most numerous groups. Individuals were interviewed in the language of their choice: Russian, Ukrainian and in one case English. Roughly speaking, about half the population identifies Ukrainian as its mother tongue and the rest, for the most part Russian. Ukrainian is the main language of communication in both rural and urban areas in western Ukraine. In cities in central Ukraine, Russian is the main language of communication (though Ukrainian is used more than in the east and south) while rural inhabitants communicate primarily in Ukrainian. In eastern and southern Ukraine, urban areas are almost entirely Russian-speaking although it is not uncommon to hear Ukrainian – or a mix of Ukrainian and Russian – spoken in rural areas as well as Russian. The languages of Ukraine's minority groups are spoken to varying degrees in their respective communities.

“national idea”. In Soviet Ukraine, the cultural renaissance permitted in the 1920s was followed by Stalin’s repression which claimed the lives of four million Ukrainian victims, including nearly 80% of the intelligentsia (Iakovenko 2001: 19). In addition, the trauma of the famine of 1932-33 claimed up to six million lives in Soviet Ukraine alone. World War II is one of the most controversial events in contemporary Ukraine. The war was perceived as an opportunity to free Ukraine of German, Russian and Polish domination in western Ukraine – part of Poland during the inter-war period. Many western Ukrainians were mobilised to fight for the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and later for the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA). The Ukrainian SSR provided the Soviet Army with millions of soldiers, fought in the Soviet partisan movement, and tend to view OUN/UPA as fascists and traitors (Prizel 2000: 13).<sup>3</sup> The legacy of these traumatic events is so difficult largely because Ukrainians have experienced them in vastly different ways. Ukrainians in lands ruled by Poland lived through neither the famine of 1932-33 nor the repression of the 1930s. At the same time, in Soviet Ukraine, the famine brutalised peasants while affecting city residents much less severely. Finally, although millions of Ukrainians were victims of Stalin’s policies, as is the case in authoritarian states, many other Ukrainians participated in executing these policies and benefited under the system. The controversies surrounding these issues are part and parcel of claims about Ukraine’s desired future: whether Ukraine should be an independent state (if so with an eastern or western orientation); whether it should be part of a revived Soviet Union; or whether it should join its brother Slav nations – Russia and Belarus – in an expanded Russian state.

Teachers’ and students’ comments reveal how historical knowledge is seen as an important aspect of the person – that part of the person connected to Ukraine as a political community. However, “forming persons” nevertheless involves a certain “microphysics” of power. Using Foucault’s concepts of discipline and power/knowledge I suggest that the interactions of teachers and students in school history lessons reveal how students are constituted as national subjects.<sup>4</sup> In the Soviet Union and Ukraine, discourses on the “na-

---

<sup>3</sup> To this day, debate continues on whether to grant veterans of OUN/UPA official veteran status which would entitle them to a special pension which veterans of the Soviet Army receive.

<sup>4</sup> “Discipline” refers to methods of enclosing and partitioning space, systematizing surveillance and inspection, breaking down complex tasks into carefully drilled movements, and coordinating separate functions into larger combinations that since the eighteenth century have been increasingly employed in factories, schools, prisons, hospitals, factories and government (Foucault 1977). In contrast to Foucault, who addresses the much broader issue of the constitution of modern subjects, I am concerned with a very narrow, but significant

tion” and “state” have been transmitted through the history curriculum in schools, institutions which have in turn served to reinforce particular historical knowledge as “truth” and thus “discipline” students to think about the past in certain ways that constitute them either as “Soviet” or “Ukrainian” subjects.

Whereas Foucault’s concept of “discipline” can assist in analysing the constitution of subjects, the work of Bourdieu and Passeron on the role of education in social reproduction is useful in considering how history education contributes (at least in part) to the reproduction of the idea of “Ukraine” as a state and nation and therefore as a political community (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990). Yet as Foucault writes, “where there is power there is resistance”, and if “disciplining” is evident in history lessons, then so is “resistance” (Foucault 1976: 95). Often knowledge of the past transmitted in the family provides the resources for students to contest official history. However, understandings of history transmitted in state institutions and families interact in schools in complex ways that both undermine and reinforce one another. A close examination of the interaction of history and memory in the social contexts of the school and family reveals the problems in applying the frameworks of Foucault, Bourdieu and Passeron in an overly schematic fashion and unveils a contradictory picture about the extent to which subjects are “disciplined”, the idea of a Ukrainian political community is “reproduced”, and “resistance” is effective in challenging the hegemony of the state.

At this point I would like to note the ideas that have informed my understanding and use of the term “the state” in this article, namely Phillip Abrams’ distinction between the “state system” and “state-idea”. He defined the state system as “a palpable nexus of practice and institutional structures centred in government and more or less extensive, unified and dominant – an ideological artefact attributing unity, morality and independence to the disunited, amoral and dependent workings of the practice of government” (Abrams 1988: 81-2). These concepts are useful for my purposes because they highlight state practices as real phenomena experienced by individuals – in schools, for instance – while also conceptualising the state as an ideological construct or a “metaphysical effect” (Mitchell 1991), which in turn helps us to consider how the state is discursively constructed in historical narratives and accepted (or not) as a commonsense idea by individuals.<sup>5</sup>

---

aspect of subjectivity in which historical knowledge plays a role in disciplining subjects as “Ukrainian”.

<sup>5</sup> Indeed the focus of the history of Ukraine course is state-like institutions which is ironic given Ukraine’s conspicuous lack of experiences of statehood in the modern era but is

## Conceptualising Memory and History

Before turning to teachers' and students' experiences it is worth pausing to reflect on how I will use the concepts of history and memory. I propose to distinguish between a number of ways of thinking about history in order to avoid conflating different meanings the term seems to have in the contexts discussed. First, history can be viewed as a commonsense notion (in a Euro-American sense) that refers to events, occurrences, developments fixed in time and space that actually occurred in the past. Second, we can think of history as the process of retrospectively reconstructing of these events "as they actually occurred". This refers to formalised, narrative histories written by professional historians that take an omniscient view of an event or period incorporating facts, figures, and information that no one individual could have possessed at the time the event took place (there are clearly a variety of genres that attach varying degrees of causality to different actors, institutions, and other phenomena). Often these histories make broad truth claims and assume that events can be fixed in the past although they may also be more post-modern, claiming to be *a* history and not *the* authoritative representation of the past (Munslow 1997: 26). Such histories may become hegemonic – power/knowledge regimes in a Foucauldian sense – and institutionalised in society (as in school curricula and textbooks). From yet a different perspective, history is intrinsically present rather than past. In this view, history is a social process in which variously positioned actors selectively construct and deploy understandings of the past in a range of settings to cement a particular notion of community. In other words, history (or often a particular historical event) can function as a symbol (with all the implied ambiguity) mobilised in discourses and ideologies to make certain claims about the present and indeed the future. Whether a commonsense notion, an "omniscient" narrative, or a symbol, I use history to refer to authoritative accounts of the past.

Memory is frequently defined as personal – "that which happened to me" – as opposed to the more multi-perspectival, authoritative account of history (Lass 1994: 102; Wanner 1998: 37). In many respects memory is personal, yet defining it only in terms of individual experience is rather limiting for this fails to account for the social dimension of memory (Halbwachs 1981 *passim*; Watson 1994: 8; Ten Dyke 2000: 151). Although memory and history are not necessarily opposed, memory can be distinguished from history in that it involves individual selves and acts: "memory of any kind implies a self or subject who perceives the memory or does the

---

significant because it generates the truth effect of a genealogy of states Ukraine can claim as its own. This is discussed more thoroughly in another chapter of my MPhil. dissertation.

remembering” (Lambek 1996: 243). I will analyse the interplay between what I am analytically defining as memory and history in schools and families to examine the extent to which memory can unsettle the hegemony of history.

### **History, Personhood and the National Subject**

The majority of the teachers I interviewed referred to the *vykholna* function of history education. *Vykhovannia* may be glossed as “socialisation” but is derived from the verb *vykhovaty* which is translated from Ukrainian as “to bring up, to raise” as in “to raise a child”.<sup>6</sup> If an individual acquires the necessary features of personhood through his or her upbringing (presumed in Ukraine to be carried out primarily in families and schools), then in this sense historical knowledge also can be considered an essential part of personhood. Whereas in the Soviet Union history education played a role in generating Homo Sovieticus, in Ukraine it appears that historical knowledge cultivates the part of the person connected to the nation. Indeed, the prefaces to the Soviet and Ukrainian curricula make this clear. The 1986 Soviet curriculum reads as follows:

History in elementary and secondary schools is a necessary component of the education and communist upbringing of youth. The study of history in the new curriculum makes a vital contribution to fulfilling the main ideological tasks determined by the XXVII Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union: bringing up workers in the spirit of high ideals and commitment to communism, Soviet patriotism, proletarian, socialist internationalism; the harmonious development of a socially active individual who combines spiritual (*dukhovno*) wealth, moral purity, and physical perfection .... In the process of studying the history of the Ukrainian SSR students are to be convinced that the friendship of the Ukrainian people and all other peoples of the USSR with the great Russian people has great historical significance (pp. 1-9).<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> In contrast: the Ukrainian word for education is *osvita* from the verb *osvityty* – “to enlighten”.

<sup>7</sup> Concerning the history of the Ukrainian SSR, the curriculum states the following: In the process of teaching the history of the republic [Ukraine] the following should not occur: idealisation of old times, admiration for obsolete ways of life and national characteristics, extolling kings and actors in an exploitative state. ... Particular attention should be paid ... to the progressive character of various peoples’ voluntary joining of Russia, the fundamental changes in the relationship between these peoples as a result of the October Revolution, and the leading role of the Russian working class and the Communist Party in the liberation of peoples from national and social oppression ... [Students] should recognise the profound

Although the content of the Ukrainian curriculum differs, history is still seen as playing a significant role in forming the character of young people and cultivating them as citizens. The preface to the 1998 curriculum reads as follows:

The main goal of elementary and secondary schools in Ukraine today is the formation of a socially aware, work-loving, creative identity of Ukrainian citizens (p. 1).

The curriculum mentions the following objectives of history education among others:

- ... creating a national consciousness ... affirming the ideals of humanism, democracy, goodness and justice;
- ... facilitating a tolerant, unprejudiced view ... towards other peoples, groups, and individuals ...;
- Preparing [students] for conscious, active participation in the social life of the Ukrainian state and to adapt in a society undergoing rapid change (p. 1).<sup>8</sup>

Whereas the Soviet curriculum seeks to generate commitment to “internationalism” and “Soviet patriotism”, the Ukrainian curriculum emphasises loyalty to the Ukrainian state and the development of national consciousness. Although the expressions in the Soviet curriculum (students are to be convinced) are stronger than those in the Ukrainian curriculum (formation of citizens, acceptance of values), clearly there is continuity between the two models.<sup>9</sup> Both can be seen through the lens of the Foucauldian concept of discipline since both have the intention of generating particular kinds of subjects: one through the “truths” of Soviet internationalism, and the other through a brand of Ukrainian nationalism.

---

meaning of Lenin’s immortal ordinance that only “under the united action of the great Russian and Ukrainian proletariats is a free Ukraine possible, without this unity there is nothing to be said of her [Ukraine]” ... the history of the Ukrainian SSR should be presented to youth as the history of an indissoluble part of a single great Union of Soviet Socialist Republics – a common homeland of all the peoples of our country (pp. 8-9).

<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the importance attached to history education in shaping young people’s views can also be seen in the following: first, the history of Ukraine and world history are compulsory subjects for students in all schools; second, there is a single curriculum for the whole country and although teachers may choose to emphasise some topics over others, all topics in the curriculum must be covered; and third, at the time of research, for grades 10 and 11 there were two ministry-approved textbooks that had been written to correspond to the curriculum. Teachers can develop their own curricula but must get them approved by the local ministry representative.

<sup>9</sup> There are other continuities as well. For example, the Ukrainian curriculum is structured around two courses – history of Ukraine and world history – which corresponds to the division of the Soviet curriculum into courses on the history of the USSR and world history.



Most teachers and students I met felt that people should know their state's history in order to integrate, participate and contribute to its development (and indeed "state" was used and not "nation", "country", or "society"). This issue emerged most clearly from discussions about whether to maintain a separate course on the history of Ukraine or integrate it into the course on world history. For Oksana Bilaniuk<sup>10</sup>, who was born in Lviv in 1967 and has been teaching history there since 1988, knowledge of Ukrainian history is a matter of the survival of Ukraine as an independent state. She acutely feels her position as a western Ukrainian and shared the following with me during an interview she gave as we walked through a park in central Lviv:

We have to know our history and know it well – we can't lose ourselves [in an integrated course]. Galicians have historically been more nationally conscious. We knew more about our history, so this problem of making the transition to our own history was not so painful. ... With respect to eastern and southern Ukraine, I think that it is a problem of the survival of the Ukrainian state. If we reject our national history then what kind of pride will there be in the nation, homeland and development and well-being of Ukraine? Because everything starts from the way a person relates to her own history, her own nationality and other nationalities, and respect for the state in which she lives. People have to know the history of this state. We respect other states, why can't we respect our own? No one will respect you if you do not do anything for your homeland. ... For the time being, I think there should be two separate courses.

Clearly, Oksana conceives of history as a "national history", an authoritative account that is neither the view nor experience of a single person. Yet, knowing this "national history" is evidently critical to being a good member of the (national) community – a citizen of the Ukrainian state. It is vital not only for unifying and improving the "well-being" of society, but also for the integrity of a person (being respected). In rejecting understandings of history held in other parts of Ukraine, and assuming that the history western Ukrainians always "knew" is "our" (meaning all Ukrainians') history, Oksana identifies particular understandings of history as superior and "true". Although she acknowledges the difficulties people face in experiencing yesterday's truth as today's falsehood, she is adamant that a certain history be accepted. It is possible to read her comments as emerging from a nationalist discourse where the congruency between nation and state is held to be the ideal which she feels can be generated through "knowing" history. Yet

---

<sup>10</sup> I have used pseudonyms rather than real names to protect the identities of the individuals cited.

there is slippage in her usage of state, nation, and homeland which perhaps reflects the current lack of consensus in Ukrainian society about the definition of political community. Thus, she also deploys “history” as a symbol of a Ukrainian political community, a community whose unity is to be cemented partly through knowledge and acceptance of a certain historical narrative.

Tatiana Maksimova – who is Russian – studied history at the Lviv State University and taught in southern Ukraine for several years before returning to teach history in a Russian-language school in central Lviv attended by ethnic Russians as well as other Russian-speakers. Although she lamented the fact that she could not teach more Russian history, she explicitly stated that her students should study Ukrainian history more than Russian history in order to integrate into Ukrainian society. However, in an interview held in her classroom during a free period, she emphasised the importance of world history for the development of Ukrainian culture (by which she means high culture – drama, literature, film, etc.) and universal human values that would enable Ukrainians to be part of a larger regional and global community:

I think that world history should be compulsory. This is how culture is produced. It provides a broad overview of issues ... Instilling patriotism in youth, the desire to serve the homeland – this is the task of the history of Ukraine [course]. I think we should teach less about political events. ... I think that culture is the most important topic. Through culture we can bring up people with universal human values and our students will carry these values with them into the future ... the most important thing is that they learn how to live tolerantly and peacefully, how to strive to learn more, how to be tolerant of all different kinds of people ... so that they will be able to integrate into Europe and the world more broadly.

For Tatiana, historical knowledge is also an essential part of a person, but her priorities differ from Oksana’s. Although she does not deny the importance of Ukrainian history and its role in instilling patriotism, for Tatiana, world history, particularly the history of culture, can serve to develop even more significant aspects of a person in the form of values enabling them to relate to a broader world.

Like their teachers, many students I spoke with felt that it was important for them as individuals and for the future of their country that they learn history, particularly the history of their own state. The following interchange between two grade eleven students (aged 17) and their teacher, Oksana Bilaniuk, in a Ukrainian-language normal school in a Lviv suburb illustrates this shared assumption:

Olena (student): [We are studying history] in order to decide what to do, whether to join Russia and Belarus or whether we are closer to Europe. We compare these options by studying history to decide what is better and what is more advantageous for Ukraine today.

Oksana (teacher): And what direction is more advantageous for Ukraine?

Olena: Europe, I think.

Oksana: Why?

Olena: Because if we join Russia, we'll return to the same past we had before. Communism. Terror. Repression. Stalin. Lenin. Marx.

Oksana: What are we doing by studying history?

Olena: We are analysing what mistakes were made.

Roman (student): Without a past, we have no future. We are drawing conclusions for ourselves so that we don't repeat the same mistakes.

Oksana: To what past don't you want to return?

Roman: To Stalin, to Russia, so that a famine isn't repeated, to the Soviet Union.

In this passage, there is a dizzying sense of movement through time and space. Olena makes use of synecdoche through her references to "communism", "terror", "repression", and the figures of "Stalin", "Lenin", and "Marx" in invoking the Soviet past as a vision of the future to be avoided at all costs. Of note is how "we" easily elides into Ukraine – a taken-for-granted entity – which demonstrates the sense in which selfhood and peoplehood conflate in defining the imagined political community of the nation. In turn, if the past can repeat itself, then history contains lessons to be learned in order not to repeat mistakes, and thus help decide whether Ukraine is "closer" to Europe than to Russia. This spatial metaphor underlines choices about a future vision – a vision of Ukraine as part of Europe rather than Russia. Finally, this short passage illustrates how certain historical events and individuals can be deployed symbolically to shape a particular vision of the future.

The students I spoke with in Kharkiv shared the same assumptions as their Lviv counterparts but had somewhat more tentative attitudes. When I posed the question, "Why study history?" to Yelena Solovieva's grade eleven history class at a Ukrainian language specialised school in Kharkiv<sup>11</sup>, one student answered (and others agreed) that "every person should know

---

<sup>11</sup> The school, which specialised in teaching English, had become a Ukrainian language school a couple of years earlier. During our discussion, some students spoke in Ukrainian while others spoke in Russian. Yelena continued to teach in Russian as she did not know Ukrainian well enough to teach in it and had not, at the time of the interview, encountered any difficulties because of this.

the history of the state s/he lives in” as if this were a self-evident fact that needed no further elaboration. It would appear that the idea of “Ukraine” as a state has indeed been reproduced. At the same time, when I asked if they thought the history of Ukraine was presented truthfully (*pravdyvo*) in their lessons, although one student agreed, another was more ambivalent because she had encountered different perspectives at home from her grandmother in whose account she thought there must also be some truth. A third student stated that every regime rewrites history to suit its own agenda, which seems to indicate that the student had deconstructed the statist discourse embedded in the school history curriculum. Although this student was able to uncover the implicit principles of the curriculum, like his fellow students in Lviv, he asserted that history was like a window to the future and that it was necessary to study history in order to build a better future for their state. Despite the fact that they may have partially deconstructed the discourse, they did not challenge its core assumptions about the existence of their state.<sup>12</sup>

Many teachers and students in Ukraine see history education as a compulsory component of a young person’s upbringing. In independent Ukraine, as in the Soviet Union, history education has had the specific objective of creating loyal citizens which occurs through the transmission of discourses on the “state” and “nation” embedded in the curriculum and textbooks.<sup>13</sup> In this sense historical knowledge is an essential part of personhood. At the same time, history education appears to be effective in disciplining teachers and students as subjects of the Ukrainian state. But to what extent is schooling effective in disciplining the desired political subject?

## Memory and History in Families and Schools

The relationship between memories passed on in families and the history taught in schools is complex. Indeed, the versions of the past transmitted in the two contexts often contradict each other. The family may be the setting for the retelling of personal memories often “forgotten” in the Soviet period or in other cases, shared memories of what was once official history. These memories mainly (though not exclusively) concern events that family members and/or their contemporaries may have experienced directly such as the

---

<sup>12</sup> Challenges to the assumptions of the existence of a Ukrainian state would not be unexpected in this situation since ideas that Ukraine, Belarus and Russia belong in a single state have considerable currency among some sectors of the population in predominantly Russian speaking regions such as Kharkiv.

<sup>13</sup> It is also important to point out that although both Soviet and Ukrainian history function/ed to “discipline” subjects through certain regimes of power/knowledge about political community, the nature of the coercion involved in enforcing a sanctioned view differs considerably. For example, the variation in Oksana and Tatiana’s positions would not have been tolerated.

famine of 1932-33, Stalinist repression, and World War II. Official history, memories, and alternative histories interact in complicated ways as a result of young people's movements between home and school. These interactions reveal an intricate picture of the processes involved in transmitting and acquiring a commonsense understanding of what occurred in the past. Thus, although history education may have contributed to generating more widespread, unquestioned acceptance of the idea of the Ukrainian state, it has had less success in inculcating the interpretation of events proposed in the history curriculum. This raises the question of whether disagreement with, or ambivalence towards, the state-sponsored interpretation of key historical events can lead to a questioning of the existence of the state among the population of Ukraine in general. In most states this would not be the case. However, because significant portions of Ukraine's population are ambivalent about the existence of Ukraine as an independent state, and because disputed interpretations of history are usually connected with other states' ideologies that lay claims to Ukrainian territory, contesting history often elides into contesting Ukraine's claim to statehood.

Sometimes family memories make students question the history they read about in school textbooks. The activities of the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) frequently arouse such tensions. The controversy surrounding these organisations stems from the fact that large numbers of Ukrainians fought in World War II on the side of the Soviet Army and therefore view them as "fascists" or "bandits" who collaborated with the Germans, waged guerrilla warfare, and took many of their comrades' lives. Indeed this interpretation predominates in Soviet, Polish and contemporary Russian historiography. In western historiography their role in collaborating with the Nazis is highlighted. Ukrainian national historiography focuses on their struggle against the Soviets, Nazis and Poles for the establishment of a Ukrainian state. OUN first emerged as a radical right political party in Poland during the inter-war period. Nowadays Ukrainian historians distinguish between two factions: the Melnykites (OUN-M) and Banderites (OUN-B), names which come from their respective leaders Andriy Melnyk and Stepan Bandera. The former are portrayed in school textbooks as more in favour of working with the Germans while the latter were more in favour of relying on Ukrainian forces, while not outright rejecting the possibility of cooperating with the Nazis (Turchenko 1994). UPA was formed in 1942 from a number of Banderite groups in the western Ukrainian region of Volyn. After World War II ended and western Ukraine became part of the Soviet Union, UPA continued operating underground fighting Soviet troops until the early fifties during which time many lives

were lost on both sides.<sup>14</sup> When I asked Oksana Bilaniuk's grade eleven class at a Ukrainian language school in Lviv about controversial events a female student had the following to say:

The role of OUN/UPA in the struggle for the independence of Ukraine [is controversial]. Earlier there were different opinions about the role of the Bandera faction of OUN. My grandmother's friend was a teacher and she was forced to comply with the current regime and teach Russian and the Soviet ideology.<sup>15</sup> As a result of this she was put on the Banderites' black list. But she was a good person ... my point is that even the Banderites did away with those people who were needed in society at that time. But the Soviet partisans also tracked down the Banderites. In other words they undermined one another. For that reason we can say that the role of OUN/UPA – especially the Banderites – is not clear-cut in the struggle for independence as is assumed.

Another female grade eleven student in a Russian language school in Lviv where Tatiana Maksimova teaches had even more ambivalent feelings about OUN/UPA which emerged from the dissonance between what she heard at home and what she learned at school:

My parents think that OUN/UPA killed Soviet troops and that they were dishonest about the fact that they intended to liberate people from the German aggressors ... First, they transformed peaceful inhabitants into fighters ... and in the evenings they went around killing the Soviet troops. And for that reason, my parents don't have such a favourable view of OUN/UPA. In school they teach us the opposite – that they fought for Ukraine's freedom and against the communists, that they wanted to create their own state.

TR: Have you come to your own conclusion about these events?

I don't know. I don't have my own objective version because I have these facts and others. There are facts that really people [in OUN/UPA] thought that they were fighting for Ukraine's freedom, they thought that was their life goal. Others [Soviets] thought the opposite: "That's not right, that we want to improve your lives". The Soviet troops thought that they were bringing something good to the

---

<sup>14</sup> For an account of their activities see Armstrong (1991).

<sup>15</sup> Germany and the USSR established spheres of influence through a secret protocol to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of the 23<sup>rd</sup> of August, 1939. The pact set a precise line through Poland that was to divide the two spheres. The western Ukrainian lands that were part of Poland, western Belarus, Bessarabia (then part of Romania), Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia fell under the Soviet sphere of influence. The Red Army crossed into Poland on the 17<sup>th</sup> of September, 1939 and entered Lviv on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September and occupied these lands until Germany invaded the Soviet Union on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June, 1941.

people of Ukraine and they were killed because of this. Sometimes I discuss these issues with my family but mostly not.

In the first example, a grandmother's story of an actual experience makes the student ambivalent about the role of OUN/UPA which is unambiguously portrayed in the textbook as having struggled for Ukrainian independence. The second example illustrates a situation in which a student questions the authority of school history on the basis of what could be memories of what was once official history transmitted through her parents. The student's parents would not have experienced these events, although her grandparents may have and thus it is not clear to what extent the parents' version is the consequence of family memories, the result of identification with Soviet official history, or a product of other factors. Although she is satisfied with neither version of the past, she believes that facts can reveal an objective truth. It is not immediately clear how such experiences ultimately affect students' identification with the history and hence Ukraine because obviously there are other factors involved (the nature of particular relationships with family and teachers, their views of other events, etc.). However, it is conceivable that the dissonance students sometimes experience could generate sceptical attitudes towards Ukrainian statehood and perpetuate a cynicism not unlike that described by Yurchak for the late socialist period (Yurchak 1997).

While on the one hand memories transmitted in the family can affect students' perception of school history, on the other hand students also influence their parents with the knowledge they acquire at school. Yelena Solovieva raised this issue in discussing the complexities of intergenerational communication. Yelena was born in Gurevsky, Kaliningrad in 1951 in a military family, studied history at the Kharkiv State University and now teaches at a Kharkiv school specialised in teaching English. (We met her students earlier.) She pointed out how parents learn through their children and her efforts to encourage this:

There is ... another ... issue: when children start to dispute things with their parents. And another interesting aspect is that parents are becoming interested [in history] ... if there is a good textbook, I recommend they buy it ... and the parents start to study history alongside their kids. ... During lessons students learn to argue their point of view, and they start to argue with their parents, and in this way they start to influence the way their parents evaluate certain events. They hear what their teacher says, see what is written in the textbooks, what their parents say and what surrounds them.

At the same time, a teacher can catalyse the recounting of life histories at home which have sometimes been silenced for decades. In some cases this

experience generates an identification of both student and family member with the episode of history at hand, and perhaps, we might speculate, with the history of Ukraine as a whole. Liubov Kokorska, born in 1954 in Khmelnytskyi oblast (central Ukraine), now works at a Ukrainian-language gymnasium in central Kyiv having studied at the Ivano-Frankivsk Pedagogical Institute. During an interview held (in Ukrainian) together with two of her colleagues, she described how she dealt with the issue of Stalinist repression:

I told my students: “when you get home ... ask your mum and dad how their families lived during the famine and in the postwar repression”. When they came to class they were shocked. They didn’t know that their grandmother or grandfather had been in prison for seven or ten years, that their relatives were scattered across several oblasts. ... Every year we have a history week at school. I asked my students to make an issue of a newspaper about their relatives who ended up in the Gulag. Later they made a presentation about it. Afterwards, one grandfather came up to me and said: “I am so grateful to you. There is nothing more important to me than the fact that my grandson came to me and asked about this”. This man was a victim of the repression after the war. He had received many medals during the war [World War II]. This was the wave of mass repression that took place in 1946/47. He said: “Now my grandson knows about me, where I was, what I had to do. I myself can’t remember any more than this. My grandson knows and he has told everyone here about me today”.

On the one hand, a child’s experience in a state institution can catalyse the recollection and transmission of memories in the family that establishes a connection between generations. On the other hand, the retelling of these stories in the context of the schools links the stories back to a larger history proposed by the state and in this way may serve to discipline students, and indeed family members, as citizens of a Ukrainian state. Memory and history reinforce one another to produce and reproduce a sense of membership in a political community albeit one which is often fragmented.

It is also likely that others’ family histories are being covered up and silenced because they do not fit into the new historical narrative. Liubov’s observations refer to this indirectly:

There were so many topics barred from scrutiny in our totalitarian society that there are simply not enough researchers to fully uncover them. The Brezhnev period is one example – the persecutions and the dissident movement. The persecutions and the destruction of the Ukrainian intelligentsia and peasantry in the Soviet period were conducted on a massive scale. The generation that took part in them is



still alive, and not just alive, but still active. This group is quite large ... [the members] occupy certain positions, and they are not interested in opening this all up because it will affect their own lives. The will to do this won't emerge immediately.

It is significant but not surprising that she did not cite concrete examples but rather spent more time describing positive instances of revelation and identification, for processes of forgetting exist alongside those of remembering and recollection. This is an area in need of further research: how class, ethnicity, persecution by, or involvement in, the Soviet regime affects the transmission of memory and perception of the new official history. This not only concerns silences surrounding events in recent history, as Liubov indicates, but also experiences of persecution that are simply too painful to express.<sup>16</sup> Where does this leave children who do not have family stories to tell in class?

One final example of how memory and history interact in schools concerns how learning state-sponsored history can marginalise the memories and experiences of those who actually participated in the historical events narrated. In many cases, students acquire the "omniscient point of view" of school history. They come to see events in a broader context – from the point of view of the state – through analysing documents and reading accounts of the events participants may never have seen. Liubov's comments about OUN/UPA made this especially clear:

Sometimes children know more about OUN/UPA in terms of what happened overall than those people who themselves took part in its activities and carried out some concrete activity in the forest. But these students, especially in the upper grades, know how it all happened, what the pros and cons were. Because a person who fought for them believes that everything they did was right – the fact that they destroyed Kovpak's troops<sup>17</sup> in the Carpathian raid. But a child who has studied about this knows that it was a tragedy because it was brother fighting brother. Because if these Ukrainian forces had united then the outcome might have been different. And so they [students] are quite critical of what all participants in these events have to say – and not just the Soviet veterans.

From this passage, it would appear that new truths of state sponsored history – buttressed by a discourse of science and objectivity – have produced disciplined national subjects. Students evaluate events positively or nega-

---

<sup>16</sup> See Kirmayer 1996 for a discussion of forgetting in Holocaust and child abuse narratives and Inowlocki 1993 for memory and forgetting of the Holocaust in Jewish families in Holland.

<sup>17</sup> A group of Soviet Ukrainian partisans.

tively from the standpoint of the formation of an independent Ukrainian state: what contributes to state independence is “good” and what detracts from it is “bad”. They are sceptical of the personal stories of individual participants whose knowledge is thereby subjugated. Whereas UPA veterans may have kept memories of these events alive throughout decades of official silence, their memories and experiences are now marginalised by a more “objective” state-centred account of history (cf. Lass 1994).<sup>18</sup>

These vignettes demonstrate various dimensions of the complex flow of memory and history between families and schools. School history often achieves the desired effect of teaching students to see history from the point of view of the state and dismisses the memories of participants of various events. Yet memories transmitted at home sometimes provide the means to contest school history. On the other hand, family memories can inadvertently tie students and their families back into the state-sponsored version of history. Further, parents may be influenced by school history: through their children they learn about hidden episodes of history which in turn, in some cases, influences their attitudes towards Ukraine’s statehood. In this way, we see that “history” and “memory” do not map as neatly onto “hegemony” and “resistance” as analysts tend to assume.

### **Contested History in the Classroom**

In the previous discussion I focused on how knowledge about the past transmitted in families and schools interacts. Clearly, the teacher plays a significant role in facilitating or restricting certain kinds of dialogue between these two contexts, an issue other writing on schools has highlighted (Luke, de Castell and Luke 1989). In this section I want to draw attention to teachers’ various strategies for dealing with conflicting perspectives in the classroom. The source of the controversy is often a comment expressed by a student that has likely been conveyed at home, and is often based on an interpretation linked to a Soviet or Russo-centric view of the historical event at hand. Some teachers’ strategies reveal their political views while others reveal a commitment to open discussion. In most cases teachers succeeded in changing how students viewed certain controversial issues. In this sense, what we encounter here is a different – but related – field of the disciplining of national subjects, a field where “facts” and “interpretations of facts” in Ukrainian history are contested rather than the idea of Ukrainian statehood

---

<sup>18</sup> I would like to make it clear that I am not making a moral judgment on the enforcement of a more neutral narrative and the marginalisation of veterans. I want to highlight this dimension of the interplay of history and memory in the context of transmitting history about an event long silenced and now re-written as part of the official historical narrative.

directly. Below I present three examples of controversies, each concerning a different event.

## **Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists and the Ukrainian**

### **Insurgent Army (OUN/UPA)**

Myroslava Stepaniuk graduated from the Lviv State University in 1988 and now teaches at a Ukrainian-language normal school in central Lviv. When I asked about controversies she had encountered during an interview that she gave together with one of her colleagues at her school, she provided the following example:

I can tell you about one incident that happened in a grade 11 class. We were talking about World War II and the role of OUN/UPA in the underground. We looked at the Soviet underground as well as OUN/UPA. I told them about the OUN underground, about the creation of the UPA and the role they played, about the involvement of Stepan Bandera. On the second day a student came to me and said, “Myroslava Ivanivna, my dad said that Bandera served Germany”. You see, our parents were taught something completely different. Soviet historiography interpreted OUN/UPA as bandits. Now interpretations of the history of this organisation are more objective. This is the kind of dispute that can emerge: a child hears something at home and understands Bandera as a certain kind of figure. In school we study this more objectively, correctly, things that have been proven. So I said: “If your dad thinks that, then ask him why two of Bandera’s brothers were arrested by Germans and killed. I think that if he served Germany, his two brothers wouldn’t have been arrested like that and Bandera wouldn’t have been in prison until 1944”. He thought for a moment and said: “Okay”. So you see, when we have facts, when we know them, we can convince them, and then these kind of controversies won’t exist any more.

Although Myroslava attempts to persuade the student to a particular point of view with reference to “the facts”, she nevertheless is presenting a particular interpretation. The facts in and of themselves do not necessarily preclude involvement with the Germans, but so constructed, can (at least for the moment) convince the student that the view presented in school is in fact more “objective”. She does not address the issue of OUN’s collusion with the Germans, which is an historical fact as well. It is also significant that she assumes all controversies will dissipate once everyone possesses “the facts” as if a homogeneous view, and consensus, automatically emerge from this kind of knowledge.

### The Artificial Famine of 1932-33

Oleksiy Mykhailenko, a graduate of the Kyiv Pedagogical Institute in 1985 as well as the director and history teacher at a lycée in Kyiv, encountered a different kind of situation, a situation where a student denied the fact that an event – the famine – actually took place. The artificial famine that occurred in 1932-33 was completely silenced in Soviet historiography and only in 1989 did the Soviet public become more broadly aware of it.<sup>19</sup> Despite the efforts of Ukrainian nationalists, the famine has not become a central part of official national ideology or a major commemoration day in Ukraine since independence. To this day, the Communist Party of Ukraine denies the fact that the famine occurred as a result of Soviet policy. In contrast to Myroslava who attempted to argue for a certain interpretation of an event with “facts”, Oleksiy organised an open discussion and turned to family memories in order to deal with this controversy in the classroom. During an interview held with his colleague, Oleksiy, a native Ukrainian speaker whose parents came to Kyiv from a nearby village during the sixties, described this situation:

We have a grade eleven student who has strong communist beliefs. When we studied the famine of 1932-33 he said: “That never took place ... There was a small famine but the horrors that everyone is talking about never happened”. How could I deal with this situation? Take him to the archives? Show him documents? I said: “Let’s have a discussion. Go home, talk to your grandmothers and grandfathers about this period. Come to class and tell me what you heard”. Some students cried during the lesson. One boy said: “My grandmother told me that that during the famine, it was very quiet, no one even cried”. You know how it is in a village – a dog barks, a rooster crows. There was none of that. Everything had been eaten. There

---

<sup>19</sup> The famine occurred as a result of Stalin’s collectivisation policy, a component of the first five-year plan, one purpose of which was to provide food for workers and city residents executing his massive industrialisation project. The kulaks, wealthy peasants concentrated disproportionately in Ukraine, were viewed by Stalin as an “enemy class” because they objected most strongly to the collectivisation policy because they did not want to give up their land or their animals. In 1929, Stalin introduced a policy of “dekulakisation” as a result of which kulaks’ land was confiscated and many kulaks shot and deported to camps in Siberia. Collectivisation was pursued in parallel whereby crippling grain demands were imposed on small farmers making it impossible to sustain their land and forcing them on to collectives. Stalin continued to increase grain quotas from year to year, and in 1932, despite a good harvest, the levels were so high the peasants were left with nothing to eat themselves. Those who attempted to hide grain or other food were executed. The famine also occurred in Kazakhstan and the North Caucasus. For accounts of the famine see Conquest (1986) and Serbyn and Krawchenko (1986).

were no farm animals, no cats, no dogs. That already shows that there was a famine. No one cried. No one had the strength to cry. They died silently. Lots of kids had such stories. Finally, this student said: “I take back what I said”, because real living people confirmed for him what happened. He said: “My grandfather lived in the city; in the city you wouldn’t have noticed this”. He lived in Kyiv, and in Kyiv the famine was not that noticeable.

Oleksiy contemplated using documents to argue that the famine really took place and could have engaged the student directly on a one-to-one basis as Myroslava did. Instead, he relied on the oral testimonies of living witnesses from his students’ families – in other words non-expert knowledge. As Oleksiy’s story demonstrates, the retelling of family stories had a powerful effect on the student concerned and convinced him of the actuality of the event.<sup>20</sup>

## The Germans and World War II

Teachers not only confront interpretations of history that predominated during the Soviet era, but also have to deal with new uncritical views that have emerged in response to the current social and economic hardship. Yelena Solovieva encountered the following situation:

Yelena: I remember about six years ago, when I just began to teach in this school and one girl said to me when we started to study the war (World War II): “Maybe it would have been better if the Germans won, maybe we would be living like they are now”. She said this during a lesson. And the students started to think: “Yes, it would have probably been better”.

TR: What did you say in this situation?

Yelena: I told them my opinion. Because they thought that if the Germans won the war we would be living like them. And then we looked at what the objective of the Germans was in invading the Slavic lands and began to clarify ... what they proposed to do, how many people they deported, the concentration camps, and then they started to see things differently.

---

<sup>20</sup> Liubov Kokorska also encountered a situation where one student claimed that the famine did not occur. However, her strategy was to break the class into two groups, instruct the students to research the period, and have them present evidence supporting the two opposing viewpoints. She wanted them to understand all of the issues thoroughly so that “students could form their own opinion”. She did not elaborate on the number of students who supported which view in the end. I was unable to pursue this point when she raised it because the discussion included two other teachers who carried on with other stories. Because time was limited, I was unable to return to this issue before the discussion ended.

Yelena intervened to counter the opinion that the student expressed. Using documents and citing facts she took an active role in attempting to challenge the viewpoint expressed and eventually managed to persuade them from their initial position.

These cases of contested history in the classroom illustrate some of the difficulties in generating a sense of identification with the nation through history. Despite efforts to portray OUN as freedom fighters, ambivalence about their role persists, while the famine – strangely absent from the pantheon of major national holidays – continues to be viewed by some either as a non-event or an event of smaller proportions brought on by natural causes rather than Soviet policy. Using techniques that give precedence to different kinds of knowledge generated in different contexts, the teachers I met often appear to have succeeded in influencing how students view the given event. Yet, given the key role history plays in making arguments for Ukrainian statehood in the post-Soviet political space which is still dominated by Russia and in which discourses of empire still circulate, how crucial is some level of consensus on the interpretation of events in Ukrainian history in generating commonsense acceptance of the idea of the Ukrainian state and its continued existence? The material I have presented spotlights this problem more than it moves towards answering it. However, it is clear that while at some level students have been disciplined to accept the idea of Ukrainian statehood, there is still much contestation surrounding some key events in the national historical narrative that justifies this state's existence.

## Conclusion

Using Foucault's ideas, school history can be considered a power/knowledge regime through which Ukrainian subjects are disciplined. Here the rather different ideas of Bourdieu and Passeron are also useful: following them, history taught at school, and indeed the process of school-based education, can be seen to play a major role in the reproduction of Ukraine as a political community. This was evident in teachers' and students' assumptions about the importance of learning history for the well-being of a person and the state as a whole. Disciplining was also evident at another level. As we saw, teachers often – though not always – succeed in convincing their students to accept the versions presented in school (new “truths” about “what really happened”). Yet, I have tried to suggest that the concept of “disciplining” is perhaps too schematic. A close examination of the interplay of memory and history in schools and families reveals a much more complicated and contradictory picture about the extent to which disciplining actually occurs. By examining the intricacies surrounding the transmission of knowledge about history, we see how personal and shared memories can both undermine and

reinforce the hegemony of history, and thus state-sponsored notions of national identity. In other words, conceptually, “memory” cannot be equated with “opposition” and “history” with “hegemony”.

This brings me to the relationship between history and memory in the political project of nation-building. Many scholars and policy makers continue to make the general assumption that history education is effective in inculcating a sense of nationness in young people. Hence the numerous studies of national mythologies embedded in textbooks and practical projects for re-writing textbooks and reforming curricula. While there is no doubt that history education has some effect in disciplining national subjects and thereby reproducing ideas of political community, my material suggests that the relationship between the effectiveness of history education in inculcating a national idea needs to be problematised and not assumed. In Ukraine, there are a number of events – namely those of World War II – that are so hotly contested, no consensus on their interpretation has been reached today. Personal and family memories, Ukrainian historical narratives, and Soviet official history all contest each other in the classroom, often leading to ambivalence among young people. Indeed, in such situations where there are so many conflicting memories and an absence of a commonsense understanding of a shared history, to what extent can history education be effective in reproducing the idea of Ukrainian statehood?

### Acknowledgements

I would like to express gratitude to the individuals in Ukraine who took time from their busy schedules to meet with me. I would also like to thank Frances Pine, Haldis Haukanes and Deema Kaneff for their comments on the draft of this chapter.

### References

- Abrams, P. 1988. [1977]. Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State. *Journal of Historical Sociology* 1 (1): 58-59.
- Alonso, A. M. 1988. The Effects of Truth: Re-presentations of the Past and the Imagining of Community. *Journal of Historical Sociology* 1 (1): 33-57.
- Anderson, B. 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Armstrong, J. 1990. *Ukrainian Nationalism*. 3rd ed. Englewood, Colo.: Ukrainian Academic Press.
- Bourdieu, P., and J.-C. Passeron. 1990. *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*. London: Sage.

- Boyarin, J. 1994. Space, Time and the Politics of Memory. In J. Boyarin (ed.), *Remapping Memory: The Politics of Timespace*, pp. 1-37. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Conquest, R. 1986. *Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine*. London: Hutchinson.
- Dyke, T. E. A. 2000. Memory, History and Remembrance Work in Dresden. In D. Berdhal, M. Bunzl, and M. Lampland (eds.), *Altering States: Ethnographies of Transition in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*, pp. 139-157. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Foucault, M. 1976. *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*. London: Penguin Books.
- . 1977. *Discipline and Punish: the birth of the prison*. London: Allen Lane.
- Halbwachs, M. 1980. *The Collective Memory*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Honcharenko, N. 1998 Mify v Suchasnykh Pidruchnykh z Istorii Ukrainy. *Dukh i Litera* 3-4: 220-230.
- Inowlocki, L. 1993. Grandmothers, Mothers, Daughters: Intergenerational Transmission in Displaced Families in Three Jewish Communities. In D. Bertaux, and P. Thompson (eds.), *Between Generations: Family Models, Myths and Memories*, pp. 139-153. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Iakovenko, N. 2001. About "Historical Memory" and "Historical Traditions" of Ukrainian People. *The Independent Cultural Journal "JI"* 22: 4-22.
- Kirmayer, L. J. 1996. Landscapes of Memory: Trauma, Narrative and Dissociation. In M. Lambek, and P. Antze (eds.), *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*, pp. 173-198. London: Routledge.
- Lambek, M. 1996. The Past Imperfect: Remembering as Moral Practice. In M. Lambek, and P. Antze (eds.), *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*, pp. 235-254. London: Routledge.
- Lass, A. 1994. From Memory to History: The Events of November 17 Dis/membered. In R. S. Watson (ed.), *Memory, History and Opposition under State Socialism*, pp. 87-104. Santa Fe: School of American Research.
- Levinson, B. A., and D. Holland. 1996. The Cultural Production of the Educated Person: An Introduction. In B. A. Levinson, D. E. Folley, and D. C. Holland (eds.), *The Cultural Production of the Educated Person: Critical Ethnographies of Schooling and Local Practice*, pp. 1-56. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Lisovskaya, E., and V. Karpov. 1999. New Ideologies in Post-Communist Russian Textbooks. *Comparative Education Review* 43 (4): 522-543.



- Luke, C., S. de Castell, and A. Luke. 1989. Beyond Criticism: The Authority of the School Textbook. In A. Luke, S. de Castell, and C. Luke (eds.), *Language, Authority and Criticism: Readings on the School Textbook*, pp. 245-260. London: The Falmer Press.
- Ministerstvo Osvity Ukrainy. 1998. *Prohramy dlia Serednoi Zahal'noosvitnoi Shkoly: Istoriiia Ukrainy 5-11 Klasy ta Vsesvitnia Istoriiia 6-11 Klasy*. Kyiv: Perun.
- Ministerstvo Prosvieshchienia SSSR i Ministerstvo Prosvieshchienia USSR. 1986. *Programmy Vosmiletnei i Srednei Shkoly: Istoriiia 4-10 Klassy; Osnovy Sovetskogo Gosudarstva i Prava 8 Klass*. Kyiv: Radianska Shkola.
- Mitchell, T. 1991. The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and Their Critics. *American Political Science Review* 85 (1): 77-96.
- Munslow, A. 1997. *Deconstructing History*. London: Routledge.
- Prizel, I. 2000. Nation-Building and Foreign Policy. In S. L. Wolchuk, and V. Zviglyanich (eds.), *Ukraine: The Search for a National Identity*, pp. 11-30. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Serbyn R., and B. Krawchenko (eds.). 1986. *Famine in Ukraine 1932-33*. Edmonton (Alberta): Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta.
- Turchenko, F. H. 1994. *Novitnia Istoriiia Ukrainy. Chastyna Persha 1917-1945 10 Klas*. Kyiv: Heneza.
- Wanner, C. 1998. *Burden of Dreams: History and Identity in Post-Soviet Ukraine*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Watson, R. S. 1994. Memory, History and Opposition under State Socialism. In R. S. Watson (ed.), *Memory, History and Opposition under State Socialism*, pp. 1-20. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.
- Wilson, A. 1998. National History and National Identity in Ukraine and Belarus. In G. Smith, V. Law, A. Bohr, E. Allworth, and A. Wilson (eds.), *Nation-Building in the Post-Soviet Borderlands: The Politics of National Identity*, pp. 23-47. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Yurchak, A. 1997. The Cynical Reason of Late Socialism: Power, Pretense and the Anekdot. *Public Culture* 9 (2): 161-188.

## PART II

---

### POWER, AUTHORITY AND IDEOLOGY

---

State ideology provides the intellectual markers for determining what is legitimate ‘history’ and what is unauthorised ‘memory’; hence the past is an important instrument in the reproduction or undermining of state (or religious) ideology. In the hands of officials the past is a tool for extending and legitimating powers, but outside state boundaries it is also a potential instrument of resistance. As it is the public domain which is privileged – providing as it does the legitimate framework and point of orientation for social values and order – the achievement of an authoritative public version(s) of the past is a fundamental concern for people actively contesting, creating and negotiating the boundaries of their community, all of whom are vying to gain the upper hand. But how social space is divided between public and private, and the implication of the past in this process, varies amongst ideological contexts.

The chapters in this part look at the role of the past in a number of ideological contexts and the use of the past for supporting or undermining power and authority.

The first three papers discuss these themes in terms of postsocialist states. Socialist ideology attributed central prominence to the past: economic, political and social aims were understood in terms of a goal oriented and morally laden past which underscored the very meaning of the socialist development project (Watson 1994).<sup>1</sup> Socialist state officials, keen to control the past, and therefore determine the present paths and future outcomes, made considerable, and relatively successful, attempts at defining and controlling the state approved version of the past (through government control of the media and other organs at the state’s disposal). This ‘centralisation’ of the past delegated history to the public domain and exiled other memories to private realms of social life.

---

<sup>1</sup> Watson, R. (ed.). 1994. *Memory, History and Opposition under State Socialism: An Introduction*. In R. Watson, *Memory, History and Opposition under State Socialism*, pp. 1-20. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.

Religion provides a particularly fruitful platform from which to explore the role of the past under socialist ideology. Since state ideology advocated a secular history, religious practices and rememberings were relegated to the realm of private memories. Despite various persecutions in the public sphere and the forced 'domestication' of religion (Dragadze 1993)<sup>2</sup>, it survived, and sometimes even thrived, in the private sphere. The religious community was symbolically maintained, in part, through memories. In eastern Europe, after 1989, this public/private boundary shifted, and the domains often reversed, as previously private religious memories moved into the public space. The once marginal past was legitimated and new validation was granted to the religious community.

The first paper in this part provides a fine example of the importance of religious memories in the survival of the Greek Catholic Church in Romania and its growing prominence following the reforms. But the state-religion relationship was often far more complex than this and the role of religious memories in socialist states was by no means straightforward. Chapters 7 and 8 provide evidence that religious memories and commemorations were not always relegated to a position of opposition to state socialism. Sometimes it is more useful to see them occupying a space outside the realm of the state (the Crimea situation) or even working in some mutually compatible way (as in the Bulgarian case). There were contexts (occasions and periods) where religious commemorations existed in parallel with state publicly acknowledged ones. For example during World War II Stalin gave his approval for religious practices in the USSR on condition that the Orthodox Church support the war efforts. In less traumatic times, there were also 'public' spaces occupied by religion; for example where Soviet ideology was not well developed – as in the case of death rituals – religious commemorations filled the 'niche' (Chapter 7). The Bulgarian case discussed in Chapter 8 indicates another space for the practice of religion during socialism: that held by non-conventional or non-institutionalised religions. Non-conventional religious figures were not subject to the same restraints as religious ones (at least not in the Bulgarian case). Ambiguity, that 'grey' space between ideological boundaries, was sometimes a key to attaining a degree of freedom.

In capitalism, the past also serves an important ideological role, bound up as it is in legitimating particular types of relations of power and inequality (e.g. see Fabian 1983).<sup>3</sup> It demarcates a very different series of public/private

---

<sup>2</sup> Dragadze, T., 1993. The Domestication of Religion under Soviet Communism. In C. Hann (ed.), *Socialism. Ideals, Ideologies, and Local Practice*, pp. 148-156. London: Routledge.

<sup>3</sup> Fabian, J., 1983. *Time and the Other. How Anthropology Makes its Object*. New York: Columbia University Press.

boundaries from the socialist case – e.g. divisions based on class which were not ideologically acceptable under socialism. (So, for instance, the remembered pasts recalled by different classes through, for example, the use of artefacts, varies – see Radley 1997: 58).<sup>4</sup> Chapter 9 focuses on the issue of class relations and how memory is created and used in the establishment of an academic identity by an Italian anthropological discipline still in its infancy. Pizza's chapter is important because it suggests that the making of memories and a history is central to the creation of an academic community, in helping to define its boundaries and identity. Moreover, this process involves establishing relations of power and inequality. In the process of creating their own memories, anthropologists marginalise and sideline others. Memories shared by anthropologists and the local community are used instrumentally by academics to legitimate their own lineage. Like Orthodox religion during socialism, local memories are relegated to the private sphere, while anthropological and other expert memories dominate the public domain. And just as all priests were not equally acknowledged after 1989 for their struggle against socialism (Chapter 6), and all seers were not given equal respect by the Bulgarian socialist government (Chapter 8), so in this capitalist case, memory and strategic forgetting go hand in hand (see also Forty and Küchler 2001).<sup>5</sup> The memories shared by anthropologists and locals that anthropologists need to revisit and keep alive in order to create and maintain their community become the very ones from which the locals find themselves marginalised and not allowed to forget. Through upholding the authoritative memories, anthropologists gain power over both the people they study and the transformation of local rituals and practices. Notably, in this capitalist context the memories become public and gain validity in part through being transformed into objects of economic worth, as commodities.

---

<sup>4</sup> Radley, A. 1990. Artefacts, Memory and a Sense of the Past. In D. Middleton, and D. Edwards (eds.), *Collective Remembering*, pp. 46-59. London: Sage Publications.

<sup>5</sup> Forty, A., and S. Küchler (eds.). 1999. *The Art of Forgetting*. Oxford: Berg.



## ***Chapter 6***

# **Burying Two Bishops: Legitimizing the Church through the Politics of the Past in Romania**

Vlad Naumescu

## **Introduction**

In her book “The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change”, Katherine Verdery (1999) explores a somewhat strange question regarding what she calls “the parade of dead bodies” in the postsocialist period. She considers the practice of burials and re-burials to be characteristic of this historical interval and its political transformations. In this respect, examination of the symbolism behind the moving of corpses reveals a more animated political life than more traditional means of political analysis. The anthropological material related to funeral rites can explain the articulation of different worlds of meaning into these single vehicles. The body, or here dead bodies, can incorporate almost unlimited symbolism. Thus any social meaning inscribed onto “empty” corpses has the potential to carry a significance that can be read politically. Verdery describes the activity around particular “famous dead” bodies, concentrating on the immediate meaning resting in them and the social reactions provoked by their symbolic investment.

My inquiry into the world of the dead she portrays starts from a related question: what remains after “the parade of dead bodies” has passed by? I shall argue that while Verdery’s assumptions provide valuable insights into present changes, there are more consistent cultural traits hidden behind these symbolic processes, and these cases can be further read as expressions of a lasting pattern of a group’s memory production and transmission.

The community I discuss here has been visible in the past years mostly because of its contested social presence. Greek Catholics in Romania (as well as in other places in eastern Europe – see for example Hann 1993, 1999) represent a complex and sometimes contradictory focus for researchers from various fields. Members of a minority church which was suppressed by the communist regimes but reappeared after 1989 making strong political claims, Greek Catholics are Byzantine by tradition, belong to the Catholic

Church and follow the Pope's spiritual lead. They now face many of the most troubling problems associated with postsocialist transformations, ranging from denominational conflicts to property issues, and from nationalism to global-local interferences. Little anthropological research has been done on this community and what is available consists mainly of short-term studies of the political behaviour of members of the elite (Hann 1999, 2000, forthcoming; Verdery 1999).

The re-burial of Bishop Inocentiu Micu Klein (first buried 1700, then in August 1997), and the burial of Cardinal Alexandru Todea (in May 2002), were performed in the same space, the town of Blaj in Transylvania, Romania. The two dead bishops now share neighbouring burial places in the Greek Catholic Cathedral of Blaj. I will look here at the burials of both Micu Klein and Cardinal Todea as deliberate gestures on the part of elites trying to mould the production and preservation of social memory of a particular community.<sup>1</sup>

Mnemotechnics, as sets of mnemonic practices<sup>2</sup> inscribed in cultural patterns, can represent the analytical category through which an investigation of social memory is possible. The modalities of memorisation which a group uses determine the way memory is produced and transmitted in that community. Further, by taking a diachronic perspective on the mnemotechnics used by a specific group one can understand the configurations of its collective memories<sup>3</sup> within the context of cultural change.

The concept of postsocialism has been described as a full collective re-writing of the past (Verdery 1999; Jedlowski 2001). Historians have recently argued for the development of a social history of remembering, one that follows variations in the modes of transmission of public memory and the social uses of remembering and forgetting (Burke 1997). In a similar vein, Matt Matsuda examined *a memory of the modern*, suggesting that any investigation of historical evidence reveals a particular memory, historically positioned (Matsuda 1996). By situating the two burial cases in the frame-

---

<sup>1</sup> The present study is focused on these two events. I witnessed the first one as a participant in 1997. Todea's burial constituted the case study for my MA thesis in cultural anthropology in Bucharest, based on long-term presence in the community and interviews taken in 2002. I would like to thank the editors who took the time to read and make useful suggestions on the text and especially Frances Pine who kept encouraging me to improve the initial text.

<sup>2</sup> Olick, J.K., and J. Robbins 1998: 112.

<sup>3</sup> Here collective memory is seen as a set of social representations about the past which a social group produces, institutionalises, preserves and transmits through the interaction of its members (see Jedlowski 2001: 33). Jedlowski refers to a plurality of collective memories because within a single group one can find various sets of representations about a shared past. For a theoretical discussion on the conceptual uses of 'memory' in social sciences see Olick and Robbins 1998.

work of social memory I am also attempting to reveal discontinuities, arising from historical changes, which are manifested within the community's memory.

### **Church as Privileged Space of Memory**

One of the most important observations made by Maurice Halbwachs in a study of the social framework of memory was that space is used for memory transmission. In *La topographie légendaire des évangiles en terre sainte: étude du mémoire collective*<sup>4</sup> Halbwachs uses the example of the European pilgrims building an imaginary construction of a Holy Land, starting with the 4<sup>th</sup> century in Palestine. He argues that they constructed a land of physical altars that reflected their own images of Christ and his life on Earth. In other words, collective memories that belong to communities limited in space and time can attach to particular distant places, strategically important for the group.

The process of attaching memory to physical and imagined spaces has been observed in the classical and renaissance arts of memory (*ars memoria*) and its relation to Christianity has been extensively studied. Frances Yates explains in her study of the strategies of memorisation (Yates 1994) how the mnemotechnics developed during the Middle Ages and Renaissance are based on loci: places and spatial images of memory. The art of memory “uses contemporary architecture for its memory places and contemporary imagery for its images...” (Foreword, xi). Memory, like any other art, includes then its specific periods; Christian images of memory harmonise with the gothic cathedrals in which one can see a symbolic memory-space.

The historical development of Christianity as a dominant ideology and of the Church's monopoly over intellectual production initiated a special relation between memory and religion. The Christianisation of memory techniques, the split between a circular liturgical memory and a laic memory, the remembrance of the dead and especially of dead saints, became new characteristics of collective memory (Le Goff 1992). Memory was a central part of the Christian ritual: Christianity and Judaism are “religions of remembrance” (Oexle 1976: 80).<sup>5</sup> The Evangelical tradition and Christian education insist on the act of remembrance as the main focus of devotional practice. The liturgical calendar became part of the remembrance and com-

---

<sup>4</sup> See Vromen, S. 1995: 28.

<sup>5</sup> See Le Goff: “And this is true in several respects, because divine acts of salvation situated in the past form the content of faith and the object of rites but also because the Holy Book on one hand, and the historical tradition on the other, insist, essentially, on the necessity of remembrance as a fundamental religious activity” (1992: 68).



memoration of past events, centred on the life of Christ from birth to death and re-enacted daily through the Eucharistic celebration.

As part of popular religion<sup>6</sup>, memory focused on Christian martyrs and the dead. Martyrs were witnesses of faith, and after their death Christian memory was mobilised around their remembrance. Martyrs' names appeared in *Libri Memoriales*<sup>7</sup> in which churches registered those whose testimony they kept and prayed for. The tomb of a martyr was the centre of the church, known as *martyrium* but also as *memoria*. A saint was commemorated on a special liturgical day, usually the day of his or her death (Le Goff 1992: 71).

Devotions concentrated on miracles and religious spaces kept alive the memory of saints and their miracles.<sup>8</sup> From the beginning of Christianity names of the dead were introduced at a special moment of the liturgy.<sup>9</sup> The development of Latin theology gave central place to a concept for the celebration and remembrance of the dead: the Purgatory (Le Goff 1981).

The Church lost its monopoly on memory only in the 18<sup>th</sup> century with the incipient expression of national identities, following a historical process of progressive exteriorisation of individual memory (Le Goff 1992). Commemoration became both a part of the French revolutionary programme and, simultaneously, its legitimisation.<sup>10</sup> Thus a fast laicisation of memory was initiated in which collective remembrance moved from religious practice into public places, becoming part of political ritual.<sup>11</sup>

Until today, however, the church has remained a community of commemorators in which "the religious memory with all the efforts made to separate itself from the temporal society, follows the same rules as the entire collective memory: it does not preserve the past but recreates it with the help

---

<sup>6</sup> Badone makes an overview of the uses of the "two-tiered" model in anthropology in the introduction chapter of "Religious Orthodoxy and Popular Faith in European Society" (Badone 1990). She discusses the understanding of popular religion as "religion as practiced" following Christian (1989).

<sup>7</sup> From the 17<sup>th</sup> century they are also known as obituaries. There was a special form through which their remembrance was evoked: "The men and the women that we bring into memory, those inscribed in the book of memory to be remembered, those whose names we wrote to remember them" (Le Goff 1992: 72).

<sup>8</sup> One can notice on the walls of many churches in Europe plaques invoking certain miracles and blessings performed by a particular saint, from his/her own lifetime up to the present.

<sup>9</sup> In the 11<sup>th</sup> century, due to monastic pressures, an annual celebration for the dead was established on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November (celebrated today not only as a religious but also a political event under the name of "the Day of the Dead" – when ceremonies are usually performed for national martyrs, at various monuments of unknown soldiers, etc.).

<sup>10</sup> The 1791 French Constitution stated: "There will be established national holidays for the purpose of preserving the memory of the French Revolution" (Ozouf 1988: 202).

<sup>11</sup> For an example of how lay (as opposed to consecrated, religiously institutionalised) places of memory function in changing political contexts see Vromen 1995.

of material traces, rites, texts, traditions left behind, but also with the help of recent psychological and social products which form the present” (Halbwachs 1994).<sup>12</sup>

Both the commemoration of the dead and the relation between transmission and preservation of memory in specific religious sites are central to the following discussion about Blaj and its Greek Catholic Cathedral.

### **Blaj and Places of Memory**

Blaj is a small town situated in central Transylvania, 100 km away from Cluj-Napoca. It has a population of 20,000 of whom the majority are Orthodox. A literal description might represent the town at first glance in the following manner:

From the train window you can see a little provincial town in between hills. Next to the railway station your attention is claimed by a huge brick church (Orthodox) built at the back of the station but dominating the view of any passenger for whom Blaj is a two-minute stop. The long, central street goes almost into nowhere, managing to miss the central square, situated somewhere on the right. For an architect, the square reveals itself as harmoniously arranged, a discreet example of late baroque. Everything seems to direct your eyes towards the cathedral, the most impressive building there.

Blaj was built in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by Inocentiu Micu Klein, a Greek Catholic bishop. In 1737, Klein moved the seat of the Greek Catholic Church there and started a spiritual and educational centre which is remembered today primarily because of the presence of several imposing school buildings spread around the town. Two additional events brought the town into the annals of national history: the emergence of the national movement, “the Transylvanian School” (Scoala Ardeleana), in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and the establishment of the 1848 revolutionary movement on the *Liberty Field* (Campia Libertatii) in Blaj.

The historical significance of Blaj developed over the years as it became a cultural site, known as Little Rome.<sup>13</sup> Today, for some, the town has taken on a wide historical mantle. For example, for one Transylvanian student:

Blaj represents History for Romania, and not only for the Greek Catholic Church but also for the entire Romania, because had the Greek Catholic Church not been created, we most probably would be

---

<sup>12</sup> Quotation translated from the 1994 French edition, see Halbwachs 1994: 221.

<sup>13</sup> “Mica Roma” was the name given to the town by Mihai Eminescu, Romanian poet (1850-1889) and frequently referred to in literary writings.

speaking something different today in Transylvania...we started to have liturgies in the Romanian language one century before the Orthodox Church while they were still using church Slavonic (Mihai, student Cluj).

Such symbolic meaning engages a dimension greater than the community itself. For a member of the clergy:

Blaj is the symbol of the Romanian Greek Catholic Church's birth and existence, the symbol of Romanianness, a place of reference (Angel, Baia Mare).

Thus, the construction of Blaj as representative of the Romanian culture came to be associated with the Church and its history.

The Romanian Greek Catholic Church arose in the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century as an option to the Orthodox Church of Transylvania, facilitated by the politics of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This choice, following precedents in Galicia (1596) and Transcarpathia (1646), united local Orthodox churches with the Catholic Church of Rome, recognising both the Pope as Head of the church, and the Florentine theological points (1439), but retaining unchanged the Byzantine rite.<sup>14</sup>

The Greek Catholic Church's relation to Romanian nation and its equal status with the mainstream Orthodox Church was recognised by the very liberal Romanian Constitution in 1923. But 1948 brought a series of legal decisions taken by the new communist government against the Church, culminating in its official elimination. This marked the beginning of a long period of suffering for its members, many of whom faced life imprisonment and death. In the process of creating a new discourse on the national past, communists left Blaj outside history, because of its strong link with the forbidden Church. This is how a Transylvanian writer remembers the censorship of the town's history:

For some time after 1948 very little literature about Blaj was published. Then we were "allowed" to publish studies, articles, even books started to come out. In spite of these frequent examples, such studies and articles...were not convincing because they were miss-

---

<sup>14</sup> A large historical bibliography regarding the Union is available, from which I mention only a few references: Suttner, E. C. (1998) *Bisericile Răsăritului și Apusului de-a lungul istoriei bisericești*, (*The Churches of East and West throughout the history of churches*) Iași, Ed. Ars Longa; a balanced well-structured argument between the two Romanian Byzantine churches (Orthodox and Greek Catholic) can be found in Bonteanu, T. (1997) *O turmă și un păstor. Problema împăcării bisericii de răsărit cu cea de apus*. (*One Flock and One Shepherd: The Problem of the Reconciliation Between the Eastern and Western Churches*) Cluj-Napoca, Editura Unitas. Document Madrid 1952 *Biserica Română Unită. Două sute cinci zeci de ani de istorie*. (*The Romanian Greek Catholic Church: 250 years of History*). Cluj-Napoca, Editura Viața Creștină, 2000.

ing the point: that this modest town in between the Tarnave rivers, created by Bishop Inocentiu Micu Klein in 1737, was about to become for a long time the cultural capital of the Romanians in Transylvania. The explanation (for this) was very easy but one could not say it: all the accomplishments of this town have become possible because of the Greek Catholic Church.<sup>15</sup>

During this period the Church underwent a process of transformation, moving from the public sphere into more private locations where it was still able to exist in a minimal form. After the 1960s some of the survivors of the communist repression continued to work for the now illegal Church, gaining the support of local communities and offering private religious services. Communication was limited, and took place primarily among family members and within relations of trust. Following a process of *domestication*<sup>16</sup> the Church became an underground community of informal networks.

Counter-memory, described in the literature on totalitarian regimes as consisting of alternative narratives to official state socialist versions of the past – “memory that resists”<sup>17</sup> – was an integrated part of this underground life. Reconstituting the past, even in a liturgical form<sup>18</sup> as these church members were doing, became an act of resistance. In effect, Greek Catholics preserved their affiliation to Rome, the embodiment of a symbolic identity-building relation, through repeated acts of remembrance. The Church lived on in its members’ memory, in a specially created space where these *dissident memories* could be kept, transmitted and perpetuated (Esbenshade 1995).

---

<sup>15</sup> Buzasi, I. 1999: 155. The book contains answers given by different Romanian intellectuals to an enquiry made by Vatra cultural journal regarding their understanding of the role of the Greek Catholic Church in the history of Romania.

<sup>16</sup> Dragadze, T. 1993: 150. Her example refers to Islam in the Soviet Union. I make use of the concept in this case to characterise how the border between sacred and profane became more permeable (and thus more accessible) with the formal disappearance of the institutional Church.

<sup>17</sup> See Esbenshade 1995: 73. He describes what he calls *the Kundera paradigm* as “the relationship in Eastern Europe between the state that erases and the memory that resists”. It can actually be seen as a potential model of remembering and forgetting adapted to any totalitarian context.

<sup>18</sup> For someone not familiar with the Eastern Christian liturgies, the differences can hardly be noticed. But for Greek Catholics hearing certain “marker-words” said by the priest during the liturgy was enough to recognise his political beliefs in confessional matters. See for example difference between: *Spirit* (word of Latin origin) and *Duh* (word of Slavic origin) both used in the name of the Holy Ghost in church services.

During this period, a Greek Catholic cleric, in a private letter addressed to a Diaspora priest, described the cathedral in Blaj.<sup>19</sup> His words illustrate how the community of commemorators built an alternative imaginary place to the physical space of forbidden memory.

Seen from the outside the Cathedral is simple and unpretentious. Looking from the outside one can notice its modest aspect, noble and welcoming. She<sup>20</sup> is permanently shining in the middle of the night as bright as during the day. Her attitude is faithful and untouched, watching like a guard, as she was since the moment of her erection.

During the past many storms and hurricanes have fought against this Cathedral. And she is still standing. Strikes and hits have beaten her but she is still pure, the symbol of a suffering, oppressed people, a light of faith and heroism. Her bell towers like two sentinels guard the destiny of our Church, and our People. The spirals, as two warm hands, are lifting in prayer and invite us to raise our thoughts to the skies, from where all the blessing is coming.

And now, let's enter this blessed Cathedral! Don't say a word! Let her talk by herself, for herself. She expresses a feeling of melancholy and sadness. Look around! There's no one! Nobody sitting on the benches, no one in the sanctuary, no one at the altar! They have all left her.

In this silent solitude someone asks: where are the bishops, the famous preachers, renowned academics and professors, young priests, the multitude of students, groups of boys and girls? Where are the generations of peasants, people who were going to the altar for a promise or cry, getting instead hope and peace?

All these faithful, from the neighbourhood or away, from here or the other world, past and present, are keeping you in their memory, but they never enter this place. They worship you as body from their body, soul from their soul. Oh, saint and beloved cathedral of Blaj! They wait for the day and hour when your great bells will sound again, calling all faithful, bishops, priests, people, young and old, to come in victoriously and unite in singing *Te Deum*, the song of victory for truth and justice. Only then we will find ourselves while entering your interior space. Only then will our crying turn into joy, our silence into a jubilant song. Our crosses will transform into resurrection and our hopes will come true.

---

<sup>19</sup> The letter was published later by the priest to whom it was addressed and quoted in Rațiu 1993: 200-1.

<sup>20</sup> Note the priest's use of the feminine pronoun 'she'.

Going beyond the dramatic voice of the evocation and noting the feminine personification of the Church, we can observe the presence of all the recurrent themes previously discussed: a community of commemorators left out of history, traumatised, forming a *milieu de memoire* (Nora 1989: 7) a space created to preserve local recollections of an alternative past. Thinking about its virtual but enduring preservation throughout the communist period we can also describe this tenacious group as a “mnemonic community which is no longer defined by spatial boundaries...but rather the duration of the story through time” (Cappelletto 2003: 245).

Their story not only remained alive until 1989 but reappeared in a revitalised form with the fall of the communist regime, when the notion of “resurrected church” took its place in the first public discourses of the renewed Greek Catholic Church, thereby validating its permanence through time.

What has happened to the Cathedral since?

Blaj, with its Cathedral Church, has to give confidence to the Greek Catholic Church which has to have the courage to open itself, to forget its fixations with being a small, national Church. The fact that such brave men [Klein and Todea] have emerged from this Church proves that it is not a provincial Church, miniature copy of the Eastern or Western Churches – it is a Church in which God works and we know that his work lasts. The Romanian Greek Catholic Church has to overcome the fear that it might be assimilated or swallowed by one side or the other. It is a critical time for Blaj as representative of the entire Church (Mihai, student, Cluj).

The symbolic meaning of the cathedral has to be re-established in its proper site. A place of memory emerges, as Nora put it, at the convergence of three meanings: material, symbolic and functional (Nora 1989: 18). After 1991, when the Greek Catholics regained the Cathedral<sup>21</sup>, the material and functional aspects were united. The Church still had to struggle to re-direct the symbolic meaning back into place – an important step in defining its present identity.

The convergence between space (the cathedral) and event (the two burials) is the key to the present examination of the mnemonic practices employed by the Greek Catholic community. We have seen that the community creates and privileges certain places for the preservation of their memory and noticed the continual form of this process.

---

<sup>21</sup> The Cathedral belonged officially to the Orthodox Church from 1948 until 1991. In 1991 one of the parish priests, Pr. Ioan Farcas, changed his affiliation and became Greek Catholic, together with the church building which he offered to the then head of the Church, Cardinalul Todea. A legal decision confirmed this status soon afterwards.

Thus, I turn in the next section to a detailed description of two graves situated on the left and the right sides of the cathedral's iconostas.<sup>22</sup> The two men described below, whose remains the tombs mark, were, at different historical moments, leaders of the Greek Catholic Church and the rest of this chapter will investigate how they were brought together into the church.

### Exemplary Biographies

Inocentiu Micu Klein was a Greek Catholic bishop (1700-1768), protector of the Church and promoter of the Romanian national movement; he was buried in Rome, in exile, almost 240 years ago and brought to Romania in 1997 to be reburied in the cathedral of Blaj.

Cardinal Alexandru Todea (1912-2002) became a priest in 1948; he was imprisoned for 13 years, and then elected metropolitan of the Church during its most difficult times (1986-1994). Made cardinal in 1991, he died in May 2002 after receiving national recognition, as well as recognition from the Vatican, for his sufferings and struggle. He was taken from Reghin<sup>23</sup> to Blaj where his body rests in the cathedral a couple of meters away from Micu Klein.

How did they end up in the cathedral church of Blaj, a place of memory as we have already seen, and what are the consequences for the community of these moves?

In the chapter dedicated to Klein, *The Restless Bones of Bishop Inocentiu Micu Klein*, Verdery (1999) discusses the political implications of his relocation from Rome to Blaj. She also points out that the entire event of his reburial had the potential to become nationally significant, but in fact remained local. The chosen community of commemorators was not the Romanian nation (which would have been possible as he was made part of the national gallery of heroes) but the Romanian Greek Catholic Church, and the repatriation of his remains carried the greatest implications for this small community.

For Greek Catholics, it was as if when Klein left Rome he started a movement across space and time, to the local specificity of place: in other words his final journey took him from the *extended identity* of the Greek Catholic Church (as part of the universal *katholiki* – Catholic Church) to the local form of Byzantine Catholicism. Through this journey, he himself came to be the symbol of affiliation with Rome, a point of identity very important

---

<sup>22</sup> The image of the two graves at the foot of the altar attracted my attention before the second burial in 2002 and it grew stronger with the burial itself.

<sup>23</sup> Reghin is a small town 100km north of Blaj, birthplace of the cardinal; he lived there during the underground period and for the last years of his life.

for reinforcing Greek Catholics' belonging. The particular representation of the Church that accompanied him was the story of its perseverance and victory over hardship and oppression (recall the last part of the Greek Catholic priest's dramatic evocation!).

It was his wish to come home [as written in his testament] and it's good like this as there he was among strangers. We all look to Rome with hope and maybe he also had his place there but home is something different (Iosif, parish member, Bucharest).

Before his funeral a three-day-academic colloquium took place, a meeting of clerics, old activists and friends of the Church. The intimacy of the people gathered around the remains of the bishop created the atmosphere of a reunion of close family and kin.

Compared to that of Klein, Todea's journey from Reghin to Blaj was shorter but it too was resonant with connotations of identity and belonging for the community. One parish member in his hometown described the event as follows:

In Reghin he was at home. There were many people who knew him and came to say goodbye. We were feeling as part of a large family which goes through a sad moment, however rich in spirituality. His arrival in Blaj, the place where he has to be honoured, created a sort of distance which has taken him away from us. But this is the way it has to be because Blaj is the symbol of the birth and existence of the Uniate Church and only here he can be properly honoured<sup>24</sup> (Cosmin, community member, Reghin).

Here again we can see a movement over space and time, but this time the voyage is from the *family* (kin, closely-related people) who assisted him during times of repression and clandestine practice, to the extended community of Romanian Greek Catholics. Like the reburial of bishop Klein, this was an event that could have generated national interest but "failed" to do so.<sup>25</sup>

After he returned to Reghin in 1964, Todea remained there, and was ceaselessly active in his efforts in support of the Church's revival.

In Reghin people came to visit from all the eparchies, there were preparations for consecrating priests; young priests were consecrated, all in secret (Valeria, parish member, Reghin).

---

<sup>24</sup> An argument supporting Verdery's idea of "proper burial" described in Chapter Three of the same book (Verdery 1999).

<sup>25</sup> Several politicians and public persons participated in this funeral, including the former Romanian president. The media coverage was however very small according to the organisers and most of the participants were members of the Greek Catholic community.



His last journey from Reghin to Blaj thus represents the passage from the *restricted identity* of the Church during underground times towards the wider or extended sense of belonging to a community of remembrance which is the Church itself. During the years of repression confessional activity was reduced to the devotional practice of some families and the secret ministrations of the few remaining priests. These activities were usually undertaken on an individual basis, as larger meetings carried increased danger for all participants. Todea's reburial in the church marked the emergence of the local Church, from its underground existence, into a very public and visible social space.

How did their individual experience then become transformed into the kind of exemplary memory some informants described? In what ways did it become significant for their personal lives?

I wanted to come to the funeral as a sign of respect and thanksgiving. But what was the reason for thanksgiving? Well, I come to say that I am what I am due to the people who, through their personal example, influenced my life. Had they not had courage I would have had less courage. Had they not had trust I would have had less trust. I went to Blaj to show to the one who passed away that his fight has not been in vain. One could find here an evangelical meaning also. As Todea lived his life in the light of those who were his examples, maybe Iuliu Hossu or Inocentiu Micu, they all drew courage from the example given by Christ who conquered the world – as the evil of the world, death (Mihai, student, Cluj).

The public discourse about Klein draws on his firm faith and his role as a national hero who led the way to freedom and hence to the establishment of the Romanian nation. The discourse about Todea on the other hand stresses his exemplary faith in spite of terrible suffering. Thus the two together constitute examples of the road the Church has to follow today: its members must transform suffering into virtue and continue on the Christian path as a reference point in Romania's transformation process.

Both bishops are representative characters whose biographies correspond to and revolve around major moments of the history of the Romanian Greek Catholic Church. The first is a reminder of the struggle to build a church and nation, and its belated recognition; the second the voyage from persecution, through the *underground life*, to present revival. They shape possible models of renewal for a not-yet re-institutionalised Church.

Inocențiu Micu consolidated the Greek Catholic Church, Alexandru Todea saved it. They both had to suffer for their Church – the first one in exile in Rome, the second in communist prisons (Mihai, student, Cluj).

There is a parallel created over time in the lives of the two clergymen who managed to support each other's "exemplary biographies".<sup>26</sup> Here, the construction of their remembrance merges two biographies into one, which can then be assumed by any "good Christian" member of the respective community.

[The two bishops are] two pillars of the Greek Catholic Church, two people who determined the history of the Church, who suffered for it, loved it and served it to their death (Angel, priest, Baia Mare).

Participants in the second funeral accepted the details marking a process of association and an affinity between the two heroes. A young community member discussing the spatial proximity of the two commented:

It's obvious that Todea's funeral in the cathedral, close to Micu Klein, will have in the future a significant symbolic value. What are the chances for the Romanian Greek Catholic Church to have another cardinal in the future? I remember that when the tomb was made in the church, next to the one for Klein, we thought that it was normal to be like this. Nobody considered the fact that it might not be the right place, even if no other metropolitan of Blaj has been buried there ... there is the metropolitans' chapel which preserves the graves of the bishops of Alba Iulia- Fagaras (Corina, youth leader, Blaj).

Todea's biography could become exemplary because it makes a possible "fit" with many individual stories. It also integrates various stereotypes held by members of the community about being Romanian (Verdery 1999: 77) and Christian. Ultimately, Christ's model of suffering is the one many of the priests-survivors employ to give meaning to the traumatic experiences they endured.

For the official image of the Church, Todea is a blameless character who stimulates enthusiasm and imposes respect: the absolute martyr, during communism and afterwards (see the enthusiasm of the Greek Catholic lay and youth towards Todea during the Pope's visit) (Corina, Blaj).

In 1990 the Church began its evolution from underground existence into the public sphere, and several people emerged to claim their merits and seek public recognition. Todea, then head of the underground Church, was one of those who actively reorganised the community of believers. Some of the

---

<sup>26</sup> The idea behind the creation and employment of heroic models has been discussed before – Verdery mentions it, referring to the power of exemplary national models in the shaping of the "Romanian national sentiment" (p. 77). Peter Burke (1997) discussing the transmission of social memory, employs the mechanism of hero-making as a possible explanation for the assimilation of a particular individual into the social memory of a given culture.

priests were refused recognition; some monastic orders with short histories have still, today, not been fully accepted. Todea was among those selected and promoted by the transforming memory of the community. In this process the mutually constructed values underpinning collective memory and the circumstances of remembrance determined the valorisation of particular memories of individuals.

Some aspects of Todea's biography and the fact that he has been acknowledged and chosen to represent the Church after 1989<sup>27</sup> allowed him to enter the same world of significations as Klein (a world which other community members also tried to access, but without success).

In some circles, among his colleagues from prison and the resistance, Todea was however a controversial character... but these controversies remained within restricted, marginal groups... My opinion is that the whole difference in Todea's case is made by his receiving the title of cardinal, which greatly enhanced the prestige he had... Justification? See the way other bishops with long years of prison and exemplary behaviour are treated: Gutiu is somewhere in the second row...; if you remember even the death of Ploscaru didn't provoke much reaction (Corina, youth leader, Blaj).<sup>28</sup>

Todea's standing in the congregation itself is actually the recognition of an exemplary image of the underground period, carrying the meaning of a common experience lived by the community. It evokes a recent past, shared by both priests and lay people, of suffering and dissidence, but also very importantly, it is a reminder of the success of the 1990 revival.

We can now see how the two bishops are re-integrated as martyrs into the social memory of Greek Catholics. Their biographies are constructed as exemplary and devotion to them has been established officially by the Church. Some of the martyr bishops who died in prison or after long suffering could also have been elected to represent community models. Popular devotions and beliefs cultivated around them during and after the underground times attached alternative meanings to their image, making the creation of an "exemplary memory"<sup>29</sup> more difficult.

---

<sup>27</sup> The major recognition being that of the Vatican; he became cardinal in 1992.

<sup>28</sup> Gutiu, Bishop and Archbishop of Cluj (1991-2002) now retired; Ioan Ploscaru, Bishop of Lugoj (1990-1998).

<sup>29</sup> Our bishops are "clean" from any confusing symbolic meaning: Klein has been too long in Rome, away from the community's daily devotion, and Todea's living presence is still strongly felt among people. Vasile Aftenie, one of the martyr bishops buried by the secret service in a Bucharest cemetery in 1950, is integrated into a local cult of graves. People come to pray to his grave as he is known under the name of 'the Saint'. Most of those who pray there don't make the connection between him and the Greek Catholic Church, themselves

I have been to the funeral as [the Cardinal] is a personality of our Church, a representative character, hero and maybe one day he will be declared martyr and part of the gallery of saints. It was also an occasion to meet other priests and friends... the event was impressive. There was a moment when I felt really impressed by the number of priests gathered there, a strong proof of the reality that we exist (Angel, priest, Baia Mare).

In attempting to answer the question of how individuals can enter the collective memory, we come to the mechanisms of forgetting and remembrance which a group employs. The Greek Catholic community engages with the same kind of mnemotechnics that the Church has been using for a long time: the making of martyrs, locating them within the church at the centre of the community, creating an official devotional cult<sup>30</sup> for their remembrance.

Blaj, as we saw, functions as a place of memory and the “exemplary” bishops as evocative means for the production of group memory. They become part of the commemorative practices which produce and transmit the social memory of the community.

In the last part of this chapter let us explore whether the present memory that Greek Catholics create possesses particular characteristics and what links socialist memories with postsocialist memory projects.

## Memory in the Present

The present case study has focused on the complex configuration formed by two funeral events and a cathedral in a small Romanian town. Its purpose has been to show how the Church employs certain mnemotechnics which are part of its established culture of memory. The building of symbolic sites, creating devotions and saints or martyrs as foci for commemoration, are acts the religious community assumes and pursues.

During socialist times these mnemonic devices were less employed, publicly, because of oppressive conditions; these in turn led to transformations within the community. At that time the role of memory was to conserve the Greek Catholic community's existence; with both the practice and identity being forced underground, collective memory remained the shelter of confessional identity.

As in most socialist states, memory regained its importance in socialist Romania due to a switch from literacy to orality: the spoken word became the trusted and entrusted one while the written word came to be

---

being of Orthodox background. For the Church that today is trying to establish an official cult of martyrs such popular-generated devotions are problematic.

<sup>30</sup> Which is actually a standardised form of commemoration within the Church.

mistrusted and was often seen as deliberately misleading (Skultans 1998). While printed text was ideologically corrupt and history was re-written accordingly, private memory came to be seen as the only reliable reference. This is a phenomenon which can be observed not only in the case of communist regimes but of all those where a totalitarian state has claimed a monopoly over truth (Passerini 1987).<sup>31</sup> Personal and collective memories acted as the counter-memory<sup>32</sup> of officially constructed discourses of the past. Becoming confrontational, social memory also altered the very being of mnemotechnics: a symbolic function of opposition was added to any marker of remembrance. The Church and its culture of memory turned out to represent dissident memories and therefore risked being altered, oppressed, or erased.

The civic movements that contributed to the collapse of socialist systems in eastern Europe criticised the manipulation of memory and the falsification of history by elites. These opposition movements came to stand for the re-writing of national histories and the uncovering of the memory of oppressed groups. The specificity of this process of memory recovery again extends again beyond the socialist context. Among others, researchers of the South American post-dictatorship societies described the process of dealing with the past as *regained memory*. By this they mean the memory of social groups that were forced to live outside the public sphere – those repressed communities which try to re-enter social space (Varnagy 2001). Memory recovery is thus a characteristic of convalescing post-totalitarian societies.

The countries of the eastern bloc have lived the experience of regaining memory in the past years, as an overwhelming literature consisting of life histories, personal diaries and testimonies has been published. The former retreat into the private life of personal memories is thus approaching an end, as individuals reconnect with public life. National cultural milieus opened spaces in which recuperated personal stories can become visible, and in response a certain audience emerged.

In Romania, *Memoria*<sup>33</sup>, a journal of the Foundation of former political prisoners, played an important role in the public expression of trauma narratives. Here, together with individual testimonies, members of

---

<sup>31</sup> See Skultans 1998: 28.

<sup>32</sup> The concept used by Esbenschade to describe eastern European memory traces its conception to Foucault's definition of counter-memory as "memories that differ from and often challenge dominant discourses" (see Olick and Robbins 1998: 126).

<sup>33</sup> *Memoria, Revista Gandirii Arestate* (Memory: the Journal of Imprisoned Thought), Cultural Foundation Memoria, Bucharest, Romania. A very important role was also played by a lengthy TV documentary showed on national television: *Memorialul Durerii* (The Memorial of Pain) based on interviews with survivors and witnesses of the communist repression.

several oppressed communities are able to tell the story of their past 40 years. Greek Catholics have been a part of this trauma-narrating collective; oppression and clandestine practice of faith are described as traumatising events, affecting both individual and community.

Because of the emotional intensity, and the pain associated with such traumatic memories, it is often that we conceive of the dynamics of remembrance involved here in psychological (or therapeutic) terms. And yet, the sharing of those memories cannot be detached, at whatever level of analysis, from its social context (Irwin-Zarecka 1994: 108).

The act of sharing a trauma narrative creates a mnemonic community that preserves and continues to tell and re-tell the story. At the same time, the creation of a public space of trauma narration let individual testimonies become legitimate memories of the past, mutually validating each other in a public space of solidarity. This is how a *landscape of memory* (Kirmayer, 1996) is formed, in a space where individual remembrance can be integrated into a generally accepted memory of the past. While “narrators attempt to compensate for biographical disruption by restoring unity and coherence to narrated lives” (Skultans 1998: 25-6), narration itself develops a social life of its own.

Observing the Greek Catholic elites after 1989, one can easily identify a vital concern with memory issues. Communities permanently construct and preserve collective memory, but the dynamics of this process are best seen in projects specially designed to recover particular memories. Memory projects tend to define the past according to their purposes, constituting a conscious undertaking of memory recovery. Tzvetan Todorov, examining the traumatic memory of repressed communities in eastern Europe with illustrations from Bulgaria, makes a significant distinction between actual remembering and the uses of memory.

Everybody has the individual right of remembering the way he wants of course, but the community valorises certain uses of memory and rejects others, it cannot exercise an undifferentiated cult of memory (Todorov 1999: 15).

Studies of Holocaust have developed specific notions within the frame of one of the most important memory projects, the integration of the past, *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (Neumann 2000: 10). Constructing memorials to make a critical reference to the past (*Mahnmal*) attaches to it an educational purpose for present and future generations. It represents a vehicle for memory transmission but also constitutes a, usually political, statement about the past. Sighet, for example, a former Romanian political prison, has been transformed into a museum, thus becoming a *Mahn und*

*Gedenkstätte* (a place of memory and memorial) similar to post-Holocaust memorial sites (ibid.: 10).

Blaj, on the other hand, represents not the embodiment of a political message but rather the conscious attempt of a community to find and valorise its past. It is constructed as a place of commemoration, connecting the *lost* past to present reality and thus reintegrating it into history. Its presence assures the community that their previously *deviant* memories will be accepted by and incorporated into what now constitutes the official narrative of the Greek Catholic Church, part of the re-written history of the socialist time.

Discussing the culture of memory of the Greek Catholic community during its change from underground survival to postsocialist revival we can observe a certain continuity, in the way the community remembers through culturally embedded patterns of memory production and transmission (mnemotechnics). A large variety of institutionalised means of remembrance (historically developed as part of the practice of churches) is thus employed. When trying to understand the specificity of memory in the present we can see a discontinuity in the way Greek Catholics made use of their remembrance. Memory practices during socialism were forced underground and as such formed the so-called oppositional memory. Today they are exhumed through public manifestations within the project of memory recovery, becoming thus part of the historical memory of the Greek Catholic community.

## References

- Badone E. 1990. *Religious Orthodoxy and Popular Faith in European Society*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Burke, P. 1997. *Varieties of Cultural History*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Buzasi, I. 1999. Lectia Blajului. In C. Boldea, and P. Moraru, *A Historical Destiny: The Romanian Uniate Church. Survey of Vatra journal*, pp. 155-158. Targu Mures: *Vatra & Arhipelag* Printing House.
- Cappelletto, F. 2003. Long-Term Memory of Extreme Events: From Autobiography to History. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 9: 241-260.
- Dragadze, T. 1993. The Domestication of Religion under Soviet Communism. In C.M. Hann (ed.), *Socialism: Ideals, Ideologies and Local Practice*, pp. 148-156. London: Routledge.
- Esbenshade, R. 1995. Remembering to Forget: Memory, History, National Identity in Postwar East-Central Europe. *Representations* 49: 72-96.

- Halbwachs, M. 1994. *Les Cadres Sociaux de la memoire*. Paris: Editions Albain Michel.
- Hann, C. 1993. Religion and Nationality in Central Europe: The Case of the Uniates. *Ethnic Studies* 10: 201-213.
- . 1998. Ukrainian Epiphany in Southeast Poland. *Ethnologia Europea* 28: 151-168.
- . 1999. Ecclesiastical Property and National Identity in Postcommunist Poland. *Frontier* 1: 8-10.
- . 2000. Problems with the (De)privatization of Religion. *Anthropology Today* 6 (6): 14-20.
- . (forthcoming). The Limits of Syncretism *po Galicyjsku*: Pluralism, Multiculturalism and the Two Catholicisms. In C. Hann, and P.R. Magocsi (eds.), *Galicja: A Multicultured Land*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Irwin-Zarecka, I. 1994. *Frames of Remembrance: The Dynamics of Collective Memory*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers.
- Jedlowski, P. 2001. Memory and Sociology. Themes and Issues. *Time and Society* 10: 29-44.
- Kirmayer, L. J. 1996. Landscapes of Memory: Trauma, Memory and Dissociation. In P. Antze, and M. Lambek (eds.), *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*. New York: Routledge.
- Le Goff, J. 1981. *La Naissance de Purgatoire*. Paris: Gallimard.
- . 1992. *History and Memory*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Matsuda, M. K. 1996. *The Memory of the Modern*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Neumann, K. 2000. *Shifting Memories. The Nazi Past in the New Germany*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Nora, P. 1989. Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire. *Representations* 0 (26): 7-24.
- Olick, J. K., and J. Robbins. 1998. Social Memory Studies: From "Collective Memory" to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices. *Annual Review of Sociology* 24: 105-140.
- Ozouf, M. 1988. *Festivals and the French Revolution*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Ratiu, A. 1993. *Biserica Furata*. Oradea: RomFlair Press.
- Skultans, V. 1998. *The Testimony of Lives: Narrative and Memory in post-Soviet Latvia*. London: Routledge.
- Todorov, T. 1999. *Abuzurile Memoriei*. Timișoara: Amarcord.
- Varnagy, T. 2001. History and Memory: Short Stories of Argentine Exercises of Oblivion. *Caietele Echinox* 1: 93-104.



- Verdery, K. 1999. *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Vromen, S. 1995. The French Pantheon: A Study in Divisiveness. *The Journal of Arts, Management, Law and Society* 25: 27-37.
- Yates, F. A. 1994. *The Art of Memory*. London: Pimlico.

## ***Chapter 7***

# **Soviet Ideology and Religious Practices in Simferopol, Crimea**

Ina Vogelsang

## **Introduction**

This chapter is concerned with individual remembrances and communal practices related to two institutions that are generally perceived to have been opposed: the Soviet state and the Russian Orthodox Church. Despite the opposition of the Soviet state, however, some religious practices were maintained under the Soviet regime and notwithstanding the fall of the communist state, Soviet festivities are still being celebrated more than nearly ten years later. I argue that the co-existence of Soviet ceremonial practice and religious customs during and after the Soviet period shows how beliefs, practices and ‘traditions’ may co-exist and may cross-cut conceptual boundaries.<sup>1</sup>

In looking at the persistence of both Soviet and religious practices I want to show how resistance to and reproduction of socialist values are not separate strategies but rather aspects of people’s belief systems that interweave through daily practices, the observance of ‘traditions’ and individual convictions. In discussing this, I concentrate on individual reminiscences that offer new insights into the attempts of the communist regime to undermine religious practices and to replace them with Soviet ceremonials.<sup>2</sup>

Kligman (1988: 9, 275) has linked resistance during the socialist period to both the upholding of ‘traditions’ and to ritual. In her argument, the perpetuation of customs was a way of preserving local identity in Romania,

---

<sup>1</sup> The material presented was collected during my doctoral research in 1997-8 in Simferopol, the capital of Crimea. It was conducted primarily with people who identified themselves as Russians and who constitute the majority in Crimea (Bremmer 1993: 25). Although I deal with their views only, I want to stress that members from other ethnic groups hold different views and that my analysis would come up with a dissimilar perspective if it were to include those views (see Vogelsang 2000).

<sup>2</sup> For a description of the Soviet repression of Orthodox religion and attempts to supersede religious rituals with socialist ones see Binns (1979, 1980) and Lane (1981).

connecting people to the past (Kligman 1988: 257). Although acknowledging that customary rites were changed by material conditions, she relates them for the most part to the domestic or family domain, a domain that existed apart from the ideology of the socialist state. In relation to the post-socialist period, Verdery (1999: 34-5) has argued that the changes after *Perestroika* challenged people's meaningful existence and amounted to a disruption of the cosmic order. She asserts that "throughout the postsocialist world there has been a veritable orgy of historical revisionism, of writing the communist period out of the past" (Verdery 1999: 112).

Both Verdery and Kligman suggest an opposition in their arguments. Kligman (1988) shows that the socialist state and its ideology stood in opposition to the understanding of 'traditional' practices by the population. Verdery (1999) maintains that postsocialist change marks a break with socialist ideology. This presupposes that a powerful socialist elite has been replaced by the formerly repressed or voiceless. My argument, on the other hand, suggests the parallel existence of both religious and socialist ideology and practice throughout the Soviet and post-Soviet period. The views of the people with whom I worked were neither entirely pro- nor anti-Soviet. What becomes apparent in their representation of the past is their attempt to portray their values as persistent throughout enormous changes.

In this chapter, I first discuss people's memories of Soviet ceremonies and ideology and then turn to religious practices. People's accounts of these suggest that in certain aspects of their lives Soviet ideology took on the form of a belief. Nevertheless an understanding of religion as something different clearly existed, and religious practices such as christening and Easter celebrations continued throughout much of the Soviet period. This gives a strong impression of a parallel system of beliefs, which in turn raises the question why, considering the pressure to abandon religion and the long period of Soviet rule, people nevertheless held on to some aspects of religious custom. To answer this question, it is therefore crucial to look at what these religious practices were.

### **Soviet Ceremonial Life and Ideology**

Soviet festive days were still being celebrated in 1998, ten years after the breakdown of the Soviet Union and are still public holidays in Ukraine today. During the first years after independence, attempts were made to eliminate these celebrations, but in different towns processions did nevertheless take place. After the election of the more pro-Russian Kuchma, old Soviet mass holidays were re-instated (Wanner 1998: 158). The year 1998

saw one of the biggest May Day celebrations in Simferopol<sup>3</sup> since independence and Masha, a university lecturer in her forties, told me enthusiastically how she had taken part in it.

As Wanner (1998: 141) has argued, state structures are crucial to the formation and maintenance of national historical narratives. The state calendar is an important means for this undertaking (*ibid.*). A sense of belonging is created through sharing the same celebrations and commemorations (Wanner 1998: 142). Accordingly, a firmly established state calendar is linked to the stability of the state, whereas social upheaval usually results in a change of state ceremonies (*ibid.*). Public commemoration also opens up a space for contestation (Wanner 1998: 165). The celebration of Soviet festive days thus exemplifies a challenge to the legitimacy of the Ukrainian State, predicated as it is on the rejection of Soviet ideology. The continuing observance of Soviet festive days is a significant marker both of an ongoing attachment to the Soviet past in itself and of resistance to change.

Hann (1993: 11) has argued that the widespread acceptance of socialist regimes within eastern Europe needs to be acknowledged, but to do so also raises the question of how this acceptance was achieved. Informants' reminiscences centred around three themes: 1) the festivity and enjoyment that was generated by ritual experiences in contrast to the daily grind, 2) the feeling of achievement and meaning people derived from the idea of working towards a better future, and, 3) the 'morality' that was part of Soviet ceremony and rhetoric.

People perceived the situation today to be the result of the introduction of capitalism. They contrasted it with what they called the 'beauty' of Soviet ideology. The latter was related to the values of communality, self-sacrifice for the good of society and caring for each other. The projection of a moral society related to the ideological sphere in so far as it gave meaning to life – Soviet ideology had religious traits and just like any belief system it provided sustenance and guidance (*cf.* Binns 1979, 1980; Lane 1981; Tumarkin 1983; von Geldern 1993). Indeed, it has been argued that the Bolsheviks themselves claimed the spiritual heritage of Christianity (von Geldern 1993: 79) and introduced elements of the old religion into their rhetoric (Lane 1981; Tumarkin 1983: 127-9; von Geldern 1993: 63, 86).

The influence of Soviet ideology was also demonstrated by the continuing custom, practiced mostly by the older generation, of laying flowers

---

<sup>3</sup> This was also an expression of frustration with the present situation. Many informants expressed the hope that if the communists were back in power, they would at least bring back social security. The Communist Party won the elections in Crimea in March 1998.

in front of the many Soviet monuments.<sup>4</sup> This can be linked to Soviet festive days, when it was customary to take school children to place flowers at the foot of important monuments. People, especially those now in their twenties, talked fondly of their childhood memories of parades.<sup>5</sup> Soviet rituals and the atmosphere of festive days left a lasting impression on the younger generation. Tania, a woman now in her twenties, for example talked about how lucky and grateful she had felt to be living in the Soviet Union. One acquaintance reminisced about the 'beautiful ritual' of keeping watch in front of the monument for the unknown soldiers.<sup>6</sup> Similar statements were made by other informants who also were in their twenties.<sup>7</sup>

Ania: I went with pleasure, for me that was such a great festive day. I had great expectations for that procession and watched it with great enthusiasm on TV. I liked it so much, those columns, everything. And on the first of May soldiers lead, and there are vehicles, aeroplanes, ohh (simulates the intake of breath – like a small child in wonder). For me that was a festivity of the soul. And cakes, everything was being sold. ... People sold cakes, ice cream, and different things. Otherwise one could only buy such things in the shop. Therefore for me that was (draws in breath as if in wonder) – great! You could walk around and buy something tasty, sit for a bit. Then we went into the park, had fun, and went on a boat. The queues were just enormous – like that, like that, many, many, many people. It was wonderful! I loved it.

Ania's memories concentrated on the creation of a festive atmosphere and the consumption of special foods. Although she actually mentioned the shortages, she did not perceive this as a negative feature. On the contrary, the very fact that usually one might only be able to get all these treats in shops created the sense of extraordinariness. Her description of the holidays

---

<sup>4</sup> This custom of the Soviet period is also described by Lane (1981: 147) and Tumarkin (1994: 32).

<sup>5</sup> Lane (1981: 249), when observing Soviet rituals in the late seventies, also noted that they especially affected children and young people.

<sup>6</sup> There existed three youth organisations that children joined that ensured a 'communist upbringing' – the Little Octobrists (7-11 years old), Pioneers (9-14 years old), and the Kom-somol or Communist League of Youth (14-26 years old) (cf. Tumarkin 1994: 151). As pioneers they would stand guard for twenty minutes, changing sides after ten minutes, after which they would be relieved.

<sup>7</sup> In concentrating on informants' descriptions of enjoyment and belief, however, I do not want to make an argument that this was shared by everybody. Ania, who was also in her early twenties, contrasted her own enjoyment with the displeasure of her parents. Ania's mother would have preferred to stay home and rest but had to participate since she was checked upon by superiors.

as 'a festivity of the soul' suggests the deep effect it had on her. The creation of 'beauty' through decorations, people's dresses, the procession and food was commented on repeatedly. The town was decorated with red flags, balloons and posters. This contributed to the special atmosphere of the day.

After the official ceremony people would either drive out of town into the countryside or walk around the town.<sup>8</sup> Violeta, who was in her sixties, stressed the enjoyment and festive atmosphere of that day:

And it was a beautiful festive day. Yes, and we dined together, we set the table or drove out into the forest. You understand, we celebrated in the forest and we had competitions. Football and volleyball, all kinds of games. We had a lot of fun.

Descriptions highlighted enjoyment, food and the emotions experienced. Similarly, all festivities in 1998 (including Christian ones) centred around food and drink and the enjoyment of sociality. Food is not only a major part of sociality but was also used to measure societal achievements during the Soviet period (cf. Glants and Toomre 1997: xxii). This should be seen in the context of periods of famine from the twenties until the early fifties.<sup>9</sup> Informants often referred to their jam-packed fridge and full tables on festive days during the Brezhnev period. Meals on festive days in 1997/98 were often accompanied by remarks on how little, comparatively, they had to celebrate this day with and how their tables used to be much fuller.

Nevertheless, it was not just the food and entertainment that were important. Violeta referred to the satisfaction she derived from these celebrations:

Oh, you know, if on the first of May and the seventh of November we did not go to the procession, it was not a festive day, because we were all well decked out. We were all so solemn, and with flowers, the music played. We all met at the procession and sang and danced and that was emotionally uplifting. We got a charge of energy there at the procession because it was a festive day.

Violeta, like Ania, stressed the uplifting emotional experience. She twice employed the word 'solemn' which also evoked the image of a church mass. This speaks to the significance that the celebrations took on for her: like a church mass, they gave her a sense of meaning and fulfilment. These emotions were not only achieved through the creation of a festive mood but were also connected to the message that was being conveyed to Soviet citizens.

---

<sup>8</sup> Lane (1981: 15) also describes these outings on festive days.

<sup>9</sup> One informant told me how he had been hungry from his birth in the twenties until the fifties. The importance of food can also be shown by the way Khrushchev is remembered: rather than focussing on political reforms informants dwelled on the fact that many groceries were not available and that their diet was mostly limited to peas and sweet corn.

The dissemination of this message through holidays and Soviet rituals became increasingly important from the sixties onwards.

Social surveys administered in the 1960s showed that Marxism-Leninism had not yet been accepted (Lane 1981: 31). As a consequence, the authorities decided to reform the existing holidays and to create new rituals that would convey socialist ideas to the population. The introduction of new holidays and rituals stressed that each new custom should contain a progressive idea and 'the principles of communist morality' (Lane 1981: 47). Accordingly, Soviet rituals stressed the increasing quantity and quality of the labour effort (Lane 1981: 26). Conscientious labour was connected to social progress and the ultimate aim of reaching a state of society where no inequality existed (Lane 1981: 38). Processions were an expression of the solidarity of workers and of their achievements such as increased factory output (Lane 1981: 155-6).

Informants' reminiscences show that these messages were conveyed successfully to at least part of the population. The sense of taking part in the creation of a better society occupied a prominent space in Violeta's recollections of Soviet festive days:

Violeta: Whereas we lived like that (stress in her voice) – we lived well! We came together and walked in columns. And each of the columns is a factory, an enormous one. ... They wrote that we have achieved this or the other, that we have fulfilled that much of the plan. And others are builders and they have built that much, so much, so much. You understand, that was solemn. And now, see what we have come to, complete decline, no factories, nobody works.

Her continual use of the term 'we' emphasises that this was a group experience and that it created sociality: in Violeta's recollections of May-Day celebrations the columns represented the achievement of Soviet society. The declaration of increased outputs at processions and in the media gave a sense of progress towards a better future.

Violeta had supported the communist ideal, although she was critical of the Soviet government. Paul, a pensioner in his seventies, talked about his belief in the future and progress, despite his opposition to the regime.

Ina: I have the impression that people had a certain belief – the Party, Lenin.

Paul: Yes, belief in the future and back then, I also think that there was one five-year plan and then the next followed and then it will already be better and so forth.

Paul highlighted that people had actually been able to perceive the steady improvements of their living conditions since World War II, and that this

gave them confidence. Nevertheless, as will become clear below, other aspects relating to Soviet morality and the elements of belief were even more important for people's positive assessment of the Soviet regime.

In this context the difficulties such as the shortages and the need to queue for goods were not important. Rather, as Violeta said:

Back then we were all respected for our work. Everybody received appreciation for his or her work. We had an aim, even if it was not possible to reach it. You understand, like a light at the end of a long tunnel. But nevertheless we endeavoured to work well, to do something, to somehow live as friends, and so on. We helped each other and we were more carefree. And now there is worry all around us.

Again, Violeta uses 'we' throughout. The people encompassed in this 'we' followed certain moral rules: 'to work well' and 'to live as friends'. As in the quote above, the past is contrasted with the present. Such comparison, invariably portraying the present like a dead end where everything was falling apart, was in my experience very common.

The Soviet system conveyed to its citizens a sense of security and progress, which after a century of wars and major upheavals must have been of vital importance to people. After its demise, the present was experienced as threatening this sense of societal cohesion and achievement. Since the promise of a communist society had not been fulfilled, the future had been stolen and comments relating to what was to come were highly pessimistic.<sup>10</sup>

Confidence and belief in the Soviet regime were fostered from an early stage when children were taught rhymes about their leaders that both familiarised them and turned them into parental figures. Adults were still able to recite these rhymes forty years later. Grigorij, an actor in the Youth Theatre, spoke about the devastation he had felt at the death of Brezhnev. He remembered vividly how he, along with many others in his surroundings, had cried and wondered what was going to happen to the country now that Brezhnev was dead. Former leaders, particularly Lenin, were still sometimes talked about as '*Deduzhka*', which is an endearing term for grandfather.<sup>11</sup>

It has been argued that Soviet citizens ignored ideological rhetoric (Tumarkin 1994: 7, 37) and that Soviet ceremonies were mostly about enjoyment and consumption (Binns 1980: 183). The material presented here,

---

<sup>10</sup> This also becomes clear in a quote by Wanner. The following is from an interview with a teacher in the Luhansk region: "We decided that we would live poorly so that our children would live in a 'bright future', as the communists said. We believed them and thought we were building a better society. It all turned out to be lies. One year ago, when Ukraine became independent, we believed life would finally improve for us. This turned out to be a lie, too. We were deceived once again" (Wanner 1998: 74).

<sup>11</sup> The leader cult has been discussed in detail by Binns (1979, 1980) and Tumarkin (1983).



however, shows that some of the population clearly linked the ceremonies with the rhetoric of a workers' state, the 'bright future' and a sense of achievement and pride. The fondness with which parades were remembered, and the way in which the 'beauty' of Soviet ideology and morality were missed even by those who were critical of the Soviet regime, show that Soviet rhetoric and ritual did have an impact. Nevertheless it is important to note that reminiscences were linked to a sense of purpose, achievement and future compensation. This strongly contrasts with and has to be seen in connection with a bleak sense stemming from the present political and economic crisis. It therefore does not just concern itself with a wholesale endorsement of the Soviet state but is related to certain elements of beliefs and practices that are missed in the present.

It is significant that most of the quotes in this section come from the older and the younger generations. The oldest generation has lost the most from the recent changes. Tumarkin (1994: 130-1) has asserted that the 1960s saw the younger generation developing an entirely different relationship with the authorities: she describes postwar Soviet youth as slow to trust political authorities and able to split their lives into public and private persona. In contrast she characterises the older generations as valuing self-sacrifice, devotion to the cause and communality, and as respecting or fearing political authority (Tumarkin 1994: 131). Although such generalisations are problematic, informants in Simferopol made similar remarks regarding the faith and devotion of people in the 1950s. Violeta's comments contain exactly this kind of morality. Similarly, the younger generation who never experienced a communist state beyond its youth organisations recalled the enjoyment of Soviet ceremonies. Those in their thirties, forties and fifties, on the other hand, were less likely to reminisce about their experiences of mass holidays. Most members of this age group had become disillusioned with the discrepancies between the proclaimed ideals of communism and the realities of day-to-day life. However, they expressed similar feelings when comparing past and present, commenting on the loss of Soviet values and the negative features of the 'transition' to capitalism. Moreover, they also talked about the enjoyment of Soviet ritual and holidays that they had experienced as children and young adults before they became disillusioned with the system.

Moral judgements made up a major part of the positive assessment of the Soviet Union. Several people told me that now that they knew capitalism they did not want it anymore. So, for example, Masha related people's positive appraisal of the past in getting to know capitalism, stating that 'our' – meaning 'Western' – philosophy and way of life were not 'beautiful'.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> The Russian term for 'red' (*krasnyi*) also means 'beautiful' (Lane 1981: 200) and is related to the other term for 'beautiful' (*krasivyi*). It had a powerful symbolic significance for the

She added that although problems existed in the former Soviet Union, people had remained idealistic. According to her it had been very important to them.<sup>13</sup>

Many people mentioned the way in which the communist youth organisations had helped the elderly or worked for other good causes. Several informants asserted that people had been 'better' back then – that people did not work for their own profit but for the good of the whole. An example of this was the way in which rewards for surpassing certain work quotas were publicly acknowledged and praised. For instance, Stalin received those workers who excelled, and the whole nation knew about them (this created the fame of the best milkmaid for instance [Bulgakowa 1993: 157]). Valia, an accountant in her forties, was now selling newspapers to make a living; since Ukrainian independence trade with Russia had ceased and her enterprise, like so many others, was closed. She remembered how her former boss had cared for his employees. Shortly before retiring he had made sure that his employees would move to new, much better facilities.

As I have already mentioned, Soviet ideology had religious elements and gave a sense of meaning and purpose to life (Lane 1981: 40-1). This originated from the idea that present-day suffering and labour was for the sake of a future greater good (*ibid.*). Paul expressed his conviction that communism had constituted just another religion.

Paul: yes, ... it was like the belief in one God – faith cannot be explained. I believe in God and I do not need proof whether he exists or if he is bad, I just believe. Faith does not need consciousness; it's

---

revolutionary movement since it was the colour that was employed by the Paris communards as a symbol of blood and revolution (*ibid.*). During the Soviet period it signalled a revolutionary aspect of rituals and, due to its near exclusive use, indicated the monolithic power of the Party (Lane 1981: 201). It had also been a popular colour in pre-revolutionary Russia (Lane 1981: 200). At that time, it was linked to peasant belief and manifested in the layout of their huts. Each hut had a 'red' or 'holy' corner in which an icon was hanging (Figs 1996: 95). The icon was at the centre of peasant religion and it was believed that it had magical powers (Figs 1996: 66). This tradition was used by the Bolsheviks when they constructed a Lenin corner in the All-Russian Agricultural and Domestic-Industrial Exhibition in 1923 (Tumarkin 1983: 127). This suggests that the word 'red' as well as the related term 'beautiful' are linked to religious and moral ideas. The conjunction of the meaning of the colour red and the 'beauty' that informants felt was created through festivities thus reinforced the impression of the morality of Soviet ideology.

<sup>13</sup> A similar observation was made in the 1980s. One of the most celebrated films in 1983 – 'My friend Ivan Lapshin' – was said to express the nostalgia for the idealism of the Soviet period that was seen to be irrevocably lost (Bulgakowa 1993). Films in this era portrayed boys and girls 'from next door' as heroes living out ideal lives (Bulgakowa 1993: 157). According to Bulgakowa this shows that society wanted a vision of an ideal life that promised happiness in the near future (*ibid.*). The purpose of these films was to instil the audience with optimism and confidence (Bulgakowa 1993: 161).

just faith. ... And I said it then, and still maintain that then the belief was like a religion: that now we live badly but we are building the future life. That is us, our normal lives were deferred to a later moment in time, just like religion defers my life. While here I struggle, and there they write, everything will be good for me. ... Stalin and Lenin's ideology, it is just the same, now it is bad, ... But then we will live well. Therefore here is a first-hand analogy. God and political religion – that is just the same.

Paul highlighted the unquestioning belief that he and others had maintained. In his recollections, this religious character was linked to the faith in the future that communism conveyed. He related this faith to the way in which political leaders were portrayed and he admitted that he himself had held onto his belief in Lenin until *Perestroika*.

Paul: well, you understand how, on the one side... I still kept the monument of Lenin. Whereas Stalin I thought of as bad. But Lenin he was good. But then I took that idol also out of my soul, he also was not an idol for me anymore. I got information about Lenin, you understand. I convinced myself that I was right, which is why I stopped believing in him and his ideas. Therefore the new information balanced the picture and I threw him out.

Despite his and his parents' critical view of the regime, Paul had maintained the idea that if Lenin had lived, the cruel repression under Stalin would not have taken place. Lenin remained an 'idol' for him – a word that clearly shows his veneration. As Tumarkin (1983) has shown, the Lenin cult incorporated religious elements. Throughout the Soviet period Lenin's image had religious overtones and his saint-like status was also obvious in the way in which any criticism was perceived as sacrilege (Lane 1981: 213). The belief in the Party and its leaders was a central feature of Soviet ideology (cf. Lane 1981: 220).

People were not only talking about the fact that their lives had become more insecure and complicated but also that they were missing a moral authority. They perceived this authority to have existed in several institutions of Soviet life. So, for example, the communist youth organisations that kept the children off the streets and occupied with something constructive such as helping others. The Communist Party was also missed as an institution that 'looked after things'. Many had perceived leaders as fatherly or benevolent figures who were striving to improve living conditions for all. These images were projected by the media, through monuments and education. Festive days can be seen as a culmination of these efforts to convince the population that socialism was successful, beneficial and powerful. The creation of a festive mood and the projection of achievement and purpose reinforced these

messages in an atmosphere that was relaxed and joyful. On those days, the excitement of celebration, meeting friends and acquaintances, dressing up and street decorations all blended in with the political message of the day. A detailed analysis of how this blending influenced people's overall perception of the regime remains an important task.

So far, the reminiscences and literature discussed rather give the impression that Soviet ritual was successfully employed to convey ideological messages to at least part of the population. However, as the next section will show, the very people who recalled Soviet ritual and morality so positively also followed religious practices and beliefs.

### **Continuity of Religious Practices**

The practice of Orthodoxy permeated people's lives and belief systems before the revolution (Figes 1996). As a result the Bolsheviks had major problems in eradicating religious beliefs and practices (*ibid.*). Before World War II, communists in small towns and villages were practising Orthodoxy and explained this to the party in terms of the need to maintain the locals' trust (Ransel 1996: 65).

Bolshevik policies towards the church were quite lenient at first (Wanner 1998: 143). By 1922, however, priests, monks and nuns were arrested and executed (Ransel 1996: 64). In the second half of the thirties, ninety percent of the churches were closed and most priests were imprisoned or killed (Ransel 1996: 65). Adhering to a religion came to be equated with opposition to the revolution (Lane 1981: 173-5). During World War II, Stalin allowed the church to become more active again in exchange for its support of the war effort (Ransel 1996: 65). The relaxation of religious repression lasted until the ascendancy of Khrushchev (Ransel 1996: 65). The change in Party politics also brought new persecution. Under Brezhnev, only individuals who directly challenged communist authority were prosecuted (Ransel 1996: 65).

Certain traditions linked to Easter, such as Shrovetide (the week before the beginning of the fast), were resumed during the Soviet period (Binns 1980: 182). Easter itself was still relevant to people, a fact which was acknowledged by several Soviet publications in the 1960s and 1970s (Lane 1981: 237). An oral history project by Ransel in the Moscow, Smolensk and Tambov regions showed that people in all three regions had continued to baptise their children (Ransel 1996: 76). The main change that occurred was in the timing of baptism, which against tradition was postponed under communist rule in order to avoid the risk of detection (Ransel 1996: 66).

Although some religious practices were maintained (*cf.* Lane 1981; Ransel 1996) during most of the Soviet period, many informants did not

know much about religion. I was told that it was mainly old women who openly practised religion since 'they were not afraid anymore'.

In 1997/98 religious festive days were not being celebrated in a major way. Rather, informants were taking their time in finding out about religious traditions. They observed or at least discussed the observance of some practices, for example, fasting or not working on religious holidays. Few were very religious in either practice or conviction; hardly anybody attended church regularly. Nevertheless, nearly everybody had icons in their flats, most people celebrated Easter and many had on occasion been to church.

As indicated above, three religious traditions were observed throughout most of the Soviet period. These were being followed even more strongly since *Perestroika*. First, there was the celebration of the week after Easter when the dead are especially commemorated. Second, Easter continued to be symbolically significant throughout most of the Soviet period. A lot of informants remembered their grandmothers baking the traditional Easter foods.<sup>14</sup> Shrovetide was also marked by other food practices, for instance making and consuming pancakes and similar food. Third, most were christened during the Soviet period.

As concerns baptism, Ransel found that communists or professionals who were responsible for upholding communist practices, such as teachers, had their children baptised (Ransel 1996: 75). Nevertheless, maintaining religious practices was dangerous. Ransel quotes several incidences in which people were fired from work because the authorities found out that they had baptised their children (Ransel 1996: 69). During times of extreme repression the consequences could be far worse: people were imprisoned or killed.

Many of my informants joked about the contradiction in practices, saying that it was another Soviet paradox that although they were all atheists, they also were all baptised. Masha told me that the only person she knew who had not been christened during the Soviet period was her husband, and she later convinced him to take the step. Stories about secret christenings were mentioned several times. Paul, who had been a teacher, told me about how he had taken his daughter to the village he came from in order to have her baptised. This way he was able to avoid exposure and risk losing his job as a teacher. Christenings usually took place in villages and were sometimes carried out by relatives. Informants stressed the importance of secrecy. When I interviewed Masha, I asked her about religious practices during the Soviet period.

---

<sup>14</sup> Binns (1908: 182) also found that these practices were upheld by older women.

Ina: I see that now in nearly every flat there are some icons and people started to celebrate the festive days up to a certain point – has that changed after *Perestroika*?

Masha: I want to say the following: it started to increase in the cities after *Perestroika* and it started to be more open. But in the village it always has been like that, even during socialism. I know this. I know very well, when I was little my grandmother celebrated Easter as did all the neighbours, they coloured eggs and so on. And in my grandmother's room the icons were hanging on the walls, even though my father was a communist.

Ina: The icons were hanging on the wall?

Masha: Sure, my father was a communist. It all depended on the individual of course. The young ones did not hang icons on walls because the ideology was such. Well, my father was a communist, we did not have anything, but in grandmother's and her mother's house, the icon was hanging and she taught me to pray.<sup>15</sup> I then forgot those prayers but in my childhood I knew them. I knew how you have to pray in the morning and how to do it in the evening. She taught me that.

Masha portrayed the differences in religious adherence as a generational choice, rather than connecting it to repression. The fact that she was taught how to pray shows the deep religious convictions of both her grandmother and great-grandmother. Masha was born in the 1950s. Despite the waves of repression of the Orthodox faith and the existence of the Soviet Union for years, she was still intimately acquainted with religious beliefs and practices. Although Masha's parents were communists, they nevertheless observed her grandfather's wish for an Orthodox burial. This shows how deeply ingrained religious ideas were and how slow their demise was. Masha herself is deeply religious today. Violeta also remembered with much emotion the communist who had made sure that she was christened even against the will of her father.

Violeta: I was christened by a communist. My father called me Woli<sup>16</sup> and he was an extreme communist and did not Christian me, you understand. And there just simply was no question whatsoever where God was concerned. Communism! [that was all my father knew]. How can I not remember the communist who baptised me, ...

---

<sup>15</sup> Reports of icons hanging in homes are quite frequent in the literature (e.g. Thurston 1991: 563; Pahl and Thompson 1994: 153).

<sup>16</sup> This name means freedom and was one of those created by communists after the Revolution.

I go to her grave and talk to her, and thank her. And ask God ... that she is well there.

Violeta's comments reveal a critical stance towards her father and the atheism that was propagated by communism. Although she was a supporter of the Soviet system and so fondly remembered the mass holidays, she adhered to Christian beliefs and practices at the same time. This is also significant since her strong criticism of the present and endorsement of the Soviet system could be interpreted as a nostalgic longing for this past. Nonetheless, she did not want to return to the communist system.

Although religion was spurned by some, the fact that the majority, including communists, upheld some religious traditions, reveals a certain ambiguity in people's behaviour. It suggests that religious practices were tolerated in co-existence with Soviet rituals. Although many of these practices were altered and strongly diminished, people still found ways of maintaining some aspects of them. The above quote from Violeta also speaks to how important it is to remember the dead, especially during the week of commemorating the dead. This religious tradition was already celebrated during the Soviet period and was observed by most people in 1997/98.<sup>17</sup> As a religious tradition, the commemoration of dead relatives sets a clear counterpoint to the exclusive focus of Soviet ideology on the collective and on those who were designated as heroes deserving commemoration. During the week following Easter, usually on Sundays or Mondays, members of the extended family go to the cemetery to visit the graves of their dead relatives. Most of my informants made a point of visiting the graves. Some who came from other regions of Crimea and Ukraine even returned to their homes, time and money permitting. People bring the traditional Easter food – *Kooleech* (a type of sweet bread which according to Orthodox tradition should be taken to church on Easter night and be consecrated). This is put on the graves together with coloured eggs, sweets and a little glass of vodka. Cemeteries have permanent benches and tables where people can eat and drink. On this day the cemetery resembles a fair rather than a cemetery. Most people have a good time, and there are large groups at most graves, though at some just one or two; at others some would be crying.

---

<sup>17</sup> I was not able to establish if this day was celebrated throughout the Soviet period. Lane (1981: 236) mentions that the Russian Orthodox habit of putting food on the grave was one of the most tenacious ones. Informants confirmed that the practice was still celebrated right after the Revolution, due to the fact that the older generation had still grown up with this tradition. But the next generation did not do it anymore (or less so) since rituals of any kind were frowned upon. Other people told me that it was still celebrated during late Soviet times, even though less than before. One friend said that this was one of the ways in which 'the people' ignored the government and did what they wanted to do.

The first time I participated in such a commemoration, I went with Masha and her husband. We just stayed long enough to have a sandwich and a bit of vodka. Masha made a remark that now her mother-in-law (whose grave we were visiting) should feel satisfied. The second time I took part in the event I was visiting a village in the south of Ukraine. On this occasion, nine of us went to the cemetery. A large table was laid while some of the women put Easter food on the graves. Immediately children came and took the food (which is customary), despite the women's protest to leave it for a while. The women were upset, saying the dead should at least have some time to 'taste' the food.

We started the meal by making a toast to the dead. I only drank half of the vodka. When one of the women realised this, she gave me a worried look and asked why I did not drain my glass. Later on I was told that in the cemetery you have to empty your glass. Toasts did not involve the usual speeches, but we took up our glasses (you must not clink glasses when toasting to the dead) and iterated something like: 'to them' or 'to the dead'. Then one of the women said that we were remembering the dead well and that she hoped that they themselves would be remembered just as well. She added that the dead would live as long as their relatives were alive and would remember them. This toast was met with enthusiasm and everybody drank to it.

After some time a distant relative joined us. The family greeted her warmly and told her to have something to eat and drink. She refused but the others insisted. They then gave her some vodka, which she refused to drink. Finally, she agreed to have a tomato and to toast with mineral water. The relative began to extend her glass to clink with the others, but was prevented from doing so in time. She apologised for forgetting several times afterwards. Later she mentioned that she had to visit ten different graveyards. As we left, an older woman expressed her concern that the dead might be annoyed because we stayed only for a short time. Everything was cleaned up and it was mentioned that nothing should be thrown away. The breadcrumbs were put on the graves and remaining leftovers were given to the dogs.

Ethnographies of Russia and eastern Europe show that a certain fear of the dead exists and that commemorating them in the right way is of great importance.<sup>18</sup> In my material this can be seen in the attention to such details as draining, and not clinking, vodka glasses.

Most of the commemoration centred on food and drink: that was placed on the graves and that was consumed. No stories about the dead were told nor were any names or specific persons mentioned. Instead, a link was created between the dead and the living through the consumption of food in

---

<sup>18</sup> For a detailed discussion of various regions of this area see Kligman (1988), Verdery (1999) and Merridale (2000).



close proximity of the graves, giving food to the dead and through toasts to the dead.

In summer 1998 some Crimean friends came to visit, and I asked them once more about the week of remembering the dead. They said that during Soviet times putting sweets on the grave, eating and drinking had replaced the religious practices of reading a mass for the dead relative. Placing food on graves is a pre-Christian tradition that was tolerated but frowned upon by the Church and that was more acceptable during the Soviet period.<sup>19</sup>

Similar observations relating to the belief in – and fears concerning – life after death have been made by researchers working in Russia and Romania. Ransel (1996: 70, 74) found that women had their children baptised because they believed that unbaptised children might be harmed by ‘unclean powers’ and that they would find no peace after death. Even women who said that they did not believe, maintained that it was necessary to have their children baptised (Ransel 1996: 70). Kligman (1988) has described the importance of satisfying the dead. If funeral rites or later dates of commemoration were not observed in the right way, the dead would take revenge on the living (Kligman 1988: 157). A central part of these rites is connected to food and drink (*ibid.*). Kligman’s observations were limited to Transylvania, but the region that she is talking about directly borders on Ukraine. Moreover, Verdery (1999: 44, 104) has argued that ideas regarding the need to nourish the dead and to have protection from them can be found throughout the area. According to her, in Transylvania and former Yugoslavia it is essential to offer food to the dead and eat in the cemetery during the week after Easter (1999: 43). Verdery states that the living must feed the dead in order to ensure their blessing and goodwill (*ibid.*). Proper burial as well as the continued care for the dead by going to the grave and bringing food are central to a ‘peaceful living and to an orderly universe’ (1999: 43).<sup>20</sup> What happens to the dead and the places in which they are buried is a highly significant issue in eastern Europe, including Russia and Ukraine (cf. Merri-dale 2000: 432-4).

Informants’ statements and actions suggest that they hold a strong belief in life after death, which totally contradicts formal Soviet teachings. Although as we have seen Soviet ideology can and has been compared to religion (Lane 1981: 40; Gellner 1990: 7), it did not deal with what would

---

<sup>19</sup> These pre-Christian traditions have two advantages: during the Soviet period ‘pre-Christian’ ritual was less problematic than unambiguously religious ritual (cf. Lane 1981: 131) and – since it has to do with eating and drinking – it also seems to be an enjoyable way of remembering the dead.

<sup>20</sup> Ideas that are linked to the concept of sainthood can also be observed in the discussion about what should happen to Lenin’s mummified corpse (Verdery 1999: 44).

happen after death. Soviet commemorations favoured those who were seen as the heroes of the Revolution and the Civil War and those who died defending the Soviet Union in World War II (Lane 1981: 86). Death rituals only became a topic when members of the ruling elite themselves approached old age in the sixties (Binns 1980). Soviet funeral rites that were established then stressed the achievement of the dead and linked them to the continuing efforts of the living (Lane 1981: 84). Consequently, until the establishment of Soviet rituals, those who died an 'unheroic' death could only be commemorated privately or through Orthodox traditions. The occasions when religious practices were most often upheld are related to the areas of faith that Soviet ideology left vacant. This complementary aspect made it possible for both Soviet ideology and religious faith to exist side by side.

## **Conclusion**

Here I want to discuss three main points: 1) the relevance of the parallel existence of religious and Soviet practices; 2) how resistance was expressed through these practices and 3) the use of memories to convey and assert a moral self-portrayal.

In my introduction I argued that it is important to examine which of the religious practices were upheld throughout most of the Soviet period. As we have seen, all such practices related to overcoming death or to the after-life (e.g. Easter, the week commemorating the dead and christenings). According to Christian teaching, a person can only enter heaven if he or she has been christened. The fact that nearly everybody was christened during the Soviet period suggests that this practice was maintained as an insurance against a completely godless existence. In this respect it is important to note that several informants linked the misfortune of the Soviet Union to the fact that it had 'abandoned' faith. The persistence of religious practices therefore seems to be related to crucial matters that Soviet ideology was not able to address in a convincing manner. These practices were upheld in clear resistance to Soviet repression of religion but did not necessarily indicate opposition to the regime. It is even more remarkable that communists and Party members took part in religious ceremonies. Consequently, it can be argued that although the Soviet regime was endorsed, people also maintained their old religious beliefs to some extent.

Religious customs that could not be performed in secret, such as Easter and commemorations of the dead, were upheld for the most part by the elimination of those elements that were clearly religious (such as a priest blessing a grave), and maintaining those which appeared more secular (such

as practices linked to food). Thus food practices played a major part in the preservation of repressed religious practices.

Whereas christenings and the preparation of Easter could be carried out in secrecy, the week of commemorating the dead was celebrated in the cemetery as a visible and communal practice. A moral obligation was attached to visiting the graves. This stands in contrast to the way in which graves and cemeteries were looked upon by the Bolsheviks and treated during much of the Soviet period.<sup>21</sup> During the Soviet campaigns against this Orthodox tradition (Merridale 2000: 164-5) measures went as far as to build new cemeteries outside of towns to make visits to the graves more difficult (Merridale 2000: 355). People's insistence on visiting their relatives' graves are significant acts that contested Soviet power. Soviet repression and neglect for the value of human life clashes strongly with their beliefs. It is in this area that the 'immorality' of the Soviet system becomes the most obvious.<sup>22</sup>

Cemeteries and graves are closely connected to overall Soviet repression and the suppression of religious beliefs. Maintaining a religious tradition that centred on the cemetery and graves could therefore be interpreted as an act of resistance. Nevertheless, this was never directly articulated by my informants who, as I have discussed, often remembered the Soviet period in positive terms.

It is most significant that informants rarely articulated the repressive side of the system. Instead, they evoked the 'beautiful' aspects of Soviet ideology. This needs to be related to several factors. As became apparent, morality was at the very heart of how the past and the present were being portrayed. The insistence on the profound morality of people during the Soviet period was a recurrent theme in informants' recollections. In the face of the revelations of Soviet repression, they advocated people's faith in socialist ideals. This tendency can also be seen as a reaction to the trium-

---

<sup>21</sup> Cemeteries in Simferopol had been vandalised and destroyed (Tarchov 1996). Vandalism after the Revolution focused on religious symbols such as crosses. During the famines of the late twenties and early thirties unmarked mass graves were used. Commenting on this fact, Paul expressed his concern regarding the fact that, although his grandparents were buried in the local cemetery, he did not know where. Many cemeteries in Crimea and elsewhere in Ukraine were closed (cf. Conquest 1988: 142). In Crimea, this was also linked to the deportation of all ethnic minorities after World War II (Tarchov 1996).

<sup>22</sup> Millions were shot without a trial during the waves of repression. The famine in 1932-3 during which approximately seven million died was fabricated to break peasant resistance to collectivisation (Conquest 1988); the widespread discovery of the remains of World War II soldiers' in forests and fields speaks similarly to the lack of respect for life (cf. Tumarkin 1994). These events reveal the callousness with which the Soviet system was maintained.

phalism that was often expressed by representatives of the capitalist system since recollections were directed at me, another 'Western' representative.

Informants did not disregard the repression which occurred under Stalin or the suffering that had taken place. However, they chose to dwell on the period of the Soviet regime that had brought them peace, material stability and security under the rule of Brezhnev. They missed the assurance of a moral authority and the security that came from knowing the system. At the same time, they held onto a sense of having achieved something worthwhile under socialism and to their self-esteem as citizens of the powerful Soviet Union. Informants strongly resisted what they saw as the immorality and corruption of capitalism. The continuation of celebrations of Soviet festive days seven years after Ukrainian independence partly counter-acted the recent reforms and re-asserted old values and concepts. Fond recollections of the Soviet Union thus need to be seen in relation to when they were told and what they expressed. Memories were employed to assert old ideals, resist change and maintain a self-portrayal of a moral people.

The simultaneous upholding of Soviet values and the practice of religious traditions may seem contradictory. These contradictions were not ignored by my informants, but they were not perceived as a problem that needed to be resolved. Instead, informants' insistence on high moral standards was a way of creating consistency through enormous changes. The socialist values that were upheld, such as self-sacrifice, communality and working for the greater good of all, are all compatible with Christian values. Some informants stressed that these values were really 'Slavic' and that it was due to this that socialism had been successfully introduced. The highlighting of recollections of the moral behaviour of people and their own self-assessment as a moral people was clearly central to informants' identity. They therefore pointed to the constancy of their values and portrayed themselves as essentially unchanged despite the historical upheaval through which they had lived.

Independent from political change and repression, people thus maintained their own beliefs and counteracted change both after the revolution and the breakdown of the Soviet Union. In so doing, they upheld both religious and socialist ideas. These were incorporated into people's ways of making sense and thinking about life and death, which partly complied with the state ideology but also resisted it.

### **Acknowledgement**

I would like to thank the ESRC for their funding of a Postdoctoral Fellowship, which gave me time to work on this publication.

## References

- Binns, C. 1979. The Changing Face of Power: Revolution and Accommodation in the Development of the Soviet Ceremonial System. Part I. *Man* 14 (4): 585-606.
- . 1980. The Changing Face of Power: Revolution and Accommodation in the Development of the Soviet Ceremonial System. Part II. *Man* 15 (1): 170-187.
- Bremmer, I. 1993. Ethnic Issues in Crimea. *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* 2: 24-28.
- Bulgakowa, O. 1993. The Hydra of the Soviet Cinema: The Metamorphoses of the Soviet Film Heroine. In L. Attwood (ed.), *Red Women on the Silverscreen: Soviet Women and Cinema from the Beginning to the End of the Communist Era*, pp. 149-174. London: Pandora.
- Conquest, R. 1988. *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine*. London: Arrows Books.
- Figes, O. 1996. *A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution 1891-1924*. London: Pimlico.
- Gellner, E. 1993. Foreword. In C. Hann (ed.), *Socialism. Ideals, Ideologies and Local Practice*, pp. x-xiv. London: Routledge.
- Glants, M. 1997. Food as Art: Painting in Late Soviet Russia. In M. Glants, and J. Toomre (eds.), *Food in Russian History and Culture*, pp. 215-237. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- , and J. Toomre. 1997. Introduction. In M. Glants, and J. Toomre (eds.), *Food in Russian History and Culture*, pp. xi-xxvii. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Guroff, G., and Guroff, A. 1994. The Paradox of Russian National Identity. In R. Szporluk (ed.), *National Identity and Ethnicity in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, pp. 78-100. Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe.
- Hann, C. 1993. Introduction. In C. Hann (ed.), *Socialism. Ideals, Ideologies and Local Practice*, pp. 1-26. London: Routledge.
- . (ed.). 1994. *When History Accelerates: Essays on Rapid Social Change, Complexity and Creativity*. London: Athlone Press.
- Kligman, G. 1988. *The Wedding of the Dead: Ritual, Poetics and Popular Culture in Transylvania*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lane, C. 1981. *Rites of Rulers, Ritual in Industrial Society: The Soviet Case*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Merridale, C. 2000. *Night of Stone: Death and Memory in Russia*. London: Granta Books.
- Pahl, R., and P. Thompson. 1994. Meanings, Myths and Mystifications: the Social Constructions of Life Stories in Russia. In C. Hann (ed.),

- When History Accelerates: Essays on Rapid Social Change, Complexity and Creativity*, pp. 130-160. London: Athlone Press.
- Ransel, L. D. 1996. Baptism in Rural Russia: Village Women Speak of their Children and their Way of Life. *The History of the Family* 1 (1): 63-80.
- Tarchov, A. (ed.). 1996. *Simferopol Album*. Simferopol: Tawria.
- Thurston, R. 1991. The Soviet Family during the Great Terror, 1935-1941. *Soviet Studies* 43 (3): 553-574.
- Tumarkin, N. 1983. *Lenin Lives! The Cult of Lenin in the Soviet Union*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 1994. *The Living and the Dead: The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia*. New York: Basic Books.
- Verdery, K. 1999. *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Vogelsang, I. 2000. Identity and Migration in Crimea – Past and Present. *Anthropology in Action* 7 (1-2): 33-41.
- Von Geldern, J. 1993. *Bolshevik Festivals 1917 – 1920*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Wanner, C. 1998. *Burden of Dreams: History and Identity in Post-Soviet Ukraine*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.



## ***Chapter 8***

# **Constructing the Bulgarian Pythia: Intersections of Religion, Memory and History in the Seer Vanga**

Galia Valtchinova

Vanga's name sounds like a ringing church bell.

Fol 1990: 179

Vanga Dimitrova (1911-1996) was a clairvoyant who lived in a small Bulgarian town on the Greek-Bulgarian-Yugoslav border. She used to see the past and to predict the future with such accuracy that she has been recognised as the greatest Bulgarian prophet of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The construction of Vanga as a national prophetess, “the Bulgarian Pythia”, occurred under socialism, and was *de facto* carried out by dignitaries of what was considered to be the most unproblematic communist regime. In this paper, I endeavour to show how in socialist Bulgaria, religion has been not only successfully “domesticated” (Dragadze 1993), but also redefined through a process of conflation of memory, identity and religion that is accountable for the worldwide return to religion (Hervieu-Léger 1993). What made the process possible, I shall argue, was the interpenetration between religious life of a predominantly Orthodox country with its specific culture of commemoration on the one hand; the special treatment of national history that made it resemble a religion of the past, on the other.

I shall begin with a biographical overview, which (*pace* Christian 1996) allows me to approach the seer as a social actor in a particular political context. The second section gives an idea of the seer's functioning and of the way she is embedded in the local culture and in a socialist society. In the third and final section, I will delineate the ways in which History, the memory of crucial historical events, and what could be termed historical imagination (often displayed as ‘memory’) informed Vanga's visions and readings.

## **Vanga's Story in History: A Prophet in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Balkans**

Vanga (Evangelia) Gushterova was born in 1911 in Strumica, Macedonia (now Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), which was incorporated



into Serbia in 1913.<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to locate the ‘national’ identity of Vanga’s family; there is evidence of her father’s engagements with the pro-Bulgarian Internal Macedonian Revolutionary organisation (IMRO)<sup>2</sup> but his sense of a local or regional identity seems to have been predominant. After the untimely death of the mother, Vanga’s family moved to the father’s native village where they shared the harsh peasant life with the larger family. It was there, at age thirteen, that Vanga was struck by a whirlwind and severely injured; despite medical treatment, she progressively lost her sight, to the point of complete blindness at the age of sixteen. This event is usually considered to mark the start of her visionary experiences.<sup>3</sup> Two years spent in a sanatorium in Zemun (near Belgrade) brought her back to an urban environment, where she was re-educated in the basic skills of a housewife (sewing, cooking). From the age of 18 Vanga had to assume care for her siblings and household. In the thirties, the family was pauperised; the father could find only seasonal work as a migrant labourer. At his death, in 1940, the family was near the bottom of the local social ladder.

According to the recollections of relatives, the manifestations of Vanga’s gift for dealing with the saints started in those years of hardship, especially in the second part of the thirties. Vanga’s gift fell in line with experiences commonly manifested through religion that is, through seeing saints and speaking with saints, mostly in dreams.<sup>4</sup> Vanga’s first publicly recognised act of *clairvoyance* occurred in early April 1941 when she had repetitive visions of a “bright man riding a horse” who revealed to her that “terrible things” would shortly occur. Indeed, this revelation coincided with the outbreak of World War II in Yugoslavia, on the 6<sup>th</sup> of April, 1941, and Vanga is reported to have spent the first days or even weeks of the war in an altered state, uttering the names of those who would return or those who would disappear before growing crowds in front of her house (Stoyanova

---

<sup>1</sup> Following the two Balkan wars (1912-1913), the Ottoman province of Macedonia was divided between Greece, Serbia, and Bulgaria; the Serbian part, where Strumica was located, baptised “Southern Serbia”, remained an integral part of Serbia during the lifetime of this ‘first Yugoslavia’ (1918-1941). In 1944, Strumica became part of the Republic of Macedonia created out of this Serbian Macedonia in the framework of the new, or Tito’s Yugoslavia.

<sup>2</sup> Of the extensive literature existing on IMRO, Tröbst 1987 provides the most balanced, and detailed, account for the interwar period.

<sup>3</sup> Vanga being struck by a whirlwind is commonly affirmed as a ‘fact of life’ by all her biographers. It might however be a *topos*: the same event was reported for another famous seer, Stoyana from Zlatolist (1885-1933), also blind, who has been active during the interwar period in the same area, cf. Ivanov and Izmirlijeva 2003: 38.

<sup>4</sup> Analysing this mechanism in the case of the Greek Orthodox devotional movement, Jill Dubisch (1995: 134-55) underlined the intimate connection between personal *historia* and national history in such visions and dreams.

1989: 51-4). The bright rider was retrospectively identified as St. George, but other saints, such as St. John the Baptist and St. Petka, a female Orthodox saint who enjoyed devotion comparable to that accorded to Virgin Mary in most Catholic societies, have also guided her visions.

The rumours of Vanga's clairvoyance spread across and attracted people from a vast area. During the war, the Strumica area was under Bulgarian administration and soldiers of the occupational forces came to consult the seer, mixing with local peasants. One of them was chosen as Vanga's husband: Dimiter Gushterov, who shared her cultural background and idiom and married her in 1942. Vanga followed him to his native town, Petrich, some fifty kilometres east of her own. Thus she earned renown as "the Petrich seer" (*petrickata gledarica*), which spread so quickly over Bulgaria that in 1943 she received a visit from the Bulgarian king Boris III; she has purportedly predicted his untimely death later in this same year.<sup>5</sup> With a few exceptions of this order, however, during the war and the first postwar years Vanga's clientele remained largely rural and mostly a regional one.

By the end of the forties, the traditional multicultural environment the seer had been bathing in for decades (Stoyanova 1989: 35), was definitively over. Vanga had to live up to new codes of social life, under a communist regime that struggled for modernisation and national homogenisation. Following the famous declaration of the Kominform (on the 28<sup>th</sup> of June, 1948), political relations between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia were broken and the Bulgarian-Yugoslav frontier was "closed down". The new border regulations made it extremely difficult for people from both Yugoslavia and Bulgaria to have access to Petrich. The local Party structure tried to shut her down, she was watched by the police, intimidated, and neighbours reported her to the police. In time, however, all the measures aimed at silencing Vanga proved ineffective. Caught between two fires – the pressure of police and husband on the one hand and of the people flocking to see her on the other, she was drawn into a visionary crisis and proceeded to utter uncontrollable readings of the past and the future before crowds. By 1950, 'the Petrich seer' was reputed to be the region's most popular person and was so well known that she drew people from across Bulgaria. Things began to change only in 1960, when Vanga was allowed to go to see her relatives in the Republic of Macedonia. After her husband's death in 1962, childless and widowed, Vanga fitted perfectly the local tradition of a female seer capable of exercising her

---

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Stoyanova 1989: 54-5; Kostadinova 1998: 12. Narratives of this consultation were reproduced throughout the years of socialism and are recalled by all writings that used to compare the Petrich seer with the Delphic Pythia.

gifts full time. The social pressure<sup>6</sup> was thus relaxed, parallel to declining police control.

Throughout the sixties, Vanga's activity underwent major changes: the public regard for her changed. She increasingly attracted educated people and a new socialist intelligentsia, from all over Bulgaria but also from abroad (Ostrander and Schroeder 1971: 279). In 1967, Vanga was officially employed by the State, in two distinct but connected frameworks: the municipality, and the Institute of Suggestology (hereafter IS) created within the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. The former assured 'material support' and received part of the income; the latter was concerned with the scientific justification of Vanga's activities. A special house for the exercise of her gifts was built in the locality of Rupite, some 15 km from Petrich; she was brought there every morning and taken back in the evening. Although not located on a main travel route and offering no officially set up curative facilities, the site was occasionally visited and known to the local people for its thermal springs. The state management was conceived and carried out essentially in terms of discipline: channelling the crowd, making people respect 'order', pre-inscription in waiting lists, and above all – paying the 'consultation fee'. People employed in local or regional power (and especially Party) structures, enjoyed priority: they were provided passage to Vanga within a day.

In time, this central regulation of visits made the share of consultations given to ordinary people smaller and smaller, while the priority channels became wider. In the eighties, getting to Vanga without connections (*vruzki*) became almost impossible: the waiting lists were established a year or so in advance, leading to the generalised use of the "second way".<sup>7</sup> Vanga was a 'consumer good', and the economy of shortage typical of State socialism commanded access to this good. A visit to the seer involved a sophisticated patron-client relationship: if providing access to Vanga was demonstrating the patron's power, 'visiting Vanga' through mobilising connections was the client's goal and at the same time a source of his/her personal valorisation. A séance with the seer could open the possibility, for the most humble of Vanga's clients, to position themselves as providers of highly valued

---

<sup>6</sup> Locally, the fact that her husband and his relatives disapproved, or "were ashamed of" Vanga's activities, was well known: such an opposition was seen as a normal reaction for a man with "such a wife". It is generally considered that a *true* female seer could be neither a good wife, nor a good mother; the same applied to women *too* deeply involved in religious matters, cf. Rushton 1984.

<sup>7</sup> For the extensive use of clientelism in socialist Bulgaria, see Ragaru 2001.

services vis-à-vis their relatives, friends and sometime superiors.<sup>8</sup> In the last years of socialism, showing off one's relationship with Vanga was a highly valued strategy, especially among the Party elite, the intelligentsia, and fashionable personalities from the capital city. Being Vanga's friend came to be seen as a sign of cultural sophistication and 'spiritual concern'. The label of *petrichka vrachka* was no longer heard in the public space: by 1989, she was evoked as the 'Bulgarian Pythia', or simply as 'the Prophetess'.

Vanga lived to see the first seven years of postsocialism: it was a time of triumph for her. She became the focus of mass media attention literally the day after the change, and remained a 'hot' topic till the end of her life: the first steps of the great seer, the truth about her gift, her past predictions which paralleled the hidden history of socialism but also, in a sense, the "secrets of History", all attracted readers. Still stronger was the public interest in new prophecies, or at least the retrospective reading of old ones, that were expected and solicited: what she had said and 'seen' about social crisis, political change, the parties and personalities ruling the State, the future of Bulgaria, the future of the Great Powers, the ultimate fate of humankind. Perhaps the seer was more preoccupied with affirming her belonging to the Orthodox world. A year after the political change, she announced her decision to build a church in Rupite, on a site indicated through dreams and dedicated to "Saint Petka the Bulgarian".<sup>9</sup> Consecrated on the patron's commemorative day in 1994, the church attracted pilgrims from throughout Bulgaria but also people guided by curiosity, political nostalgia, or out of love for history.<sup>10</sup> Vanga died on the 11<sup>th</sup> of August, 1996 and was buried near 'her' church. Adding the attraction for religion and the explicitly nationalist appeal of the patron saint to the post-mortem celebration of the seer's gifts, Rupite became a true 'site of memory' (Nora 1984).

---

<sup>8</sup> I hint at the numerous instances of "hidden séances", or "a consultation within the consultation", which were made possible by Vanga's practice of touching and manipulating lump sugar that has previously been in contact with the consultant. According to general opinion, it stimulated Vanga's clairvoyance. Cf. Kostadinova 1998: *passim* for accounts how the seer sensed pieces of sugar that a visitor has brought on the behalf of other persons.

<sup>9</sup> St. Petka (gr. Paraskevi) of Epivata is a holy ascetic and recluse from the early 10<sup>th</sup> century. The transfer of her relics from Byzantium to medieval Bulgaria (1231), during the Ottoman invasion of Serbia, and finally in Moldavia (1641), made for the 'nationalisation' of this saint in these three Orthodox countries. Perhaps the epithet 'Bulgarian' is new for the cult of this saint, a fact pointing at Vanga's successful attempt in bringing closer the association of her favourite saint with Bulgarian national identity.

<sup>10</sup> In 1996, I observed a group of pilgrims organised by two female 'dreamers' who claimed to have a mission: transmitting to Vanga the messages of historical heroes who have appeared in their dreams and suggested to them "solutions for Bulgaria", cf. Valtchinova 1998: 401-2. I also witnessed, in association with various pilgrimages, political manifestations of monarchists, and in a more diffuse way, a nostalgia for socialism.

## Communicating through Space and Time: The Dead and Commemoration in Vanga's Gift

Vanga finds missing people, helps solve crimes, diagnoses disease, and reads the past. But her greatest gift is prophecy...

Ostrander and Schroeder, 1971: 265

For all those who came to seek her help, the religious character of Vanga's expertise was self-evident, sustained by basic common sense. It was an aggregate of 'gifts' and techniques for communicating with the supernatural, whether the divine or the other world, and it was easy for Vanga to shift between them. This fluidity, the ease with which Vanga moved between these two spheres, was a source of awe and admiration; fascination with her extraordinary capacities was often accompanied by fear of the world the existence of which she unveiled. To denote the relationship one had to have faith in her gift, people used to ask one another: "Do you believe in Vanga?", the term of 'believe' being used here in its distinctive religious meaning. In this part, I try to find out how the many faces of Vanga's *gift* are linked to the social and political context in which she lived, and how the local culture impregnated the seer's expertise. Drawing on accounts and archival data, I will seek an answer by looking at how ordinary actors understood Vanga's gift.

### *The Discourse of the Gift, or the Ambiguity of Being a Seer*

Throughout Vanga's career as a seer, she was considered to possess 'God's gift' (*dar bozhi*). As elsewhere in the Mediterranean, "having a gift from God" was, and still is, the most common way for designating what Feuchtwang (2001) has called *grass-roots charisma*. The vocabulary of 'gift' pervades the local popular discourse on mediators with the supernatural realm: saying that somebody has received God's gift supposes that, as a perfect Christian (cf. Hart 1992: 125), he/she is apt to communicate directly with the divine realm. Perhaps *gift* might signify quite different kinds of interactions with the divine, from prophesising and clairvoyance to healing, the latter being understood more widely as a capacity for relieving pain and suffering. Vanga mastered all of them: "speaking" with selected saintly figures and with the dead allowed her access to other dimensions of time and space, and provided her with knowledge that nobody could have direct access to. Such a capacity was, however, a dangerously ambiguous one. This ambiguity was conveyed in the words designating the blessed by God's gift.

Orchestrating the public image of Vanga, the terms used by people to designate her expertise range from ‘clairvoyant’, ‘diviner’, ‘seer’ and ‘medicine woman’ to ‘witch’. In her native area, Vanga was known as *vidovita zena*, literally “woman who sees” what ordinary people cannot and are not allowed to see. Here, *seeing* is a generic term for communicating with the supernatural realm and in spite of the positive connotation it was given by most of my informants, it seems to denote the relationship with both ‘divine’ and ‘demonic’ worlds. In Bulgaria, Vanga became known first as ‘the *gledarica* or *gledachka*’ (literally ‘she-who-looks-at’), and later as ‘the *vrachka* from Petrich’. Depending on the context, *vrachka* can mean healer, seer or witch, developing from positive or neutral to negative meanings.<sup>11</sup> This is due both to the efforts of the Orthodox Church to fight ‘superstitions’, accusing those who “go to a witch”<sup>12</sup>, and to more recent trends of modernising collective mentalities by dissociating medicine from all things religious. In time, the word came to designate both a ‘witch’ feared by the villagers and a religiously inspired folk healer, as well as what Favret-Saada (1979) called ‘*désensorceleur*’ (un-bewitcher). The use of *vrachka* often implies the possibility of switching from one meaning to another. In this sense, the move from a term referring to sight (*gledachka*) to a more opaque and polyphonic one encompasses the ambiguity of Vanga’s expertise: was it actually from God or from the Devil? Was she working miracles or was she just a ‘charlatan’? As both biographers and archives attest, such questions have been asked many times, even by many of those who have sought Vanga’s help. As long as one remained in the traditional referential framework, such questions could not be given a definite answer to.

Once Vanga was adopted by the socialist State, this ambiguity could only be prejudicial to the system of explanation put together to account for this alliance. Indeed, the creation of the Institute of Suggestology and the launching of biomedical experiments was designed to legitimate the state’s support for Vanga, as well as to provide ground for alternative, “scientific explanation”, which drew mainly on the natural sciences. At the same time, a more subtle argumentation was developed by recourse to history. The first strategy led to the “naturalisation” of the seer’s gift, which ended in the “phenomenon Vanga”: the construction of her religious expertise in terms of

---

<sup>11</sup> *Vrachka* is derived from *vrach*, an Old-Slavonic word for healer, details in Ivanov and Izmirlieva 2003.

<sup>12</sup> The most current expression of this Orthodox discourse can be found in a church wall-painting: in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the scene of “going to *vrachka*” illustrates one of the sins punished by God in the detailed picture of the Last Judgment usually represented around the main entrance. It should be noted that “going to *vrachka*” does not imply a gathering of witches and a ‘pact with the Devil’; but a recourse for the sick and the afflicted, or more generally speaking, an appeal to the *vrachka*’s dubious art of healing.

physics, psychics and the extra-sensorial (Dobrijanov 1995). However, even authors speaking of her “powerful energy fields” and “forms of telepathic communication” could not escape from using religious references. It was a way of retaining a basic religious understanding of the seer’s gift, and at the same time bypassing the dangers inherent in the use of religious vocabulary. Imposing the public image of Vanga as the ‘prophet’, an intellectual elite with a more flexible view of Marxist orthodoxy played up the enormous cultural capital associated with Greek Antiquity (which provided the main reference), thereby discretely keeping in the background the associations with biblical prophets.

The issue of the nature of Vanga’s gift and the sources of her inspiration illustrates the blurred boundary between the so-called ‘high’ and ‘low’ religion. As other folk practitioners, be they seers, clairvoyants, healers, or ‘witches’, she defined herself squarely within Orthodox religious terms. Like most of the popular religious experts in Christendom, she started by seeing saints and speaking with them, which is a metaphor for conveying one’s religious appeal. Often, the profile of such experts could change by effect of their strategies for public presentation and as a function of public interest in their activities. Deeply rooted in their local communities, praised by some while feared by others<sup>13</sup>, they usually were the first to be addressed in the case of health problems, or in order to identify the nature of a problem. Borrowing from Klanicsay (1997), one could say that Vanga could operate both miracle and *maleficium*, oscillating between the artificially separated realms of religion and superstition; much depended on the way people approached her. I will try to characterise Vanga’s expertise by looking at her séances.

#### *A visit to the seer*

Vanga: Where is your mother? Where did you send her?

Consultant: She is dead, my mother ...

V: Here she is, standing near you! ... And where is your sister? You have two sisters?

C: Yeah ... Do I have a dead sister?

V: Yes, just here, behind you. I look at her. Here is your mother, here is your sister. And your stepmother also: do you have a stepmother? ... Yes, boy, I look at them as you look at me. Your sister is very upset, because of the way she died ... And who was killed?

---

<sup>13</sup> A reaction common to Vanga (Stoyanova 1989: 54): this ambiguity structures the relationship between folk doctors and other religiously inspired local experts, and their clientele, cf. Blum and Blum 1965: 181-205; Lebarbier 1998.

C: A killed one? Yes, I actually came for him...

V: Here he comes, right now! Gosh, I hope I'm not going into a trance, I'll put out your eyes, all of you! When has he been murdered, please? Look here, do you see how death goes around?!

C: My brother has disappeared ...

V: But who is Mitko here? *They* ask for somebody, *they* put the letter 'S'...

C: It must be for Simon, it's my dad's name...

V: Where is your wife, asks your mother ... Where is the child – she points at only one child ... Your mother is asking about the old house ... You remember her very well, your mother, you keep commemorating her all this time since her death... (Dobrijanov 1995: 34-5).

This piece is one of the hundreds of séances recorded with Vanga and published *tel quel* by a leading Bulgarian sociologist. It conveys the feverish atmosphere reigning during a consultation. Indeed, a successful séance would comprise the following elements: telling personal names of relatives and friends, identifying key events from the consultant's private or public life, identifying his/her health problems, and speaking with his/her dead family and friends. The sequence quoted above features the essence of her readings: contact with the deceased family. As a rule, a séance with Vanga consisted of two kinds of dialogue: one between the seer and the consultant, and another one, in parallel, between the seer and the voices she heard or the 'spirits' of the deceased family that the visitors were supposed to have brought with them. Speaking in the name of dead relatives or friends, passing on news from them, and knowing names, were the most impressive features of a session. Reading into one's past constituted Vanga's basic skill, the one she displayed most frequently, causing dismay and awe in the crowd. Such readings were based on her "knowledge" derived from those passed away. As we can see from the text above, the main skills deployed by the seer were to detect the dead and to build a bridge between him/her, or them, and his/their living relatives. Therefore it is Vanga's relation to the dead that formed the background to her visionary and prophetic expertise.<sup>14</sup>

Vanga's interaction with the deceased is part of the local *culture of the dead*. As others have already observed in the context of Greece (Hirschon 1989: 192-218; Hart 1992: 130-42), concerns with death and rituals of commemoration pervade the Orthodox cult and liturgy, and "memory itself is institutionalized" (Hirschon 1989: 16). All that is related to death is marked as the female realm: divination, mourning, care for the dead, and the duty to commemorate dead members of the family are still exclusively the concern of women (Hirschon 1983; Seremetakis 1991). The dead provide the

---

<sup>14</sup> Cf. also Stojanova 1989: 76-81; Dobrijanov 1995: 291-3; Tsvetkova 1998: 88-9 (with spirits of the dead).



roots of the living in, and the strongest and most effective tie to, the past. Besides the church, this space provides a place for the assertion of women's social eminence (Hart 1992: 163); cemeteries are predominantly women's space where aged *mavrofora* "are mediating in an area between margins, where the realm of the deceased impinges on that of earthly existence" (Hirschon 1983: 124). A similar culture of the dead remained an essential part of many Bulgarians' personal and implicit social culture during socialism. Being the least influenced by the socialist ritual system, funeral (and more generally, separation with the dead) were characterised by abundant ritual activity.<sup>15</sup> The community-bound commemoration of the family dead called *zadushnica* (literally *for-the-souls*) was in some places carried out four times in a year, following a strictly religious calendar. The very loss of a parent or a beloved one could transform the socialist citizen into a believer: the experience of a death or of an incurable illness constituted a powerful religious appeal, especially for women. Even under triumphant socialism, death remained in many instances the domain of a momentarily tolerated 'return to religion'.

Vanga's special concern with those individuals missing during the war was an interface of this same culture of the dead. She earned her renown during the Second World War by finding missing people, especially in revealing whether those supposed to be dead were actually living (Stoyanova 1989: 51-4, 60-6). Such a gift was especially appreciated in this violence-ridden region, where a long tradition of nationalist struggles made for the frequent disappearance of people in obscure circumstances. In Petrich, Vanga predicted the return of people who had deserted Bulgaria in the 1920s; such cases were possible in the peculiar context of this border town, which functioned as a central quarter for the terrorist wing of IMRO for most of the interwar period (Tröbst 1987: 309-10). Other traumas also helped maintain the issue of the missing highly sensitive: between 1912-13 and 1923-25, several flows of refugees coming from Greek Macedonia settled in the region, the uprooted taking over the dwellings left by those who, choosing a Greek identity, took to the opposite direction.<sup>16</sup> The reappropriation of new/deserted places and landscapes resulted in the bereavement of numerous families, losing one or more family member(s). The deep political and social

---

<sup>15</sup> According to the Bulgarian folklorist Garnizov (1992), under socialism funerals drew supplementary rituals from other significant life-cycle rituals such as marriage and baptism, for which Christian *rites de passage* were less tolerated.

<sup>16</sup> The issue of Bulgarian refugees from Greece is intimately connected with the one of Macedonian struggles (which reached its height in the period 1904-1908) and the need, for the local population, to join either the Bulgarian or the Greek national project, in the aftermaths of the liberation from Ottoman rule (1912); unfortunately I cannot go further into this issue here. Vanga's native Strumica area experienced similar struggles and similar shifts of population.

changes which followed World War II did not change the situation: people continued to disappear, especially young men, but the whole issue was kept silent. In the Petrich area, where three frontiers and all three ‘Worlds’ of the cold-war period met, another kind of “missing persons” became evident: those attempting an illegal border-crossing into Greece or Yugoslavia. As Bulgarian police considered both countries ‘capitalist’, such acts used to be classified as State treason. Maintained by the political context, Vanga’s gift of locating missing persons never lost its importance.<sup>17</sup>

Vanga’s gift also included healing. The major part (almost 90%) of the consultations with Vanga recorded by the IS<sup>18</sup> focused on health problems, but the consultation itself was described in a vocabulary of “prediction”. A specific wooden language was developed using questionnaires and word of mouth, which attempted to eliminate any hint of religion, at the same time presenting the seer mainly in terms of “forecasting the future”. The questionnaires circulated by the Institute among thousands of people who consulted Vanga between 1967 and 1974 present quite a rigid framework for the respondents: the answers must be given in terms of ‘she predicted’ (*predskaza*), and whether a prediction has come true or not (*predskazanoto se sbadna*). Most of those affirming that she has foretold their futures included in the latter category ‘predictions’ concerning the efficacy of biomedical treatment, thus applying to modern healing the view that human health, as life itself, was ultimately in God’s hands.

Even if most of the consultations were connected to usual hardships and health problems, it was prophesising that captured public attention. Vanga’s capacity for foretelling the future ranged from more or less predictable issues, like the coming of a long-expected child or the outcome of a personal undertaking (a job, a marriage) to significant events such as a civil war or a State *coup*. Foretelling the future marked, to employ R. Kosellek’s (1990 [1975]) terminology, the “horizon of expectation” for people who were coming to consult Vanga; perhaps the “space of experience” as reflected in the completed questionnaires was quite different. Predictions about significant events, or prophecy – and all knew that *prophecy* was about political issues<sup>19</sup> – were actually rare. Apart from foretelling the future in

---

<sup>17</sup> Even in the late sixties, letters from Yugoslav citizens asking Vanga’s help for finding persons who disappeared in the 1940 are not uncommon; cf. State Archives, arch. N. 904-II, files 54, 55.

<sup>18</sup> Information concerning the consultations with Vanga are kept in the Bulgarian State Archives (a. F. 904-II) with other documents related to the IS. This conclusion draws upon ca. 1000 files studied from a total of ca. 7000.

<sup>19</sup> The seer’s relatives and close acquaintances were attentive in not letting Vanga become involved in dangerous political readings, cf. Stoyanova 1989: 97; Tsvetkova 1998: 87.

special circumstances of emotional stress, mainly suffering, Vanga's predictions on larger political issues (like, for instance, the events in Prague in 1968) occurred rarely with ordinary clients. From the seventies onward, outbursts of prophesising were attested mainly before intellectuals and high-ranked personalities.<sup>20</sup> Many of them would retrospectively be qualified as "seeing into History". I turn now to how history influenced Vanga's clairvoyance, and to the use of history in the construction of a national Pythia.

### **History as Religion: From Reading Histories to Reading History**

You must remember, Bulgaria is a very ancient country; it is the land of Orpheus'.

Ostrander and Schroeder 1970: 280

This assessment by Professor Lozanov, the IS director, is taken from one of his first interviews for a Western audience. In 1967, he explained Vanga by reference to a mythic figure known from Greek Antiquity. This seemed natural for this psychologist who guided and supervised the scientific examinations of Vanga's mind; also for an occasionally interviewed medical student who observed that "the Greeks had Cassandra and the Oracle of Delphi". Orpheus, Cassandra, Delphic Pythia: all of them mythic figures of the mediator between the human and divine realm, all of them associated in some way with *foreseeing* and enunciating the 'divine truth', and with religion broadly speaking. We are in the heart of the process that represented Vanga in a number of ways: from antique 'models' to highly prestigious references which ennobled her, providing the local prophet with illustrious ancestry, and putting her beyond the criticism of zealous Marxist ideologists. This is one aspect of the complex relationship between the Petric seer and history; a second aspect is the role she was supposed to play in the 'knowledge' of history. Yet a third is the way she has appropriated events, images and heroes of the national history, letting them appear in her own visions. I will briefly delineate all three aspects.

Antiquity, i.e. ancient history and archaeology enjoyed special attention in Bulgaria, as in all Southeast European societies, not least because of the possibilities they open for the construction of national identity. Balkan national historiographies did not resist the temptation to "bring home" some of the glory, which the West used to associate with ancient Greece: post-Yugoslav Macedonia and the crisis over the name of the republic is but one example of this trend. In Bulgaria, these possibilities have been exploited successfully by *thracology*, a distinct historical discipline promoted from the

---

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Stoyanova 1989: 82-3, 97-100, 106-7; Kostadinova 1998; Tsvetkova 1998: 179-209.

early seventies onwards for studying the ancient Thracians, proclaimed as one of the three collective ancestors of the Bulgarian nation.<sup>21</sup> The rise of the new discipline coincided with the generational change within academia and a marked nationalistic turn in the politics of culture and humanities, patronised by Ljudmila Zhivkova (1942-1981), the Bulgarian communist leader's daughter. Having graduated in history and seeking ways to celebrate Bulgarian ancient and medieval past in order to foster "pride of being Bulgarian", Zhivkova heralded a new vision of Bulgarian history in which the emphasis was placed on distinctiveness from other cultures, on continuity in the *longue durée*, and on the dialectics of suffering and glory. Entering politics (1970), she became the head of socialist Bulgaria's cultural politics. Preparing the celebration of the 1300 anniversary of the foundation of the Bulgarian state (1980-81), she launched an ambitious program in which history and cultural heritage were given key importance.<sup>22</sup> The special place of history was reflected in the high status of its professionals: historians were 'sacred scholars' (Karakasidou 1994) who like in Greece or Romania (Verdery 1991), operated at the forefront of national ideology.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, Zhivkova surrounded herself with social scientists, historians (including the founder of the new discipline) and artists. The serious institutional backing and the high political prestige of the promoters for new trends in Bulgarian history-writing created a huge interest in history: the Bulgarian ancient and medieval past became fashionable in wider milieus, providing food for fiction books, movies and musical creations. These were regular channels through which new ideas and interpretations of national history, promoted by an elite, could reach a larger audience. They were all the more effective because the passion for history was not limited to the professional elite: "history" was the subject of discussions and resonated in a mental space that was easy to activate in both formal and informal contexts. In Bulgaria, as elsewhere in the Balkans, popular interest in history might take unexpected shapes, from fashionable talk during informal gatherings to ultimate justification and mobilisation of people engaged in an argument.<sup>24</sup> Our seer was not an exception to this rule.

---

<sup>21</sup> On thracology see Fol 1990; on the theory of the three collective ancestors see Iliev 1998.

<sup>22</sup> For biographical details and useful insights into Zhivkova's nationalism see Crampton 1997: 204-5.

<sup>23</sup> For the highly politicised history-writing in socialist Bulgaria, see Riis 2002 who emphasises the connection of religion, the Church, and the nation-building process that is reaffirmed in the 1970s and the 1980s.

<sup>24</sup> This presence of history in everyday life is best studied on Greek examples, reflections in Herzfeld 1997 and Sutton 1998 are especially relevant to our case.

By the end of the seventies, Vanga was publicly associated with Zhivkova's circle<sup>25</sup> and was said to be the latter's guru. The visit to the Petrich seer had become part of the protocol for foreign personalities from the cultural realm, especially for Soviet guests. Personalities from other socialist countries and leaders from the Third world also sought Vanga who, in such cases, was encouraged to prophesise on political matters. It is in this context of the celebration of a Bulgarian identity – an identity based on history – that Vanga developed another side of her prophetic gift: seeing back into the remote past. This is the second interrelationship between history and Vanga, identified above, to which I now turn.

Vanga's passion for history was well known and shared with her friends and guests: she loved people giving narratives concerning historical heroes and kings, of great events and ancient civilizations (Tsvetkova 1998: 170-1). Sometimes, instead of taking a siesta, she would invite selected guests to talk history: she "transported herself" to the place and time evoked, and sometimes "corrected" the narrator. This was the case, for example, in the account given by a Bulgarian writer (*apud* Stoyanova 1989: 77-80) whose visit ended with a trip to a nearby village, where excavations of a medieval fortress took place. It was one of the localities where king Samuel (976-1014) was supposed to have lost the decisive battle against the Byzantine emperor Basil II, who, succeeding to capture and blind Samuel's ten thousand soldiers, was known as the 'Bulgar-Slayer'. Following the official Bulgarian historiography, this battle marked not only the end of the First Bulgarian kingdom, but also a peak in national suffering.<sup>26</sup> After a visit to the archaeological site, Vanga started speaking with the writer's father (dead long ago), who asked through her news from his family. Several minutes later, she declared seeing King Samuel's blind soldiers going up the hill, and asked the writer who 'Basil' was: the actors of History were thus connected with the ordinary dead. The seer was reported to have encouraged many of her consultants to visit Samuel's fortress and to "love our history". Though uniformly interpreted as referring to a Bulgarian national past, these words

---

<sup>25</sup> Vanga was given special attention by the three most influential Bulgarian historians during socialism: Professor Al. Fol, the founder of thracology, Professor N. Genchev who promoted a new vision on the Ottoman period and the National Revival (18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> c.), and the leading historian of the capitalist period, Professor I. Dimitrov. Some leading Marxist philosophers and sociologists, as well as the leaders of the Union of Bulgarian Writers and the Union of Bulgarian artist-painters were among her closest friends.

<sup>26</sup> King (*tsar*) Samuel is a symbolically significant figure from both a Bulgarian and Macedonian (FYROM) *national* perspective; the quarrel between the national historiographies of these two States is similar to the one over the 'ownership' of Alexander the Great that exists between FYROM and Greece.

could have different interpretations.<sup>27</sup> Beyond the apparently national perspective, the seer was attracted to historical personalities who embodied the idea of suffering, an idea more or less embraced by all Balkan historiographies.

The interest in Byzantium was regularly evoked for explaining Vanga's love for Melnik, a small town some 30 km from Petrich. This ancient byzantine fortress, a prosperous centre of wine trade in Ottoman times, was known as one of the outposts of cultural Hellenism until 1913, when its Greek population left it. Despite this traumatic experience, the 'Greek' spirituality persisted in churches and houses, which formed the subject of one of the largest cultural heritage preservation programmes in socialist Bulgaria. Restored and extraordinarily beautiful frescoes helped keep open the churches, which the seer used to visit frequently, especially in the beginning of the 1970s: she heard voices saying "We are Byzantines", saw people clothed in white and gold, touched the stones and talked to the ruins, affirming that she received energy from the glorious past (Stoyanova 1989: 81-2). Without doubt, however, the attractiveness of Melnik was due to its association with another seer, 'holy' Stoyana.<sup>28</sup> History was relevant to Vanga's prophetic gift on two levels: as literally a *text* (written or told) which induced her into prophetic inspiration, and as a *pretext* to introduce a purely religious example that she wished to follow.

Thirdly, and finally, the appeal of the antique past to the seer was less powerful but also discernable. Vanga's ideas about Antiquity were shaped by the discipline of thracology, mostly by its popular versions conveyed by fiction and through the accounts of writers and university professors who paid her regular visits. She associated Antiquity mostly (perhaps vaguely) with Orpheus and mythical figures such as the Thracian rider, who occasion-

---

<sup>27</sup> The story of King Samuel and of his decades-long struggle against Byzantium is literally inlaid in the landscape of both Petrich and the Strumica area: local names of rivers, villages, and many localities are derived from the names of Samuel and Basil. Such an intense presence of History in the region is certainly a product of the 19<sup>th</sup> century national revival, a piece of invented tradition in the sense of Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983. For the time being, however, history has become an integral part of the strong *local* identity developed in both areas.

<sup>28</sup> Blind since her teens, guided in her visions by the same saints (St. George, St. Petka), uprooted and a refugee from a neighbouring region in Greek Macedonia, 'holy' Stoyana represented Vanga's *alter ego*: she was never treated as a *vrachka* and enjoyed high esteem within her community, including the local priest, who was the first to promote her popular cult after her death; cf. Ivanov and Izmirlieva 2003. There is growing evidence that Vanga used to compare herself to Stoyana and regularly commemorated her (cf. Tsvetkova 1998: 36-7).

ally appeared as spiritual “guides” in her trances.<sup>29</sup> As these figures lacked real popular appeal and failed to produce mobilising nationalist discourses, their images remained somewhat pale: Vanga ‘saw’ them as shadows, they lacked the physicality that characterised the ‘normal’ dead she used to communicate with, and she could rarely speak with them. When, in 1983, a film director described to her his project to make a movie about Orpheus (Stoyanova 1989: 82), Vanga said his ideas were wrong, delivering her own vision of the Thracian singer as follows:

He is a poor young man, I see him, he puts his ear on the earth and registers all sounds; his gift comes from the earth, not from God, all his voices are from the earth. ... He walks through the mountain ... and he is followed by Samuel...

The many pasts are thus telescoped into one temporal flow – the time of History, in which the symbolic figures of Bulgarian identity find their place and meet. This is a logical end to the process of appropriation of representation and to images of Bulgarian national history based on ‘religious’ ideas. In the course of this process, Vanga has recast her visions and prophecies of national heroes and even mythical figures, mixing them with the saints. Urged from ‘above’ and answering the impulses that came from ‘below’, the seer developed her gift in line with her aptitude for communicating with the dead: “seeing” into history was just a manner of associating the illustrious dead with ordinary mortals.

### **Conclusion: From Family Dead to the *Illustrissimi Mortes***

This paper raised more questions than it could answer. Trying to understand how a local seer rose as a national prophetess, under socialism, I have explored three distinctive but intertwined paths which are present when the seer is at work: religion, memory/commemoration, and history. Social and individual memory were interwoven in Vanga’s experience; the work of other people’s memories was pivotal in her expertise. Showing the centrality of the dead, I have presented her skills for communicating with the dead against the culturally patterned ways of dealing with death and the deceased. Vanga started her career of a clairvoyant in the traditional manner: by seeing saints and speaking with saints, but it is “speaking with the dead” that constituted the core of her gift. With such practices she acted in a similar way to other Balkan Orthodox women whose visionary experience, though rarely recognised by the Church, played an essential role for the production and re-

---

<sup>29</sup> The Thracian rider, an anonymous local divinity that appears on motives since Hellenistic times, was considered to have influenced the iconography St. George, usually represented as a warrior riding a horse.

production of religious life in the broadest sense of the word. Her 'gift' was rooted in a specific culture of the dead and of commemoration – a culture imbued by the Orthodox rituals of commemoration, which, again, is exclusively a women's realm. One can say that Vanga's readings repeatedly reproduced the intimate connection between memory, the past, and a certain form of religious feeling and practice.

The shift from saints, those 'very special dead' (Brown 1981), to the ordinary dead was a shift in 'level' not of essence: such a move was reversible, so that Vanga could easily shift again to the special dead, those celebrated by nationalist historiography. The latter are the illustrious dead of the Nation, who, through commemoration and places of memory, helped to produce and reinforce a sense of collective belonging. Saints had a prominent place in the economy of divine help and trust, while the importance of the deceased family was in the social reproduction of a family or lineage. The living memory of an individual, and of *proxima mortes* communicated through a multitude of channels, merged with the *illustrissimi mortes* of the Nation and, finally, with History.

I have made it clear that history, or rather the historical-religious dimension of a Bulgarian national identity, was present in Vanga's expertise in a variety of ways. History provided a pool of prestigious references and images to which Vanga was compared and, at the same time, a cultural and politicised background against which the seer projected her own visions and prophecies. Vanga's prophetic gift was most effective vis-à-vis the past: she was able to scan the past in order to find a solution of present-day problems and the future. This is precisely what brings to mind the Oracle of Delphi, more than the superficial resemblances to the Delphic Pythia that many Bulgarians used to evoke as a measure of her expertise. Borrowing from a recent study on the Greek oracle (Morgan 1993: 28), one can conclude that Vanga's basic role "was to sanction already formulated solutions to difficult, often unprecedented, and potentially divisive problems of past or present community conduct, in order to enable leaders to establish a consensus of opinion for their acceptance". In the age of nationalism, even under socialism, such an insidiously religious sanction of memory and history by a seer-prophet could be welcomed.

### Acknowledgements

The research which led to the writing of this article was supported by the Open Society Fund, RSS grant # 994/2000, as well as by a Mellon Visiting Fellowships at the IWM-Vienna and the Warburg Institute-London (2001). I am grateful to Deema Kaneff and Frances Pine for their comments on earlier drafts and for their editorial help. I am also indebted to my exchange with Elizabeth Claverie and Jane Schneider. The responsibility for the views expressed here is only mine.



## References

- Blum, R. and E. Blum. 1965. *Health and Healing in Rural Greece*. Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press.
- Brown, P. 1981. *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in the Latin Christianity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Christian jr., W. A. 1996. *Visionaries. The Spanish Republic and the Reign of Christ*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Crampton, R. 1997. *A Concise History of Bulgaria*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dragadze, T. 1993. The Domestication of Religion under Soviet Communism. In C. Hann (ed.), *Socialism. Ideals, Ideologies and Local Practice*, pp. 148-156. London: Routledge.
- Dobriyanov, V. 1995. *Fenomenat Vanga. Eksperimenti po Telepatna Komunikacija*. Sofia: The University of Sofia 'St. Kliment Okhridski' Press.
- Dubsich, J. 1995. *In a Different Place. Gender, Pilgrimage and Politics on a Greek Island*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Favret-Saada, J. 1977. *Les Mots, la Mort, les Sorts*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Feuchtwang, S., and W. Mingming. 2001. *Grassroots Charisma: Four Local Leaders in China*. London: Routledge.
- Fol, A. 1990. *Kultura i Politika v Drevna Trakija*. Sofia: The University of Sofia 'Kl. Okhridski' Press.
- Garnizov, V. 1992. "Identité et Rites des Funérailles à l'époque du Totalitarisme". *Etudes et Documents Balkaniques et Méditerranéens* 10: 68-70.
- Hart, L. K. 1992. *Time, Religion, and Social Experience in Rural Greece*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Hervieu-Léger, D. 1993. *La Religion pour Mémoire*. Paris: Cerf.
- Herzfeld, M. 1997. *Cultural Intimacy. Social Poetics in the Nation-State*. New York: Routledge.
- Hirschon R., 1983. Women, the Aged and Religious Activity: Oppositions and Complementarities in an Urban Locality. *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 1 (1): 113-129.
- . 1989. *Heirs of the Greek Catastrophe: The Social Life of Asia Minor Refugees in Piraeus*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Hobsbawm, E., and T. Ranger (eds.). 1983. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Iliev, I. 1997. The Proper Use of Ancestors. *Ethnologia Balkanica* 1: 7-18.
- Ivanov P., and V. Izmirlieva. 2003. Betwixt and Between: The Cult of Living Saints in Contemporary Bulgaria. *Folkloristica: Journal of Slavic & East European Studies Association*, 8 (1): 33-53.

- Karakasidou, A. 1994. Sacred Scholars, Profane Advocates: Intellectuals Molding National Consciousness in Greece. *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 1 (1): 35-61.
- Klaniczay, G. 1997. "Miraculum and Maleficium": Reflections Concerning Late Medieval Sanctity. In R. Po-Shi Hsia, and R. W. Scribner (eds.), *Problems in the Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Europe*, pp. 49-73. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Kosellek, R. 1990 "Champ d'expérience" et "Horizon d'attente": Deux Catégories Historiques. *Le Futur passé. Contribution à la sémantique des temps historiques*, pp. 307-329. Paris: Editions EHESS.
- Kostadinova, Z. 1998. *Prorochestvata na Vanga: II. Choveshki Sadbi*. Sofia: Trud.
- Lebarbier, M. 1998. Entre Imaginaire et Réalité: L'image de la Femme dans un Village du Nord de la Roumanie. In M. M. J. Fernandez (ed.), *Parler Femme en Europe: La femme, Image et Langage, de la Tradition à l'oral Quotidien*, pp. 95-136. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Nora, P. 1984. Entre Mémoire et Histoire, la Problématique des Lieux. *Les Lieux de Mémoire. La République*, pp. XVII-XLII. Paris: Gallimard.
- Ostrander, S., and L. Schroeder. 1971. *Psychic Discoveries behind the Iron Curtain*. Toronto: Bantam Books.
- Ragaru, N. 2001. 'Rendre service': Politique et Solidarités Privées en Bulgarie post-communiste. *Cahiers d'études sur la Méditerranée Orientale et le Monde Turco-iranien* 31: 9-56.
- Riis, C. 2002. Religion, Politics and Historiography in Bulgaria. Boulder, Colo.: East European Monographs.
- Rushton, L. 1984. The Angels: A Women's Religious Organization in Northern Greece. In A. Blok, and H. Driessen (eds.), *Cultural Dominance in the Mediterranean Area*, pp. 55-81. Nijmegen: Centrale Repografie, Directoraat A-Faculteiten, Katholieke Univ.
- Seremetakis, C. N. 1991. *The Last Word. Women, Death and Divination in Inner Mani*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Stoyanova, K. 1989. *Vanga*. Sofia: Nauka i Izkustvo.
- Sutton, D. E. 1998. *Memories Cast in Stone: The Relevance of the Past in Everyday Life*. Oxford: Berg.
- Tröbst, S. 1987. *Mussolini, Makedonien und die Mächte 1922-1930: die „Innere Makedonische Revolutionäre Organisation“ in der Südosteuropapolitik des faschistischen Italien*. Köln: Böhlau.
- Tsvetkova, B. 1998. *Vanga: Shivot za Horata*. Sofia: Alisa-MG Publisher.
- Valtchinova, G. 1998. Entre Religion, Tourisme et Politique: La Naissance du Pèlerinage de Rupite, Bulgarie. *Ethnologie Française* 28 (3): 396-405.

Verdery, K. 1991. *National Ideology under Socialism. Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceausescu's Romania*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

## ***Chapter 9***

# **Tarantism and the Politics of Tradition in Contemporary Salento**

Giovanni Pizza

The Salentine peninsula in southern Italy is a sort of “memory site” in the history of Italian religious anthropology. It is the part of Apulia which is home to “tarantismo”, the spider bite possession ritual linked to the cult of Saint Paul, and the location of the 1959 ethnographic study conducted by Ernesto de Martino (1908-1965), and documented in his classic book, *La terra del rimorso* (*The Land of Remorse*, de Martino 1961).

The first part of de Martino’s book, the ethnographic study, is entitled *Salento 1959*. In the Salentine villages in which de Martino did his field-work, women called *tarantate* claimed to be bitten by tarantula during their work in the fields. On the 29<sup>th</sup> of June, Saint Paul’s day, they went to the city of Galatina. Inside and outside the church of St Paul they performed convulsions, which medical scientists classified as hysterics. The women were possessed by the spider spirit, and asked Saint Paul to help them recover. Previously, de Martino had observed possession and healing dance performances of some “tarantate” in their own homes. They were cured through music, dance and colour symbolism. This ritual has long historical roots, and has been the subject of argument between medical and catholic discourses since the Middle Ages. The medical profession classified the female bodily performances in three ways: as a disease caused by the venom of the tarantula; as an hysterical mental disorder; and as female fiction. Catholicism on the other hand introduced the figure of Saint Paul and progressively transformed a possession cult into a catholic cult of the saint. De Martino showed that the medical approach reduced the “symbolic autonomy” of tarantism, that is, it ignored its ritual function. He also argued that local bodily performances of spider-spirit possession should not be considered “subversive” to either medicine or official Catholicism. They were ritual performances in which ceremony and suffering were interwoven. Tarantism then was no

longer understood as a mental disorder but rather as a ritual aiming to give a cultural meaning to female existential and social suffering.<sup>1</sup>

During the 1960s and 1970s, two decades after de Martino's fieldwork, his book had a strong impact on the Italian public, newspapers, and television. Several scholars went back to Salento in order to restudy tarantism (Rossi 1970; Castiglione 1977; cf. Seppilli 1995; Lombardi-Satriani 1996; Gallini and Faeta 1999; Pizza 1999). In the 1980s the French anthropologist Georges Lapassade did fieldwork there, in collaboration with theatre performers. In a sort of research action, musicians and healers of tarantism were engaged to collaborate in experimental works of theatre (cf. Blasi 1994; Lapassade 1994).

In the 1990s there was a rediscovery of de Martinian thought in Italian academic culture (Gallini and Massenzio 1997). A parallel revitalisation and transformation of "tarantism" occurred in the local politics of culture and tradition in Salento (Di Mitri 1999). After the popularisation of de Martino's anthropological research, many academic and self-proclaimed anthropologists, tourists and students began to visit Galatina, in order to see the ritual performances of the "tarantate". Today tarantism healing performances are no longer visible, and "tarantism" is now a complex field of cultural production. Observing contemporary "tarantism" means coming to terms with a complex interweaving of various practices of writing, art, cinema, philosophical reflection, academic anthropology and cultural politics put into play by local institutions. I began my own fieldwork in contemporary Salento in

---

<sup>1</sup> De Martino's book was translated into French and, more recently, into Spanish. It has not yet been translated into English, however, English readers have a good abstract written by George Saunders. Here I quote a part of it: "This book is fascinating, and deserves translation on its ethnographic merits alone. After an introduction, the first section details the work of the research team in Salento in 1959 and describes the symbolism of the tarantola bite and of the rites, the relationship between tarantism and the economy, and the rapport of the cult with official Catholicism. The second part focuses in considerably more depth on the symbolism of the music and dance. The third part, the longest and most theoretical, is entitled *Historical Commentary*. Here de Martino (a historian of religion by training) reports on its historical investigation of the origins of tarantism, on its relationship to other forms of magic and to the Enlightenment, and (...) on the reactions of scholars and the bourgeoisie to the phenomenon. (...) For example, he notes the first attempts by a group of Neapolitan doctors in the early 18th century to develop a scientific analysis of tarantism. In their report, they argued the tarantism was, on the one hand, an 'institution' (founded in culture), and on the other, a disease, and particularly a psychic disorder. Over the next century, the analyses of tarantism became more 'professional and specialised', and, according to de Martino, the cultural dimension was ignored as the 'scientific' judgement of the phenomenon came to emphasise pathology – that is, to medicalise it" (Saunders 1993: 885). For a discussion of de Martino's book see also Lewis 1991.

1998.<sup>2</sup> From the first moment of my fieldwork I was aware of the involvement of the ethnographer in this kind of field work. As an “academic anthropologist” I was immediately considered “de Martinian”, and I was asked to participate in local debates and conferences on tarantism, and to write articles for local journals.

In its popularised form, contemporary anthropology has now entered into this process, in Italy as well as elsewhere (cf. Battaglia 1995; MacClancy and McDonaugh 1996; Pizza 1999; Mahon 2000), offering the instruments that enable its conception, objectification, and finally, its embodiment. Ernesto de Martino himself is being transformed into an embodied symbol, to be recalled or rejected, evoked or repressed. He has now become identical with Saint Paul, as the guiding spirit both for anthropologists and local experts. He is the agent (and in this role, ambiguous and ironic just like any self-respecting spirit) of a new form of possession: a process of embodiment of local history and local memory (Palumbo 1997; Lambek 1998), which delineates a field managed by a multiplicity of subjects from local cultural producers and academic anthropologists to local politicians.

In this chapter I will examine the uses of memory in two fields, comparing the academic anthropological memory of de Martino to the contemporary commodification of tarantism carried out by local cultural producers and institutions. My main aim is to draw a parallel between different discourses invoking memory of the past in Salento: the memory of academic anthropology, with its foundation myths, re-studies and memorial rituals; and the memory of local cultural producers, collaborating with political and heritage institutions to bring about a sort of commodification of tarantism. In a sense I will try to delineate what happens *when they read what we write* (Brettel 1993). My argument is that the cultural traits of the local revitalisation discourse and the renewed practice of tarantism have invaded the academic anthropological debate. Local actors are using this debate in order to legitimate the revitalisation of tarantism, which is no longer a “healing rite” or a “possession cult” linked to social suffering, but a “popular dance” with an indefinite trance meaning. In a sense, if we move toward a more open interpretation of tarantism as spirit possession (Boddy 1994; Olivier de Sardan 1994), we can consider it as a wider system of thought and practice to which local writings, pictures, films or music performances may also

---

<sup>2</sup> After a timely re-reading of tarantism (Pizza 1996, 1998), I started my fieldwork in Salento in the summer 1998, to study the contemporary practices of tarantism and the politics of culture, tradition and memory that subtend them. My main informants were local scholars, academics and musicians, as well as politicians and journalists, each one engaged in the public discourse on tarantism. For a first survey on the cultural production of tarantism in contemporary Salento see Pizza 1999.

belong. Local and global artists are also rediscovering the aesthetic values of tarantism, and are participating in this reconstruction of the Salentine cultural past.

In the following four sections I shall explore some specific aspects of this process of revitalisation of Apulian tarantism: first, the transformation of Ernesto de Martino into a symbol of identity in the Italian anthropological discourse; second, the relationship between the ethnographic memory of de Martino and local cultural productions, in particular the works of three local artists-writers-scholars who provide “visible evidence” of cultural producers (Mahon 2000); third, the transformation of tarantism today into an identity play, claiming a search for local origins; and fourth, the ‘patrimonialisation’ of tarantism, and its transformation into a sort of cultural commodity with the birth of the music festival *Night of the Taranta*.

### Remembering the “Founding Father”

In his article on the work of Ernesto de Martino, published in 1993 in *American Anthropologist*, George Saunders called him “the founding father” of Italian anthropology and compared him to Claude Lévi-Strauss or Franz Boas, as “one of the most exciting, original and profound thinkers of the 20th-century anthropology” (Saunders 1993: 875). Even if somewhat delayed in Anglophone anthropology, this international recognition has contributed to a “revitalisation” of de Martino’s work, and has generated an international debate. Saunders’ article was quickly translated into Italian, along with several international commentaries, and the Italian debate on de Martino, which had quietened down in the 1980s, started up again. The 30th anniversary of de Martino’s death, two years after Saunders’ article appeared, was the occasion for an important conference on his work (Gallini and Massenzio 1997). Clara Gallini, one of Italy’s most important contemporary anthropologists, was the chief organiser of the conference. She was de Martino’s assistant when he had his first chair in Sardinia, and it is to her that we owe the publication of de Martino’s remaining incomplete works (de Martino 1977). In 1977, when Gallini edited the first posthumous book of de Martino’s work, she denounced a sort of “damnatio memoriae” which had marked the decade after his death (Gallini 1977: XXIV). Eighteen years later, in 1995, she opened the conference with an introduction entitled, *Cultural fatherlands, memory*, quoting de Martino’s concept of *patria culturale*, “cultural fatherland”, and stressing the importance of memory and the act of remembering, especially from the point of view of the politically engaged anthropologist who lives today in a world torn by a sort of “war of memories”, in an age doomed to “oblivion” (Gallini 1997: 6).

“Cultural fatherland” in de Martino’s writings means the emotional consciousness of attachment to a place and at the same time a strong feeling of identity and belonging which links us to our past. Now his most prominent pupil, Clara Gallini, was using this anthropological concept to remind us not to forget de Martino’s work, as it had been forgotten after his untimely death thirty years before. Listening to her memorial overture at the 1995 conference, I found it interesting that a concept taken from de Martino’s work was being given salience in the construction of the identity of Italian anthropology and anthropologists. Gallini went on to criticise Italian anthropology for having sometimes followed culturally exogenous fashions (such as structuralism in the seventies or postmodernism in nineties), wondering whether “we” (Italian anthropologists) “suffer from weak memory, preventing us from building solid cultural fatherlands from which we can look beyond” (Gallini 1997: 10). In Gallini’s presentation, then, de Martino was considered the epitome of a national anthropological identity, and, in a sense, of the anthropological self. The process of remembering him was thus presented as a way to resist the permeability of post-modern subjectivity.

This kind of relationship with a de Martinian memory in Italian anthropology was strikingly visible at the conference. Those anthropologists for whom de Martino had really been a “founding father” remembered him and spoke about him in genealogical terms. Carlo Tullio Altan (1997), for example, entitled his paper *Ernesto de Martino, my elder brother*, and Pietro Clemente intentionally spoke about *De Martino inside us: history and genealogy*, and decided to title the first part of his paper *Fathers, sons, and grandchildren* in order to stress the presence of this important “ancestor within the page” (Clemente 1997, 1999). Two years later, in 1997, another important Italian anthropologist, Vittorio Lanternari, wrote a book called, *My Alliance with Ernesto de Martino* (Lanternari 1997). The representation of a de Martinian memory was performed in metaphorical terms of kinship, descent, heritage, consanguinity, affinity, and adoption. In a sense, the discourse surrounding a de Martinian memory involved the person and the self of the orators at the conference, their identity, their capacity to remember the past.<sup>3</sup>

The second half of the nineties witnessed the important rediscovery of de Martino in anthropological discussion, and the recognition of his complex and fascinating thinking. New translations of his books into French, Spanish, (and Polish), and the publication of his archives through the efforts of Clara

---

<sup>3</sup> For the implications in terms of identity within the genre of the “history of anthropology” cf. Bourdieu 1984; Clemente 1999; Handler 2000.



Gallini (de Martino 1995, 1996), have led to a sort of “renaissance” of his presence in the debate (cf. Pizza 1999).

Now this bit of good fortune has led to another important consequence. De Martino is not only remembered by several generations of Italian academic anthropologists, but has at the same time also been rediscovered by local actors in southern Italy where he did his fieldwork, in particular in Apulia, on the Salentine peninsula (the “heel” of the Italian “boot”), the land he baptised the land of remorse, *La terra del rimorso* (meaning also the land of the re-bitten).

In the local context, the public memory of tarantism is above all the ethnographic memory of de Martino’s fieldwork team, and of de Martino’s monograph on tarantism.<sup>4</sup> While academic anthropologists are engaged in an undoubtedly important rediscovery of de Martinian thought, on the contemporary Salentine peninsula de Martino is being revitalised in a complex process involving different actors. Depending on the different positions of the diverse subjects on the local scene, de Martino’s work is at times the model for “correct” revitalisation practices, at times a sort of cultural map to be followed step by step by those who want to discover contemporary Salento, or rediscover places and persons (de Martino’s informants). But de Martino is also remembered as the anthropologist who branded the Salentine peninsula land of remorse, for most local actors an offensive term synonymous with backwardness. So they say that Salento is no longer the land of remorse – meaning the land of a “bad past” – but the *land of renaissance*, and this transformation has been made possible by the continuous revision of tarantism studies.

All this is happening in part because *La terra del rimorso* is de Martino’s best known work as well as the last big work to be published during his lifetime. But another reason for this “renaissance” is that the cultural phenomenon he studied was really spectacular, consisting of a sort of spirit possession, a spider possession demanding dance and music: the rhythm of the “pizzica tarantata”. So tarantism was literally a “collective representation” in the true sense of a staged performance, and *La terra del rimorso* was a sort of “multimedia” product. The book was enriched with photographs, a disk, and a music score by Diego Carpitella (1961), a founding father of ethnomusicology in Italy, and a member of de Martino’s field-

---

<sup>4</sup> The production of a public discourse about Ernesto de Martino and his 1959 ethnographic expedition on tarantism in Salento is not an isolated phenomenon: the same happens, for example, with the “ghost” of Bronislaw Malinowski among contemporary Trobrianders (cf. Battaglia 1995, 1997), and with Marcel Griaule’s ethnographic memory among the Dogon in present-day Mali (cf. Ciarcia 1998; Doquet 1999; Michel-Jones 1999).

work team. Soon after the publication of the book, a film was produced based on Carpitella's footage and de Martino's research (Mingozzi 1961).

### The Land of Remembrance

The academic rediscovery of de Martinian work seems to be paralleled by the Salentine rediscovery of de Martino as an important figure and the rise of several "local anthropologies". At the same time we see a revival and a reinvention of tarantism, which is being freed from its former association with suffering and despair (Signorelli 1996), and transformed into a 'renaissance' discourse, renaissance being the specific term used by many local culture specialists.

The transformation of tarantism into a positive symbol, freed of its connection to suffering, is possible only because the symbol has been totally decontextualised, reified, and projected onto an ill-defined universal dimension. While in de Martino's book the trance of tarantism is an example of a dramatic relationship between the existential self and its presence in the world, with the tarantistic ritual aiming to solve this cultural drama, the contemporary public process of rereading considers trance and possession by the tarantula as a cultural good, a public patrimony: music and dance are no longer linked to suffering but are instruments for recollection of an indefinite idea of trance.

The reversal of de Martino's interpretation of tarantism thus becomes integrated into the anthropological debate on the *exorcistic* or *adorcistic* nature of the tarantistic ritual.<sup>5</sup> Scholars including Georges Lapassade (1994) and Gilbert Rouget (1980) accused him of not seeing tarantism as a true *adorcistic* cult of possession, but merely as an *exorcistic* ritual; these *adorcistic* academic interpretations thus favour local revitalisation reinterpretations. The search for possession becomes a sort of attempt to come into contact with the past, to renew the past in the present through a practice of nostalgia (Battaglia 1995).

---

<sup>5</sup> Luc de Heusch (1962) introduced the distinction between *adorcism* and *exorcism* to differentiate between shamanism and spirit possession: while shamans dominate spirits, the possessed are dominated by spirits. The *adorcistic/exorcistic* debate on tarantism has been developed by Rouget (1980) and Lapassade (1994) who have criticised a de Martinian consideration of tarantism as *exorcism*, that is as a healing ritual linked to social and existential as well as corporeal female suffering. They say that it is an *adorcistic* ritual instead, a "possession cult" in which the trance identification between women and spiders takes place. This debate is present in Italian academic anthropology (cf. Gallini 1988; Apolito 1994; Pizza 1996, 1998, 1999; Dei 1998), as well as among local scholars who also seem to be divided between "de Martinians" (*exorcistic* approach) and "anti-de Martinians" (*adorcistic* approach): see in the following paragraph examples by Luigi Chiriatti and Pierpaolo De Giorgi.

Here we are confronted with, first, the academic anthropological debate and the anthropological memory of de Martino and, second, a literary sociology of the local response to de Martino's work, and the cultural policies in contemporary Salento which are revitalising and reactivating the memory of de Martino and tarantism.

These various actors become increasingly bound together. With increasing frequency, in fact, conferences in Salento on the reinterpretation of tarantism appear to be organised by local scholars who work in collaboration with academics belonging to the local university in Lecce and to the national anthropological community. Clear evidence of this process is seen in consortia for the promotion of local cultural heritage where, among the typical regional food products or crafts, town festivals and monuments, tarantism can also be found.

Here, I examine three particular figures who represent different approaches to tarantism and its historical continuity. This historical continuity should be understood as continuity with the Salentine 'past' – defined broadly as the "origins of tarantism" – but also as continuity or discontinuity, depending on the analyst's position, with de Martino's treatment of tarantism. The books of these authors all take de Martino's text as their fundamental model, even imitating its style and composition with its photographic appendices and selection of sheet music, and are sometimes sold together with audio or video cassettes.

These three examples share a narrative expressing a sense of belonging to a place and a commitment to the memory of the past. We are dealing with three local artists-writers-scholars, insiders in the contemporary practice of Salentine tarantism, who are also involved in the field of Salentine cultural politics both as organisers of traditional events and programmes and as performers, leaders of musical groups inspired by the tradition of tarantism, publishers of their own books and disks. The three, Giorgio Di Lecce, Luigi Chiriatti, and Pierpaolo De Giorgi, each published a book (in 1994, 1995 and 1999 respectively).

### ***On the Trail of a de Martinian Tarantism***

Di Lecce is the promoter of the musical group Arachne Mediterranea, director of theatrical performances, and editor of a volume entitled *The dance of the little taranta* (Di Lecce 1994). The latter is a collection by various authors on Apulian tarantism as well as his own recent interviews with victims, often the same "tarantate" who were identified by de Martino in 1959. Di Lecce's work – like that of the other two local authors – grows out of a local tradition of study and performance of popular traditions which extends from the musical group *Canzoniere Grecanico* in the 1970s to the performances of

the theatre group “Oistros” (which took its name from the chapter of de Martino’s book on the symbolism of the “pungolo”, sting, goad or cudgel, the Greek *oistros*) in the 1980s. These were politico-cultural movements of local historians and artists engaged in collecting local memories of tarantism for theatrical purposes but also with an aim of revitalising the local cultural heritage. Thus Di Lecce and his group took part in these initiatives on a number of occasions and had actually “staged” theatrical performances based on historical documents which had been cited by de Martino.

Di Lecce’s book was published at the time of the completion of a German television documentary produced with Di Lecce’s collaboration on “the origins” of the tarantella. His rediscovery of Salento is constantly informed by de Martino’s descriptions in *La terra del rimorso*; it is de Martino’s Salento that Di Lecce wishes to discover, retracing its steps with a level of care and attention even more persistent than that of de Martino’s followers.

To Di Lecce, retracing de Martino’s steps means tracking down the same informants. In particular, “Maria di Nardò”, the first and most significant “tarantata” to be studied by de Martino in *La terra del rimorso*, is presented by Di Lecce as an exemplary case, described with great precision and literary attention, almost as if to prefigure the screenplay for the photographic sequence or the documentary film produced by the troupe.

The case of Maria di Nardò highlights the effects on the local community of de Martino’s research and simultaneously explains the attention of later researchers. Almost immediately following the investigation conducted by de Martino and his team, Maria di Nardò became the subject of media reports, with photographs of herself performing the dance cycle appearing in weekly magazines as well as the national press and on television. But in order to understand Di Lecce’s insistence on retracing de Martino’s path we have to take a step backward.

### ***Deep South: In Search of Lost Tarantism (or Lost de Martino)***

In the late 1970s, twenty years after de Martino’s fieldwork, Annabella Rossi, who had herself been on de Martino’s research team, returned to Salento to film with Gianfranco Mingozzi, the director of the first Italian documentary on tarantism. She too retraced de Martino’s steps, entitling her documentary and book *Profondo Sud: Viaggio nei luoghi di Ernesto de Martino vent’anni dopo* (“Deep South: A Journey to the Places of Ernesto de Martino, Twenty Years Later”, cf. Barbati, Mingozzi and Rossi 1978). Here too, the focal point is an interview with Maria di Nardò. The documentary shows images of a woman in pain who is impatient with yet one more useless interview with an anthropologist. Watching this documentary today you

understand immediately that the anthropologists involved are conducting a pilgrimage in the footsteps of one of their ancestors, subjecting Maria di Nardò to an interview the sole purpose of which seems to be the enactment of a ritual of their own anthropological memory. Perhaps they were anguished by the untimely death of de Martino (at 57 in 1965), but it is clear that this interview explains more from the point of view of “remembering the ancestor”, than it does from an ethnographic point of view. Let’s take a look at the interview.

Maria. Interior. Evening.

The interview takes place in the outpatient clinic in Nardò. Maria sits motionless in front of the white wall of the clinic, wearing a dark overcoat. She is very tense; irritated and frightened at the same time. She speaks in a low voice barely looking up.

Question by the female interviewer (Q): What did you eat back then during the day?

Maria’s answer (A): What do I know? I was working, wasn’t I?

Q: No, what did you eat? When you got up in the morning, what did you eat?

A: What did I eat? Whatever there was!

Q: What?

A: Bread, bread and pasta, no?

Q: And at noon?

A: At noon a few mouthfuls of pasta.

Q: And when you came back home in the evening?

A: In the evening...whatever we ate at noon we ate in the evening too.

Q: When you were bitten by the tarantula...how did it happen?

A: Now, lady, who can remember? I can’t remember as far back as that! It’s not just a year ago, it’s a lot of years ago! I can’t remember that now.

Q: Today, compared to 1940, when you went to Galatina for the first time, are there more “tarantate” or fewer?

A: ...How am I supposed to remember how many tarantate there are and how many there aren’t? What do I know about it!

At this point the producers notice the embarrassing situation and turn things over to a voice off camera:

The discomfort of this interview is real because the confrontation we are observing is real. The folklore of consumer society is always painless, it doesn’t create discomfort, doesn’t put anyone in difficulty: it is made to nullify feelings of guilt. The work of the ethnologist, on the other hand, is often built on encounters like this one.

Overcoming the reserve and hostility of the interviewees, the ethnologist forces himself to document the past, history, the ways of living of a subaltern class which in many cases still hasn't acquired self-awareness and may not be capable of providing direct testimony about itself without some outside mediator. There is violence in this relationship but it is a necessary violence, at least until these men and women become, as de Martino hoped, protagonists of history, culturally and politically aware (Barbati, Mingozzi and Rossi 1978: 139-43).

Obviously, violence was not necessary for such an awareness, but rather for the Salentine pilgrimage of the post-de Martinian anthropologists and for their immersion in their own ancestor cult. Today this document provides testimony not about the past or the history of the subaltern class, but about the relationship that a group of anthropologists in 1976 had with their own anthropological past. Maria shows that she is much less "wild" and much more lucid and aware of her own history than the de-Martinian anthropologists who are interviewing her, when she cries out: "I'm upset because you're doing these things to me! Because these things are not right!" (And then addressing herself to the doctor, out of respect for whom she had allowed herself to be interviewed). "Doctor, I wouldn't have done this except out of respect for you. Only for respect! Otherwise, I wouldn't have come today, not here!"

In the end the de Martinians betray the true ritual character of their motivation, asking:

**Q:** Do you remember a professor some years ago by the name of de Martino and who...

**Maria,** interrupting: But back then that was another story, it was. Now I'm staying in my house. Because those people (the de Martino team) have already framed me once... To me they were all bad people. To me, yeah, they were all lousy...

She suddenly steps outside of the camera frame. The camera remains focused for a few seconds on the white wall of the clinic. Then you hear Maria, who continues to scream off camera, still referring to the group led by Ernesto de Martino:

Because they always wanted to do bad things to me, they didn't always wish me well. They always did things against me! (Barbati, Mingozzi and Rossi 1978: 139-43).

Maria's resistance, her rebellion, turns the interview on its head. The anthropologists reveal the true meaning of their journey to Salento: on the one hand a memorial ritual of the reconstruction and reinvention of their identity as "politically committed" anthropologists, and on the other, a first attempt to

project their anthropological memory, or rather the “memory” of Ernesto de Martino, in a public television program.

Thus, in his mimetic attempt at de Martinian remembrance, the local scholar Giorgio Di Lecce also carries out his own ritual performance. He cannot do without an interview of Maria, because only through the “violence” of this “ethnographic” ritual will he be able to legitimate himself as an expert on tarantism. Giving his interview the dramatic title of *The remorse of Maria thirty years later*, he published a text in which Maria’s answers are clear and repeated refusals:

**Di Lecce:** Do you remember...?

[And here I collect all the answers by Maria to all his questions].

**Maria:** Who are you! What do you want! I don’t know anybody! I don’t remember anything! I don’t know anything! What do you people want? Who are you? Who sent you? How do you know my name and address? What do you want? The water for the pasta is boiling, I gotta go (Di Lecce 1994: 244).

Notwithstanding this refusal, Di Lecce’s desire to presentise the past of 1959 makes him conclude that in these last thirty years nothing has changed for Maria di Nardò.

### ***Love Bite***

Luigi Chiriatti is the leader of the popular music group Aramirè, and the author of *Morso d’amore* (“Love Bite”, Chiriatti 1995). In Salento, Chiriatti has been one of the chief operators in a programme of the rediscovery and conservation of tarantism, which is rather averse to “contamination”. He organised one of the first musical groups in Salento in the post de Martinian era: *Il Canzoniere grecanico salentino*. Recounting the story of his life, he defines his “entrance” into tarantism as an “initiation crisis”, stealing from anthropology the concepts and terminology to explain his own choices.

*Morso d’amore* opens, in fact, with an evocation of the author’s own childhood in which cruel games with animals – snakes, lizards, spiders – characteristic of the folklore of children’s games in the rural Italian south – are experienced with a sense of guilt, especially with respect to Saint Paul, who is both the agent of possession in the tarantistic ritual and the guarantor of the cure.

Chiriatti’s precocious attraction to the popular traditions of his local community – which started when he was ten years old and culminated in a university thesis on tarantism – is recounted and interpreted in this book as a sort of vocation which grew out of his family environment. He begins by recording his parents’ singing, and journeys around Salento. Here his encounter with tarantism, which he defines as a true and proper initiation ritual,

takes place. From this moment on, his research on local tarantism, which will lead to encounters with numerous “tarantate”, is described as a kind of challenge-dialogue between himself and Saint Paul, a dialogue similar to that between the “tarantati” and the spirit that possesses them. It is an encounter of two double ambiguities: Chiriatti, researcher and Salentino, and Saint Paul who heals the bite but also attacks by biting. Chiriatti describes his research on tarantism as a continuous attempt to escape from the possibility that he, too, might be possessed by the spider-saint, a position directly opposed to that of Di Lecce and the other researchers.

He is among the many who have tried – since de Martino – to document the most spectacular moment of the possession, when the “tarantate” go to the sanctuary of Saint Paul in Galatina, but he is almost paralysed by a feeling of terror:

I didn’t have the courage to come nearer to the place of worship. I was terrified by the tarantate, because of all my ancestral fears infused with stories and sins committed against Saint Paul [when he killed snakes and spiders in contravention of traditional taboos] (Chiriatti 1995: 16).

And so he decides to continue his study of tarantism through the vehicle of his university thesis, but here, too, his approach is much more cautious than Di Lecce’s. He assumes an attitude of greater modesty in following the same de Martinian tracks, in contacting the same informants. So in the early 1980s, at the beginning of a process of revitalisation, he takes up his research once again and starts shooting a new documentary, discovering a new tarantata, Cristina who will be his Maria di Nardò. But, according to Chiriatti, at the moment she is about to be filmed, the tarantata doesn’t want to dance, she doesn’t feel the impulse of the trance performance. It is then that he reactivates his competitive dialogue with the saint, has a vision, more or less real, of a snake, and kills it while yelling out the traditional magic chant which he had used as a child to challenge Saint Paul. Struck by the challenge, the saint-tarantula moves inside the body of his tarantata, so that the filming of the dance can begin. As we can see from this account, the phenomenon of tarantism appears to be reconstructed in the expressive form of a story of memory, but the attempt to objectify it is an ongoing challenge for Chiriatti, a real and true example of exorcism. Being also “inside” the local tradition, an “initiate”, as he defines himself, the acts he performs in his study of tarantism are effective only when he successfully challenges the saint. He feels the same emotions when he succeeds in entering the church in Galatina on the day of the tarantate. His experience brings him once again very close to the visionary state:



The darker it got on the night of 28 June the more tarante and saints and witches and devils and everything else I had taken in as a child and as an adult through popular culture and through my anthropological studies began to be personified before my eyes. They were all there, alive and real between me and the door leading to the balcony. I couldn't move, couldn't manage to win the challenge with Saint Paul. I thought, 'What if I too turn into a tarantato? And what if some snake comes out and "blows" me? The battle was drawn between myself and Saint Paul (Chiriatti 1995: 20).

Since then he has never again entered the Galatina church. He believes that the ritual that takes place in the chapel of Saint Paul "is too intimate, too personal, for me to impose my presence. I was always on the outer limit, leaning up against the door of the chapel, half in and half out with one foot poised to enter but stopped from doing so systematically not only out of respect for the tarantate women but also by irrational fears of being co-opted by Saint Paul into the ranks of the tarantati" (Chiriatti 1995: 21).

This ever present risk is transformed, he says, into a sort of trance when he performs his acts as a musician:

The state of being inside the phenomenon as an active participant comes out anyway when I play the drum. There are moments when I completely lose all sense of reality to enter, if only in a personal way, another reality made up of sensations, emotions. Perhaps it is this inside-outside freedom to go in or go out that gives rise to the conflict between myself and Saint Paul: the fact that I have not been captured by him, that I am not one of his possessed, has put us into conflict, sometimes dormant and sometimes diluted over time, but never resolved (Chiriatti 1995: 21).

In the end he tries to achieve a pacification of this intimate dialogue with the saint, which by now has become a constructive element of his own self, and he finds it again in a traditional practice:

I decided to make a definite break by giving the name Paul to my youngest child (Chiriatti 1995: 22).

Concepts of an indigenous auto-anthropology as well as references to de Martino are used by Chiriatti to represent himself as a local scholar who embodies tarantism, achieving a re-evocation and reinvention of his own cultural memory.

### ***Tarantism as Renaissance***

*Tarantismo e rinascita* ("Tarantism and rebirth") is a recent volume produced by a Salentine publisher, Argo, that also brought out – in a different series – the previously unpublished works of de Martino and several journals

of academic anthropology. The author of this 333 page volume is Pierpaolo De Giorgi, of whom the book jacket states:

Pierpaolo De Giorgi took his degree in Philosophy at the University of Perugia, discussing a thesis in Aesthetics. He is currently the director of the regional centre for educational and cultural services in Copertino. He conducts an intensive activity of research and promotion of cultural initiatives in the area of popular traditions and ethnomusicology. His interest in the practice of the performing arts led to his founding of the group of “Tamburellisti di Torre Paduli”, with whom he has gone on concert tours throughout Italy and abroad. The groups musical activities are aimed at the conservation and promotion of a whole tradition of Salentine music and dance, commonly known as “pizzica, pizzica”. With this volume he wishes to share with the public a broad range of his reflections on various aspects which come together to make up the universe of tarantism.

“This book... is me”, began De Giorgi, at the presentation of his book in 1999 in Perugia before an audience composed primarily of members of the Perugian Salentine community. He thus rendered explicit his intimate motivation: the attempt to find in tarantism an “ancient identity”, both individual and collective. He also explains that the book’s title expresses, through the idea of rebirth, a reversal of the de Martinian concept of a tarantism connected with suffering. From a perspective which historians of religion would define as neo-irrationalist, De Giorgi intends to subvert a stereotype of a tarantism connected to individual and collective suffering, to arrive at an understanding of the archaic dimension of tarantism, rooted in the archaic mythologies of Magna Grecia (the regions of Apulia, Basilicata, Calabria and Sicily).

We should keep in mind, regarding this point, the broad range of De Giorgi’s activities. He is a poet and a musician in a neo-tarantist ensemble, who defines himself as an ethnomusicologist and anthropologist employed in a cultural institution in the Salentine town of Copertino. He is among the most important figures in the contemporary movement for the revitalisation of tarantism. As he himself proudly states, his objective “is that of protecting and recovering the Salentine heritage and in particular the culture of tarantism. The music that cured the tarantate must now enchant the crowds in the piazzas” (De Giorgi 1999: 51).

Tarantism is dying in its canonical, de Martinian forms, but according to De Giorgi “it is being born again, because it is nothing else but a philosophy of rebirth, a definitive resource for survival” (loc. cit.). So from his perspective, the southern question becomes the question of the rebirth of forgotten folklore:

Having shed the worn out clothes of cultural subjection, the Apulian folk tradition and more generally the Mediterranean folk tradition now appears in all of its exuberant potential for rebirth (*loc. cit.*).

### **Tarantisms Today: Playing Identity**

The books of Chiriatti, Di Lecce and De Giorgi about tarantism cannot be considered the work of local historians, but must be seen together with their authors' activities as musicians, writers and artists. What they have in common is the "search for origins", which is especially strong in De Giorgi. Their search does not constitute an anthropological or historiographical problem but belongs to a complex rhetoric of identity and self, which attempts to effect a ritualised rebirth of history in the present, or rather to ensure the continuity of the past in the present by reincarnating it in the physical performances of dance and music, or by identifying a new symbolic life in a system of objects connected to tarantism, in particular the drum, which is described as a "cosmic" instrument. De Giorgi writes:

In my view the Salentine drum is a perfect symbolic expression of the contemporaneous presence of complementary opposites (the sharp notes of the rattles and the bass notes of the skin) condensed inside the unity of the magic ritual circle of the frame. More precisely, it is the instrument that allows the union of sky and earth, the sacrifice and the construction with the skin of the goat, the quintessential sacrificial animal (De Giorgi 1999: 159).

While for Chiriatti:

The drum is the most important instrument for the musical therapy of the tarantati and it must be made in a certain way because it represents the synthesis of musical therapy and is itself a synthesis of symbols. Circle, rattles, and skin must be assembled in a certain way...The circle represents, in its roundness the universe and the magical-ritual circle in which the action of the ritual takes place. The rattles, always made of copper, represent disorder, the irrational, the obscure, the ugly, the discordant, reality that scratches you and falls on top of you. The rattles scratch, cause disturbance, refuse to enter into harmony with the other instruments, they are annoying, in discord with the pre-constituted rhythmic and harmonic order. This is the reason why the new drums with small, harmonious rattles aren't appreciated by the old musicians. The skin represents the constant rhythm, the constant cadenced beat, which serves to reintegrate the taranta into the order of the things of daily life (Chiriatti 1995: 27).

The "fetishist" symbolism of the drum is thus revitalised by local subjects in connection with the neo-irrationalist and Jungian readings which are pro-

posed, often in the prefaces to their books, by academic philosophers and scholars<sup>6</sup>. These academic professionals tend to deconstruct, on a scientific level, the de Martinian interpretation of tarantism. The neo-mythological and neo-irrationalist perspective lends itself well to the essentialist construction of identity and belonging, and seems to be more useful for a cultural politics which transforms tarantism into a global commodity.

### **Salento 1999: The *Night of Taranta***

Both local culture specialists and academics aim to reify and essentialise symbols, to objectify them and to place them within an individuality understood universal entity, outside any obvious concept of the socially constructed nature of the self (Pellegrino 1999). A real and true division of labour is at work, that derives its structure from tacit or declared complicity between local, academic, and national authorities and institutions, and cultural operators and specialists in local culture, but which can explode into open conflicts about the purity, the authenticity, or the “correctness” of the tradition. In sum, what is being put into play is a politics of tradition (Papa 1998).

An example of this is the formation, in the second half of the 1990s, of an actual consortium of Salentine towns for the purpose of implementing a programme for the revitalisation and conservation of local cultural heritage (*Consorzio dei Comuni della Grecia salentina*). By way of research projects and “collective representations” – in the concrete sense of performances – the cultural politics launched by these towns directly involves, on the one hand, the University of Lecce, the capital city of Salento, and on the other, local folklore groups and local historians of Salentine popular culture. In the same period, and alongside the consortium, a publishing house was established in Nardò, specialising in texts on tarantism, and, in addition, an association of experts, ethnomusicologists, historians of the theatre, and anthropologists were dedicated to an “Institute” to the memory of de Martino’s ethnomusicologist, Diego Carpitella. This Institute, which at the moment has no official seat, promoted the festival together with the consortium, the Province and the University of Lecce. The festival was held at Melpignano, and was directed by two professors: Maurizio Agamennone and Gianfranco

---

<sup>6</sup> Georges Lapassade, the French anthropologist, for example, writes the preface to Chiriatti’s book, while Paolo Pellegrino, a philosopher from Lecce’s University, does so for De Giorgi (Lapassade 1995; Pellegrino 1999). It is interesting to observe this involvement of intellectuals in the production of neo-tarantism. It should be observed in Gramscian terms (Gramsci 1996) as a connivance in the production of “local culture”, as a sort of “academic and popular partnering” (Downey and Rogers 1995); cf. also Appadurai 1996; Herzfeld 1997; Palumbo 1997.

Salvatore, teaching Ethnomusicology and History of popular music at the University of Lecce.

The division of labour in the reconstruction of the Salentine tradition gives rise to various conflicts which emerge in the design and realisation of a large annual festival named – with the consent of the above-mentioned subjects – *Night of the Taranta*. A complex debate explodes around the *Night of the Taranta*; here, our interest is in understanding, apart from its economic and political causes, the forms in which the conflict is represented. And it turns out that the conflict is represented through a discussion about the conservation of traditions, which pits those who wish to define the philological purity of tarantism against those whose objective is to achieve an aesthetic re-evaluation of the phenomenon. These opposing viewpoints cut across the established division between groups of local culture specialists and groups of academics, and, involve all the structures and institutions concerned with the management of local cultural heritage.

Public statements against the event are made, for example, by Luigi Santoro, professor of Theatre History at the University of Lecce, in an article entitled *Stop These Fake Events* (Santoro 1999), and also by several folklore groups excluded by the organisers, including one directed by Luigi Chiriatti. In reality, this philological dispute hides an economic conflict: part of what is at stake is local government access to and management of large financial contributions from the European Community for cultural programmes which promote interregional relationships between Apulia, Greece, and the Balkans. And so a political conflict begins to emerge around the division of labour in the cultural revitalisation process, concerning an entitlement to the right of celebration, the right to be present and to speak, and the right to sing “ritual” and “traditional” songs (cf. Di Mitri 1998; Petrachi 1998; Santoro 1999)<sup>7</sup>.

The first signs of conflict appeared when the two ethnomusicologists, who are the directors of the event, decided to open it to outside artistic directors, nationally and internationally known musicians, experts of that “ethnic” music which has had so much success in the global market of reinvented traditions, or other national musicians who have already had success in the political-folklore revivals of the 1970s and who are now trying to ride the wave back into the music market. Those who are unable to manage these relationships either pull out of the programme and work up a rhetoric of purity, or are expelled from the programme because of their aversion to “contamination”.

---

<sup>7</sup> On the relationship between ritual, culture, music and property rights cf. Harrison 1992; Brown 1998; Scherzinger 1999.

Interviewed in 1999, Lamberto Probo, a drum-player, member of one of the most famous local musical groups, *Officina Zoè* which decided not to participate in the festival, asked:

Why do we always have to hand things over to professors and musicians who come from other parts of Italy? Not having ever lived around here, what can they possibly know about the “pizzica taranta?” You have an in-depth knowledge of these phenomena. That’s why we’ve decided not to participate, because we’re fed up with the fact that the money always ends up going to the same “experts” and professors of music, and the human resources residing in our local communities are called in only after everything has been decided (Anonymous 1999).

So these artists refuse to participate in the reinvention of tarantism, justifying their decision in terms of the prestige of that sector of the scientific community most loyal to de Martino. Or else they return to the evocation of the pre-de Martinian model of tarantism as a disease, stressing the connection between tarantism and suffering, in order to deny its current transformation into a cultural good to be sold on the national and international market, Roberto Licci, leader of *Ghetonia*, another musical group, states:

The tecno-pizzica? No, no thanks, I’m not interested. I’ll never listen to that. We don’t want to be involved in an event designed for tourists, the only purpose of which is to spend public money. It’s time to put an end to this kind of speculation. Tarantism is a serious thing, it’s connected with sickness and it shouldn’t be sold in the piazza like some commercial product (Anonymous 1999).

On the other hand, Pietro Fumarola, sociologist from the University of Lecce, states in 1999 that this kind of transformation should be supported because:

The tecno-pizzica better represents the new aesthetic of the pizzica and its penetration into young people’s social environments that are quite distant from the traditional culture of Salento, but which dictate the tastes, cultural strategies, and consumption of the mass of young people.

Luigi Santoro, already engaged in a dispute with other academics over the re-interpretation of tarantism, identifies three alternative forms of discourse: past (de Martinian), present (the contemporary celebrations) and future (to be designed).

There are at least three ways of talking about tarantism: to reconstruct what it was and in what forms it was expressed; to describe what it is and in what forms it is expressed; to imagine what it could

be and in what forms we would like it to be expressed in the future (Santoro 1999).

But this proposal for a tarantism of the future would require, in his opinion, a preliminary condition:

All the cultural and musical groups have to stop associating themselves with tarantism and eliminate the pizzica from their repertory.

A kind of moratorium on tarantism, since “we have to admit that playing the pizzica now is like playing a funeral march without the corpse (...) all of this is the cultural broth of a ruling class without culture, incapable of reading the past or designing the future, dedicated only to dissipating scarce resources in order to go skating on television in the company of midgets and dancing girls, marionettes, and pied pipers on the take. The pizzica and the taranta are our last reserve of originality and creativity which we can neither sell nor give away. We can only offer to those who feel the need, the conditions for creating a great invention: an area, an event, time and spaces within which to gather up our solitude and accompany our bodies to lie between the abyss of nonsense and the fragile and momentary spider webs of sense, between formless chaos and metaphorical order, between the folds of the I and the fractures of the we. An invention capable of offering a place even to the displaced Karl of Kafka’s *Amerika*, who, like all of today’s displaced people, ‘had the chance to apply for a job that did not make him feel ashamed, on the contrary, for which he could even have been invited publicly to apply. And the promise that he would be accepted could also have been made publicly’. In the meantime, the opportune thing to do is to cancel all the events and strike all the sets, take off the masks, and tear up the costumes, but above all to silence the pizziche and bury the tarante” (Santoro 1999).

But the vice-mayor and cultural affairs commissioner of Melpignano (host city to the night of the taranta) Sergio Blasi, founding member of the Diego Carpitella Institute who has put his name on the event together with other historical anthropologists and musicologists, has no intention of cancelling it. He declares:

The Night of the Taranta is not a pre-wrapped package, but an original idea born and developed in the territory of Salento, which has succeeded in moving beyond the narrow confines of the province and achieving what by now can be called international resonance. Underlying the night there is a clear policy of cultural development aimed at giving visibility to Salento and thus to export it as the home of an important indigenous culture.

What we have here is a definitive consecration of the patrimonialisation of tarantism. But, by way of drawing a provisional conclusion, it must be said that, even on the inside of this broad range of voices and activities, this

politics of patrimony is not always able to retain control over the very spaces that it creates. Various actors, who live and participate in the practices activated by this programme of revitalisation, tend at times to elaborate it and re-shape it, as the source of an alternative discourse that conceives itself, or that represents itself, as radically autonomous and that asserts the impossibility of reducing the lived experience of a taranta music concert or rave party to either a few anthropological notions or the intent to create a cultural commodity. In the words of Damian, a disc jockey:

I repudiate those who play the role of the trendy anthropologist, pulling out all kinds of analytical hooks which have absolutely nothing to do with this kind of phenomenon. I repudiate those small time, semi-trendy journalists who, although they still haven't even learned the terminology, try to exploit situations like this to build their CVs.

This affirmation by the young DJ, defending his own autonomy with respect to outside interpretations, can certainly be shared by all those who subscribe to a critical anthropology which is also capable of reflecting on itself and its own involvement in the realities which it studies. In the final analysis, this must mean an anthropology which is aware of its own "aptitude" for complicity with local politico-cultural processes of imagining the past and reinventing identity.

## References

- Anonymous. 1999. Gruppi Esclusi Contro Organizzatori. La "Guerra" del Tamburello. *Il Quotidiano di Lecce*, 24/08/1999.
- Apolito, P. 1994. E Sono Rimasta Come Lisolo a Mezzo a Mare. In A. Rossi, *Lettere da una Tarantata*, pp. 7-76. Lecce: Argo.
- Appadurai, A. 1996. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Barbati, C., G. Mingozzi, and A. Rossi. 1978. *Profondo Sud. Viaggio nei Luoghi di Ernesto de Martino a Vent'anni da Sud e Magia*. Milano: Feltrinelli.
- Battaglia, D. 1995. On Practical Nostalgia: Self Prospecting among Urban Trobrianders. In D. Battaglia (ed.), *Rhetorics of Self-making*, pp. 77-96. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- . 1997. Ambiguating Agency: The Case of Malinowski's Ghost. *American Anthropologist* 99 (3): 505-510.
- Blasi, M. 1994. Il Teatro del Sogno. In G. Lapassade (ed.), *Intervista Sul Tarantismo*, pp. 185-205. Maglie: Madona Oriente.



- Boddy, J. 1994. Spirit Possession Revisited: Beyond Instrumentality. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 23: 407-434.
- Bourdieu, P. 1984. *Homo Academicus*. Paris: Éd. de Minuit.
- Boyer, P. 1990. *Tradition as Truth and Communication: A Cognitive Description of Traditional Discourse*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brettel, C. B. 1993. *When they read what we write. The politics of Ethnography*. Westport, Conn.: Bergin & Garvey.
- Brown, M. F. 1998. Can Culture Be Copyrighted? *Current Anthropology* 39 (2): 193-222.
- Carpitella, D. 1961. Appendice III. L'esorcismo Coreutico-Musicale del Tarantismo. In E. de Martino, *La Terra del Rimorso. Contributo a una Storia Religiosa del Sud*, pp. 335-372. Milano: Il Saggiatore.
- Castiglione, M. 1977. Il Tarantismo Oggi: Proposte per una Verifica. *La Critica Sociologica* 11: 43-69.
- Chiriatti, L. 1995. *Morso d'Amore. Viaggio nel Tarantismo Salentino*. Lecce: Capone Editore.
- Ciarcia, G. 1998. Ethnologues et "Dogon". La Fabrication d'un Patrimoine Ethnographique. *Gradhiva* 24: 103-115.
- Clemente, P. 1997. De Martino Dentro di noi: Appunti, tra Storia e Genealogia. In C. Gallini, and M. Massenzio (eds.), *Ernesto de Martino nella Cultura Europea*, pp. 193-207. Napoli: Liguori.
- . 1999. Gli Antenati Dentro la Pagina. Sulle Scritture del Tempo e delle Generazioni e sui Riti Memoriali e Genealogici nella Saggistica Antropologica. *Archivio Antropologico Mediterraneo* 2 (1-2): 7-15.
- De Giorgi, P. 1999. *Tarantismo e Rinascita. I Riti Musicali e Coreutici della Pizzica-Pizzica e della Tarantella*. Lecce: Argo.
- De Heusch, L. 1962. Cultes de Possession et Religions Initiatiques de Salut en Afrique. In A. Abel, *Religions du Salut*, pp. 127-167. Bruxelles: Université Libre de Bruxelles.
- Dei, F. 1998. Il Tarantismo fra Antropologia e Psicoanalisi. *Ossimori. Periodico di Antropologia e Scienze Umane* 9-10: 22-30.
- De Martino, E. 1961. *La Terra del Rimorso. Contributo a una Storia Religiosa del Sud*. Milano: Il Saggiatore.
- . 1977. *La Fine del Mondo. Contributo All'analisi delle Apocalissi Culturali*. Torino: Einaudi.
- . 1995. *Note di Campo. Spedizione in Lucania, 30 Sett. – 31 Ott. 1952*. Lecce: Argo. (edited and with a preface by C. Gallini)
- . 1996. *L'opera a cui Lavoro. Apparato Critico e Documentario alla "Spedizione Etnologica" in Lucania*. Lecce: Argo. (edited and with a preface by C. Gallini)

- Di Lecce, G. 1994. *La Danza della Piccola Taranta: Cronache da Galatina 1908-1993, a Memoria d'uomo*. Roma: Sensibili alle Foglie.
- Di Mitri, G. L. 1998. Fratelli Coltelli nella notte della Taranta. *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, 24/08/1998.
- . (ed.). 1999. *Quarant'anni Dopo de Martino. Il Tarantismo*. Nardò: Besa.
- Doquet, A. 1999. *Les Masques Dogon. Ethnologie Savante et Ethnologie Autochtone*. Paris: Karthala.
- Downey, G. L., and J. D. Rogers. 1995. On the Politics of Theorizing in a Postmodern Academy. *American Anthropologist* 97 (2): 269-281.
- Gallini, C. 1977. *Introduzione*. In E. de Martino, *La Fine del Mondo. Contributo All'analisi delle Apocalissi Culturali*, pp. IX-XCIII. Torino: Einaudi.
- . 1988. *La Ballerina Varipinta. Una Festa di Guarigione in Sardinia*. Napoli: Liguori.
- . 1997. *Le Patrie Culturali, la Memoria*. In C. Gallini, and M. Massenzio (eds.), *Ernesto de Martino nella Cultura Europea*, pp. 5-10. Napoli: Liguori.
- , and F. Faeta (eds.). 1999. *I Viaggi nel Sud di Ernesto de Martino*. Torino: Bollati Boringhieri Editore.
- , and M. Massenzio (eds.). 1997. *Ernesto de Martino nella Cultura Europea*. Napoli: Liguori.
- Gramsci, A. 1996. *Gli Intellettuali e L'organizzazione della Cultura*. Roma: Editori Riuniti.
- Handler, R. (ed.). 2000. *Excluded Ancestors, Inventible Traditions. Essays toward a more Inclusive History of Anthropology*. Vol. 9. Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Harrison, S. J. 1992. Ritual as Intellectual Property. *Man* 27 (2): 225-244.
- Herzfeld, M. 1997. *Cultural Intimacy. Social Poetics in the Nation State*. London: Routledge.
- Lambek, M. 1998. The Sakalava Poiesis of History: Realizing the Past through Spirit Possession in Madagascar. *American Ethnologist* 25 (2): 106-127.
- Lanternari, V. 1997. *La mia Alleanza con Ernesto de Martino e Altri Saggi Post-Demartiniani*. Napoli: Liguori.
- Lapassade, G. 1994. *Intervista sul Tarantismo*. Maglie: Madonna Oriente.
- . 1995. *Prefazione*. In L. Chiriatti, *Morso d'amore. Viaggio nel Tarantismo Salentino*, pp. 5-12. Lecce: Capone Editore.
- Lewis, I. M. 1991. The Spider and the Pangolin. *Man, New Series* 26 (3): 513-525.

- Lombardi Satriani, L. M. 1996. Rimorsi Demartiniani. *Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni* 62 (20): 279-286.
- Mac Clancy, J., and C. Mc Donagh (eds.). 1996. *Popularizing Anthropology*. London: Routledge.
- Mahon, M. 2000. The Visible Evidence of Cultural Producers. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 29: 467-492.
- Michel-Jones, F. 1999. *Retour aux Dogon. Figures du Double et Ambivalence*. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Mingozzi, G. 1961. *La Taranta*. Film. 16mm. Col. and b/w.
- Olivier de Sardan, J. P. 1994. Possession, Affliction et Folie: Les Ruses de la Thérapisation. *L'Homme. Revue Française d'Anthropologie* 34 (3): 7-27.
- Palumbo, B. 1997. Retoriche della Storia e Conflitti di Identità in una Città della Sicilia. *Meridiana* 30: 135-168.
- Papa, C. 1998. The Social Construction of Umbrian Extravirgin Olive Oil. In C. Papa, G. Pizza, and F. M. Zerilli (eds.), *Incontri di Etnologia Europea*, pp. 145-160. Napoli: Esi.
- Pellegrino, P. 1999. Saggio Introduttivo. Dopo Schneider e de Martino: Le Nuove Prospettive di Ricerca sul Mito e sul Tarantismo. In P. De Giorgi, *Tarantismo e Rinascita. I Riti Musicali e Coreutici della Pizzica-Pizzica e della Tarantella*, pp. 7-44. Lecce: Argo.
- Petrachi, C. 1998. La Memoria Urgente del Presente. Luigi Chiriatti e "La Notte della Taranta". La Scelta di Dimissioni dal "Diego Carpitella". "Prima di Contaminare, Abbiamo Bisogno di Capire". *Lecce Sera*, 22-23/08/1998.
- Pizza, G. 1996. Sulla "Possessione Europea". *AM. Rivista della Società Italiana di Antropologia Medica* 1-2: 261-284.
- . 1998. The Virgin and the Spider: Revisiting Spirit Possession in Southern Europe. In C. Papa, G. Pizza, and F. M. Zerilli (eds.), *Incontri di Etnologia Europea/ European Ethnology Meetings*, pp. 49-81. Napoli: Esi.
- . 1999. Tarantismi Oggi: Un Panorama Critico sulle Letterature Contemporanee del Tarantismo (1994-1999). *AM. Rivista della Società Italiana di Antropologia Medica* 7-8: 253-273.
- Rossi, A. 1994 [1970]. *Lettere da una Tarantata: Con una Nota di Tullio De Mauro*. Lecce: Argo.
- Rouget, G. 1980. *La Musique et la Transe: Esquisse d'une Théorie Générale des Relations de la Musique et de la Possession*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Santoro, L. 1999. Cancellate questi Falsi Eventi. *Il Quotidiano di Lecce*, 24/08/1999.

- Saunders, G. R. 1993. "Critical Ethnocentrism" and the Ethnology of Ernesto de Martino. *American Anthropologist* 95 (4): 875-893.
- Scherzinger, M. R. 1999. Music, Spirit Possession and the Copyright Law. *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 31: 102-125.
- Seppilli, T. 1995. Ernesto de Martino e la Nascita dell'Etnopsichiatria Italiana. *Storia, Antropologia e Scienze del Linguaggio* 10 (3): 147-156.
- Signorelli, A. 1996. Il Tarantismo ... che Purtroppo non c'è più. *Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni* 62 (20):591-598.
- Tullio Altan, C. 1997. Ernesto de Martino, mio Fratello Maggiore. In C. Gallini, and M. Massenzio (eds.), *Ernesto de Martino nella Cultura Europea*, pp. 177-182. Napoli: Liguori.



## PART III

---

### CONTESTED MEMORIES, VIOLENCE AND SILENCE

---

The chapters in this part explore the role of memory, and the equally important act of forgetting, in the context of war, conflict and persecution. While the causes of such traumatic events are many and complicated, memory and history clearly play a part. A shared past is necessary to the very survival of the community – be this the nation or any other collectivity, including ‘liberatory movements’ such as those of African Americans or Jews where membership is formed on the basis of shared memories (Boyarin 1994: 23).<sup>1</sup> To recall the words of Kundera: ‘You begin to liquidate a people by taking away its memory’ (quoted in Forty and Küchler 2001: 11).<sup>2</sup> While all states are built on legitimating some memories and forgetting others, which memories are validated and maintained differs. Depending on the context, the past can be either taken for granted or a contested domain. Indeed the negotiation and contestation of memories within a community, and between it and outsiders, is an ongoing field of activity. Memories are constantly reshaped, reinvented, recovered and forgotten. Further, what has been ‘forgotten’ can always be ‘re-remembered’; that is, it has the potential to challenge established memories (Middleton and Edwards 1997: 9).<sup>3</sup> Thus memories are implicated in processes of social change and conversely involved in maintaining continuity over time. In this way boundaries are reproduced or questioned, identities defined and communities, including nation states, shattered, transformed and rebuilt.

Contested memories and histories are frequently a significant factor in wars between nations; the break up of Yugoslavia was no exception. Contested war memories extending back at least to the Second World War were deeply implicated in the Yugoslav conflicts. But diverse memories are not

---

<sup>1</sup> Boyarin, J. (ed.). 1994. *Remapping Memory: The Politics of Timespace*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

<sup>2</sup> Forty, A. 1999. Introduction. In A. Forty, and S. Küchler (eds.), *The Art of Forgetting*, pp. 1-18. Oxford: Berg.

<sup>3</sup> Middleton, D., and D. Edwards. 1990. Introduction. In D. Middleton, and D. Edwards, *Collective Remembering*, pp. 1-22. London: Sage Publications.

only a source of tension, they are also proving to be a significant force in the foundation and rebuilding of the new states, even a source for the collective healing that is apparently taking place. Since the main marker between Serbs and Croats is religion, religious festivals are one important focus for the building of the new Croatian nation state (see Chapter 10). Through such festivals Croat memories are validated and feelings of nationalism propagated. New community boundaries are being set up, within which alternate memories of other groups are excluded. Thus, more often than not, the minority Serb population living in Croatia share their own memories in a separate public space, at different festivals and different sites. During these separate festivals, Serbs are restrained and measured in what they express publicly and what is left unspoken. On the still rare occasions that Serbs and Croats participate in the same festivals, a sharing of past memories and the creation of new ones gives hope for a growing and renewed communication between the two traumatised groups. Thus these festivals and the memories that are played out through them are used to build new boundaries between the communities involved.

The form of a group's marginality – its particular relationship to state structures and more specifically the nature of its peripherality (economic, political, social) and historical particularities – determines the mechanisms available to it for reproducing its own boundaries and community. For the Roma, persecuted over many centuries in Europe, all collective references to the past are obliterated. Thus to the outsider, there appears to be no commemoration at all. But the Roma of Madrid retain private memories and the community is bound through these memories which are so oblique and obscure that only an insider would recognise the practices as a form of 'remembering' or history. Much like a secret society, and in the context of ongoing persecution, Roma have developed particular mechanisms for surviving which involve the management of the past through confining it to private commemoration and obliterating any collective references in a show of strategic silences. In such a way they 'conceal' their community from public (state) scrutiny. Interestingly, all attempts by the Spanish state to assimilate the Roma through rehousing and education have failed or, from another perspective, been successfully resisted. But where the state has failed, Evangelism is having an impact.

Strategic silences are not only a weapon of persecuted minorities. They are also central to the maintenance of states. This is true not only of totalitarian and socialist states; such silences are also vital instruments in the creation and continuation – to different degrees – of all modern states which

claim to be democratic. Forty and Küchler (2001: 7, 8)<sup>4</sup> make the point that the very stability of postwar Europe has depended on a 'colossal act of collective consensual forgetting' and that 'a degree of amnesia is necessary to stable political life'. In the last chapter of this final part, Narotzky and Moreno show how the very foundation of Spanish democracy depends as much on forgetting and silences as on the legitimization of particular memories. Forgetting is 'intrinsic to memory' and 'can be as active a process as remembering' (Lambek and Antze 1996: xxv, xxix).<sup>5</sup> With a divisive history that spans the Civil War and Franco's fascism, there are many perpetrators of injustice and numerous victims seeking atonement. The resulting conflicting memories cannot all be given equal public validation. The establishment of a democratic state after Franco's death involved the selected legitimization of some memories as historical truth while exiling other memories. The very survival of the contemporary states depends on maintaining certain silences and forgetting (Forty and Küchler 2001).<sup>6</sup> For those citizens not willing to forget, in a state unable to acknowledge or accommodate alternate memories, the only avenue left for expression is often violence. Thus what is remembered and what is forgotten is under constant scrutiny and review, if not negotiation.

---

<sup>4</sup> Forty, A. 1999. Introduction. In A. Forty, and S. Küchler (eds.), *The Art of Forgetting*, pp. 1-18. Oxford: Berg.

<sup>5</sup> Lambek, M., and P. Antze. 1996. Introduction: Forecasting Memory. In P. Antze, and M. Lambek (eds.), *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*, pp. xi-xxxviii. New York: Routledge.

<sup>6</sup> Forty, A., and S. Küchler (eds.). 1999. *The Art of Forgetting*. Oxford: Berg.





## ***Chapter 10***

# **Religious Celebrations and the (Re)creation of Communities in Postwar Knin, Croatia**

Carolyn Leutloff-Grandits

From the time that Knin became the “capital of Serbian Krajina” during the war between Croats and Serbs in Croatia (1991-1995) and almost all Croats of the region were expelled by Serbian extremists, the Croatian side has tried to stress the Croatian identity of the small but strategically important town of Northern Dalmatia. Stories about the “Croatian history” of the town, referring to the “first Croatian king Zvonimir”, who had his seat in medieval Knin, were published in Croatian national and local newspapers and scientific elaborations (Gunjaca 1992; Đurić 1995; Pać 1998).

When in August 1995 the Croatian army successfully regained the town of Knin following the flight of almost all Serbs of the region, one of its first actions was to put a new sign “*Hrvatski kraljevski grad Knin*”, Croatian royal town, at the entrance, to give the town a Croatian identity. In a similar fashion, a new statue of a Croatian soldier stretching his arms above his head, holding a machine-gun with one hand and making a victory sign with the other, was erected in the main square of Knin. The monument commemorates the Croatian victory over the “rebellious Serbs”, also called “Serbian Chetniks”<sup>1</sup>, who had occupied almost one third of Croatia during the war between 1991 and 1995.

Even earlier, on the 5<sup>th</sup> of August, 1995, on the very day after the unexpectedly quick military success of the Croatian army in the war-time Serbian bastion of Knin<sup>2</sup>, the Croatian general Ivan Korade raised a Croatian

---

<sup>1</sup> Expression for the Serbian nationalists during World War II, but also during the war in the 1990s.

<sup>2</sup> In fact, the “liberation” of Knin lasted only one day (the Croatian military operation started on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of August), and there is a debate why the Serbian military did not defend its positions and why the majority of the Serbian civilians fled before the Croatian military even arrived in Knin. While according to one position the Croatian military organised an ethnic cleansing according to another opinion the Serbian military and political leadership organised the flight of the population (see Mappes-Niediek 1995).

flag measuring 20 x 5 metres above the castle of Knin (cf. Žanić 1996: 56). The Croatian flag replaced that of the Serbian Krajina-Republic, which had flown over Knin during war times, when the town was held by Serbs. On the very next day, the town was visited by the Croatian president Dr. Franjo Tuđman, who climbed up to the castle in the presence of the Croatian army and other state officials, and kissed the flag during an emotional ceremony. Since 1995, the anniversary of the so-called Croatian “liberation” of the Serbian-held territory has been a national holiday in Croatia, called *dan domovinske zahvalnosti*, Day of Homeland’s Gratitude. In Knin this day was celebrated for years with visits from prominent Croatian state officials, as well as with a folk music festival.

A similar level of national awareness is reached during certain Croatian church festivals, when Catholic bishops from all over Croatia come to visit the town of Knin. Like the Day of Homeland’s Gratitude, such Croatian religious festivals often recall the experiences of war in the 1990s. The national dimension of these festivals is strengthened by the fact that religion is the most important ethnic marker between Catholic Croats and Orthodox Serbs.<sup>3</sup> In fact, after the war religious celebrations were the main public events in the region of Knin, in numbers as well as in popularity.<sup>4</sup> Depending on the festival, they attracted different population groups, such as Croatian returnees, Croatian new settlers in the region, and Serbian returnees in different constellations.

In this chapter I will investigate what kind of role the Catholic and Orthodox festivals play in the (re)establishment of local, national and transnational communities after war and displacement in the locality of Knin. What meanings did the festivals have in pre-war socialist times, and how far were these meanings changed or kept in postwar times? What role does commemoration and memory play in the construction of communities during such festivals?

The role of festivals and rituals for the experience of community and the creation of a common identification between people, even if they distinguish themselves from each other profoundly in other social aspects, has been stressed by several social anthropologists (Barth 1969; Turner 1969; Cohen 2000: 50, 55). This is also true in the context of war and displace-

---

<sup>3</sup> See for the role of religion as a marker of national identity in socialist Yugoslavia Bringa 1995: 20-3.

<sup>4</sup> Although I agree with Creed (2002) who states that in postsocialist times economic crisis was paralleled by a ritual decline, I want to stress that this must not include religious and national celebrations. It would be interesting to investigate how far such public celebrations which offer an alternative to the socialist ideology might have boomed in different postsocialist countries, as is the case in postwar Croatia.

ment, in which, as Cohen (2000: 50-1) states, the “symbolic expression of community and its boundaries increases in importance. (...) For those (communities) whose members have been dispersed, ritual provides occasions to reconstitute the community”. During festivals, memories are resurrected and feelings of being at home can be negotiated and (re)created.

However, remembrance in itself is not a stable factor either, but it is in most cases a reconstruction of the past with the help of events of the present (Halbwachs 1985). It is negotiable and depends on the setting as well as on the circle in which it takes place and the context to which it refers. On a public level remembrance is often shaped by the political system and ideology.<sup>5</sup> In a nationalist political system like postwar Croatia up to the year 2000 and partly beyond, publicly generated remembrance evokes mainly a nationalist reading of the past. It seems rigid and constructs communities in terms of national categories and symbols. The imagination of a national home plays an important part in this. Still, oppositional voices, which do not refer to a nationalist past, may gain recognition too.

In relation to this we should also take into consideration that most festivals in the locality of Knin have not been newly invented after the war, but have had a long pre-war history. Festivals which after the war became national events might have had other (or additional) meanings in socialist and pre-socialist times. The memories of these meanings of pre-war festivals can shape the reading of present festivals and construct alternatives to national ideas about community.<sup>6</sup>

Decade-long forms of communication and cooperation between neighbours, friends and kin, which might have bridged ethnic and religious boundaries and superseded the war, can have an impact nowadays on festivities as well. People might recall individual experiences of religious festivals in pre-war times in which they celebrated with neighbours, relatives and friends of the other national group, and can revive such joint celebrations in postwar times.<sup>7</sup> As Hayden states, writing about the relationship between religious festivals and interethnic cooperation in postwar Bosnia, this might not revoke the structural differences between national groups, but rather remain on a local, private or individual level of interaction and identity creation (Bringa 1995: 66-84; Hayden 2002: 160, 161). However, unlike Hayden, I would not call this “negative tolerance” between national or

---

<sup>5</sup> See for the political construction of remembrance in the late 1980s and beginning of 1990s, which led into war, Denich (1994); Hayden (1994); Sundhaussen (1994); Grandits (1998).

<sup>6</sup> For the study of religious festivals and their local or national contexts respectively, see also the study of Vučinić-Nesković (2001) who concentrates on public orthodox Christmas-Eve celebrations in the Bay of Kotor, Montenegro.

<sup>7</sup> For theoretical considerations regarding overlapping group borders see Elwert 1995.

religious groups, but rather a form of ambiguity with which people live. People in a local community and locality do not just refer to the national level, but to the local as well. The local level might even take precedence over the national one.

It must be remembered, however, that in the region of Knin, not all participants of festivals can draw on experiences of pre-war festivals and interethnic communication and cooperation in the locality, because not all participants lived in the region in pre-war times. People who settled after the war or who come from outside solely to participate in the festival are excluded from such experiences. Furthermore, it remains debatable whether religious festivals in socialist times bridged ethnic boundaries at all, or whether they were already creating communities along ethnic borders. Last but not least, the war brought severe ruptures in interethnic relationships, and many individuals may deliberately decide not to take up pre-war ties and habits. Still, as Cohen (2000: 55) writes, "people can participate within the 'same' ritual yet find quite different meanings for it".

In my description of the relation between celebrations, commemoration and community (re)creation I will concentrate on festivals and events which took place in the year 2000/2001, when I conducted fieldwork in the locality of Knin and participated in these festivities. I chose as examples two Catholic and two Orthodox festivals, which are both celebrated publicly. Both the first Catholic and the first Orthodox festival discussed have a deep national significance and attract visitors from all over the country and even from far away, while each of the other two festivals described has a more specific local importance. To grasp the meaning of these events and to analyse the memories to which they refer, I want to describe briefly how the festivities have been celebrated in earlier years, taking a look back into pre-war, socialist times. Here I draw on narrative interviews in which people describe the festivals as well as on historical sources which mainly derive from the late 1980s and 1990s. Before I turn to the description of the festivals, however, I want to give a short overview of the interethnic relations between Croats and Serbs in the region of Knin with special regard to the role of religion and the war and postwar period.

### **The History of Religion and Interethnic Relations between Croats and Serbs in the Region of Knin**

In the region of Knin (as in other parts of the former border region between the Habsburg Empire and the Ottoman Empire) Serbs and Croats, or Catholic and Orthodox people, lived as neighbours for centuries. Up to the 1960s, both population groups lived mainly from agriculture and cattle breeding and

shared many socio-economic and cultural similarities. Both groups spoke (and speak) the same dialect of Serbo-Croatian.<sup>8</sup>

National identity became increasingly important from the late 19th century onwards. Especially during World War II, the massive violence of nationalist movements overshadowed interethnic relations. During socialism such national tensions receded again. This can best be shown in the increasing numbers of ethnically mixed marriages. The role of religion and nationality diminished. Unlike in other socialist countries, however, in Croatia religion was not fully abandoned, and religious festivals were again celebrated from the 1960s onwards, although with lower attendance than before socialism. Most people in the region of Knin, Serbs as well as Croats, only went to church on special occasions, like Christmas, or on religious holidays such as St. Ante's day, or in the case of Serbs on *slava* days<sup>9</sup>; and even in these festivals the position of the church itself had diminished. What attracted people was socialising with their kin, neighbours and friends, either at home or in front of the church, which was a local tradition. At the same time, religion continued to be the essential marker of Croat and Serbian nationhood (Grandits and Promitzer 2000).

When in the late 1980s the growing political and economic crisis of socialist Yugoslavia caused national antagonisms, the revival of religion was closely connected with the rise of nationalism and fuelled the conflict between the two national groups in the region of Knin.<sup>10</sup> The neglect of the church as a part of either Serbian or Croatian national and cultural identity began to be critically recognised (Radić 1998).

The collapse of socialist Yugoslavia, the declaration of the Republic of Serbian Krajina in 1990 and the declaration of the Croatian independence early in 1991 were accompanied by a violent escalation of the conflict between Croats and Serbs in the ethnically mixed regions of Croatia (Grandits and Leutloff 2003). The following war (1990-1995) brought two big violent

---

<sup>8</sup> A common language of Serbs and Croats was attempted to be established in a long unification process which dates back to the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the 1970s, the struggle over a common Serbo-Croatian language reached a new peak, and since 1990 the Serbo-Croatian language was split into Serbian, Croatian, and Bosnian. For the conflict about the Serbian Croatian language see Katičić 1995 and Okuka 1998.

<sup>9</sup> There are different *slavas* in the Serbian tradition. The most important one is the *krsna slava*, which is celebrated on the day of the saint of the male head of the household (Kaser 1993). Other *slava* celebrations are connected to the Saints Day of the village church or the monastery (Rheubottom 1976).

<sup>10</sup> Religious affiliation as a national marker is also found among Poles (being Roman Catholic) and their Ukrainian minority (being Greek Catholic) in today's Poland. Competition for religious rights and fear of religious dominance in today's Poland is the most obvious conflict between these groups. This includes – next to assimilation and out-migration – a struggle for territory and property-rights (see Hann 1998).

ruptures in the region of Knin; these had different effects on native Serbs and Croats. When in 1991 Serbs declared the (internationally never recognised) “Republic of Serbian Krajina” with Knin as its capital, they violently expelled Croats from the territory. At that time, many houses owned by Croats had been occupied or destroyed by Serbs, and many of the Croats’ material belongings had been stolen. Croatian churches had been destroyed or demolished.

In 1995, this situation changed radically. During the Croatian military action in August 1995, almost all Serbs in the region fled to Serbia and other regions under Serbian control. Those few who stayed behind were threatened and intimidated or even violently attacked, and many Serbian houses were destroyed and plundered. However, unlike the Catholic churches, which had been destroyed or demolished by Serbs during the recent war, Serbian churches had been taken care of by the Croatian army when it “liberated” the area, and this had saved them from destruction.

In the aftermath of the Croatian military operation, the formerly Serb held territory was re-integrated into the Croatian state. In the following months, about 3,000 local Croats who had been expelled by Serbs returned from exile into the region of Knin. Furthermore, up to 1997 about 9,000 Croats came to settle in the Knin area, invited by the Croatian government of Franjo Tudjman, and moved into mainly Serbian property. They originated primarily from Bosnia but also from other regions in Croatia and from Vojvodina, and the majority of them were refugees themselves. Unlike local people, the Croatian settlers from Bosnia were more attentive to the church. They regularly took part in Catholic church services and thanks to them, the Catholic church festivals flourished in the postwar period in Knin. The Catholic church had furthermore strong support from the local city council.

Since 2000, in the municipality of Knin about 19% of the Serbian pre-war population has returned. In the neighbouring rural municipality of Biskupija this percentage was about 34%. Altogether, about 9,500 Serbs have returned to the region of Knin.<sup>11</sup> Most Serbs were only able to return to the countryside, as houses in the towns were occupied (according to UNHCR Knin 2000, unpublished statistics and PULS 2001 unpublished document). Furthermore, Serbs who returned were predominantly elderly people. Younger Serbs on the whole did not return, because they had neither access to jobs in the public sector nor the possibility of successfully reclaiming their property. Serbian clerics also returned slowly.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> However, many of them might not have returned permanently, but only applied for documents and returned into exile.

<sup>12</sup> This changed after the year 1999/2000, when again 11 priests were present in the region of Knin.

Compared to the re-organisation of the Catholic Church the regional Orthodox Church developed much more slowly. This was closely related to the political and social situation in the former war region of Croatia. Until 2000, Serbian cultural or religious expressions were still seen as an insult to the Croatian nation.

The year 2000 in which I conducted fieldwork can be seen as pointing the way ahead as it was the key year for changes. After the nationalist president Franjo Tudjman, who had gained power in 1990, died in December 1999, the national elections of early 2000 were won by a coalition of parties opposed to the nationalist HDZ (*Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica* – Croatian Democratic Union) which Tudjman had led.

Still, the Croatian nationalist parties consolidated their power in the locality of Knin during the local elections in 2001.<sup>13</sup> Croatian settlers in particular voted for the nationalist parties in order to keep their right to occupy Serbian houses. On the Serbian side, for the first time since the war Serbian parties could be elected, and were quite successful in gaining votes. Local Serbs were convinced that only Serbian national parties would be able to pressure the Croatian state to reinstate rights for Serbian citizens. Nevertheless, nationalism was also shaken in these regions. A few civil initiatives tried to bridge the ethnic differences and point at the common social difficulties in the former war region. Although they were nearly powerless, they represented the first signs of a changing social landscape, in which community was not solely based on national markers, but on social and economic considerations as well. At this time, competition between local Croats and Croatian new settlers for jobs and for leadership in Knin developed (Leutloff 2002; Leutloff-Grandits 2002). While local Croats and local Serbs re-established relations with each other, a gap opened up between local people (Croats as well as Serbs) and Croatian newcomers. Religious festivals became platforms on which these developments became visible.

## **Catholic Religious Festivals**

### ***Proslava Naše Gospe (Celebration of Our Mary) in Biskupija***

The celebration of *Naša Gospa* (*Proslava Gospe Velikog Hrvatskog Krsnog Zavjeta*) takes place in the village of Biskupija near Knin, on the second weekend in September, and is both a religious and a Croatian national festival. The small Catholic church dedicated to Holy Mary (*Sveta Maria*) was built in 1938 next to the ruins of an 11<sup>th</sup> century Catholic church when the “Croatian” King Zvonimir ruled in Knin. Archaeological excavations in the

---

<sup>13</sup> For election results see Večernji List, 22.5.2001, p. 19.



late nineteenth century had uncovered the ruins of the church, a pediment portraying the Holy Mary, and relics of four other churches (Soldo 1988: 19). Since these findings, Croatian historiography as well as catholic clerics have stressed the extraordinary meaning of Knin as both a royal and a Christian religious centre of the Croatian people in medieval times. The small church erected next to the ruins in 1938 was to commemorate as well as symbolise this 'century old' union between the Croatian people, the Croatian state and the Christian religion, and to serve as a signpost for the future of the Croatian people (Soldo 1988: 5, 31, 39; Žanić 1996).<sup>14</sup> Numerous Croatian priests<sup>15</sup> and between seven and eight thousand visitors came from all over Croatia to take part in the opening of the church (Soldo 1988: 59; Bezina 1998: 120).

In what ways the creation of the Zvonimir memorial church increased national antagonisms between local Serbs and Croats, or gave them an opportunity to celebrate peacefully with each other and show respect for each others' belief, is not fully clear. For 1938 it is documented that many participants in the church procession were of Orthodox belief, most likely people who lived in the neighbourhood of the church and the wider region of Knin (Soldo 1988: 6). At the same time, the Franciscan Bezina notes that on the evening of the festival about 90 Serbian "Chetniks"<sup>16</sup> arrived to provoke the crowds, but the situation did not escalate (1998: 122). However, during World War II, when Serbian Chetniks fought against Croatian Ustasha in Knin, the Zvonimir memorial church (like most other churches in the region) was devastated.

After the foundation of socialist Yugoslavia in 1945, the church *Sveta Maria* was renovated (1957-1966) and in 1966 the festival of *Naša Gospa* was celebrated for the first time since the World War II. According to Soldo the festival was attended by 2,500 to 3,000 guests, from the region as well as from Zagreb and other Croatian towns. The small church received even more attention during the 900th anniversary celebration of the original church in 1978, when the festivities were extended to three days. On the day of the

---

<sup>14</sup> For the problem of national symbolism which exists in religious sites see Hayden, Robert, 2002: 160-1.

<sup>15</sup> In 1938, the famous but disputed Croatian bishop, Dr. Stepinac, who was the leading Croatian church representative during World War II, was present during the festivities in Biskupija and held a speech during the church service (Bezina 1998: 117). In October 1998, Pope Paul Johannes II came to Croatia to bless the deceased Bishop Stepinac and name him a martyr of the Catholic Church. Since the early 1990s, Stepinac had "become the central cult figure of the new patriotic ideology in postcommunist Croatia" (Perica 2001: 63).

<sup>16</sup> The term "Chetnik" denotes the members of the Serbian royalist movement before and especially during World War II. In the war of the 1990s, the term was again used for Serbian nationalists.

main celebration in front of the Zvonimir memorial church, some ten thousand believers, predominantly from outside Knin, took part in the church procession (Soldo 1988: 6, 82). Soldo (1988: 75, 76) describes this in terms of the people's demand to revitalise Catholic belief and Croatian national consciousness.<sup>17</sup>

In narrative interviews conducted with Serbs in 2000, however, the national dimension of this festival was rather neglected. People told me that many Serbs had joined the festival during socialism; not necessarily the church service, but the so called "*sajam*" (fair) which took place in the afternoon and evening, and which served as a meeting place for the youth as well as for other parts of the population.

During the time of war in the 1990s, when Serbian nationalists expelled the Croats, the memorial church, along with other Catholic churches in the region, was demolished by Serbian extremists. The replicate of the famous medieval pediment portraying Holy Mary was stolen with other Croatian cultural and historic treasures.<sup>18</sup> It goes without saying that the festival was not celebrated during war times.

After the reintegration of the Knin region into the Croatian state in 1995 and the return and immigration of Croats, the Croatian Church renovated the church of St. Mary (and all other Catholic churches in the region) and started to celebrate *Naša Gospa* in Biskupija anew. Alongside its religious and national connotations, the festival took on a military dimension, reflecting 'Croatian' experiences of war. *Naša Gospa* was declared to be the guardian saint of the military diocese created in 1997, to which all catholic soldiers and police forces of Croatia belong (Milanović-Litre 2000: 18-9; Perica 2001: 55). The intention was to give the Croatian army a saint to celebrate the Day of the Croatian "Liberation" of Knin in 1995 (Jezerinac 2000: 14-5). From then on, the festival *Naša Gospa*, which in socialist times had been a Croatian national event but at the same time had attracted local Serbs as well, became linked to the Croatian view on the recent war history in Knin. The concord of the Catholic Church and the Croatian state was widened by the Croatian military.

From 1999, the three-day festivities for *Naša Gospa* were opened by a military procession from Knin to the "Zvonimir memorial church" in Biskupija. In 2000, the procession was led by soldiers who carried Croatian national symbols, such as the facsimile of the Cross *Višeslavova* originating from Zvonimir's times, a reprint of the medieval pediment with Holy Mary

---

<sup>17</sup> In that main church service, neither of the numerous orthodox priests invited took part, nor did the representatives of the socialist government in Zagreb or the local city council of Knin (Soldo 1988: 87).

<sup>18</sup> For similar processes in Bosnia see Hayden 2002: 166.

found in Biskupija, and the Croatian flag (Milanović-Litre 2000: 18-9). The procession arrived at noon in Biskupija, where a church service took place. Along with the priest of the Franciscan monastery of Knin, the soldiers' chaplain of the third territorial unit and the military bishop of Croatia gave a sermon. In addition to historical explanations for the celebration of this event in this locality ("cathedral of the Croatian bishop built by the Croatian king Zvonimir in 1078") (Jezerinac 2000: 14), the military bishop commemorated the Croatian army's defence of the Croatian state against Serbian aggression: "Let's pray also for the deceased soldiers of this third defence unit of the Croatian army, and for all of those who gave their lives for the freedom of our homeland" (Jezerinac 2000: 14).

To recall the role of Serbs during the war, he did not forget to mention some atrocities against Croats committed by Serbian extremists, like the case of an old woman in Lasinji who "was nailed to her house by Chetniks and then the house was set on fire during the beginning of the aggression on Croatia" (Jezerinac 2000: 14). This brutal case, taken as an example of the cruelty as well as the blasphemy of Serbian attacks during the war, turned Croats collectively into victims who had to defend themselves. But it was not only the experience of Serbian aggression which led the priest to call for new and changed times. He also took a stance against the socialist past in terms of the future development of Croatia. He said: "We are not indifferent either about whether to remain in the mental structure that dominated in Croatia for more than 50 years or to make a great change towards God" (Jezerinac 2000: 15). It was clear that the priest actively wanted to break with the socialist past: referring to the suppression of Catholic belief during that time, he called for the revival of Catholic belief and the return to God.

During the first day, the church service was particularly made by and held for the Croatian military. Nevertheless Croatian immigrants who had settled in Biskupija after the war joined the service. For them, participation in catholic church services was seen as an expression of their national and cultural identity and as a resistance against socialism.<sup>19</sup> The only domiciled Croats from Biskupija to participate in the church service were two local municipal representatives. Because of their public position in the local community they were obliged to take part in the festivities. Sitting in the first row in front of the priests, behind them only soldiers in uniforms, they looked quite alien, a perception re/inforced by the fact that they were obviously not well acquainted with Catholic church practices and were uncertain

---

<sup>19</sup> This wish to oppose the socialist system and leadership was already based on the outcome of World War II, in which many of the Croatian families mentioned became victims of the socialist partisans because they had supported the Croatian nationalist Ustasha movement during World War II.

when to stand up and when to sit down again. But the local representatives were criticised for their local political course, too. It was known that the two domiciled Croats tried to bridge the interests of domiciled Croats, Croatian settlers and the majority of returning Serbs to enable a common life in the municipality of Biskupija. Until 2000, this was definitely not in line with the policy of the (local) Croatian church and military representatives, which supported Croats (often to the expense of Serbs). During the festivities, a catholic priest openly accused the local mayor of “helping Serbs to return”.<sup>20</sup>

While the second day of the festivities for Holy Mary was designated to the Croatian youth of the region of Knin who were invited to take part in the pilgrimage to Biskupija (Glasnik Sv. Ante 2000: 12), the third day, a Sunday, was the peak of the festival and designated as a national pilgrimage day. Five years after the war, this predominantly Serbian village, which for the rest of the year was very much on the margins of the state and in its remoteness even forgotten, was again suddenly crowded with about 2,000 Croatian believers and numerous clerics from Knin, Šibenik, Split, Zadar, Gospić and other regions of Croatia as well as from foreign countries, all of whom gathered in front of the small Catholic church (Glasnik Sv. Ante 2000: 13). As on the previous two days, the bishop from Sibenik stressed in his sermon the historical meaning of the locality for the Croatian nation as well as the role of the church in times of difficulties and fear, insecurity and unbelief (Ivas 2000: 16). He declared the locality of Knin to be Croatian national territory, integrated the Croatian settlers from Bosnia into the “family” of the Croatian state and encouraged them to keep their faith in the settlement project. For Croatian immigrants in the region of Knin, this day was an acknowledgment of their projects to settle in Knin.

As on the first day, however, the festival did not seem very connected to the domiciled population in the village of Biskupija, neither to the increasing number of Serbian returnees nor to the few Croats who had returned from 1995 onwards. Although local Croats as well as some Serbs had been proud of the outstanding historical meaning of their home-place, other Serbs saw the Croatian national celebration in a mainly Serbian inhabited place as a provocation. This ambivalent position prevented most of them from participating in the festivities.

---

<sup>20</sup> This treatment was quite the opposite from the one towards the officer Keseman of the Croatian army, who only some days before the festivities was charged under the suspicion of having carried out war-atrocities between 1990-1995. Although he had a flat in Knin, he could not be found there, and the public speculated that he had disappeared.

When he presented himself for the first time in public during the church celebrations in Biskupija, the Croatian military bishop sent an open greeting to him during his prayers and invited him to take the Holy Communion.

A group of young domiciled Croats living next to the church tried to use the occasion to earn some money by opening a coffee-bar and offering grilled meat to the pilgrims instead of joining the church service themselves. To furnish the coffee-bar they had borrowed chairs from their Serbian neighbours. However, the business project was not very successful, as the majority of participants left the village directly after the church service. In fact, it seemed that the visitors were wary of buying from locals, as this region was known to be again mainly inhabited by Serbs. Furthermore, they had no personal links to the place and were without such emotional connections.<sup>21</sup> Instead of the festivities prolonging and developing into a communal festival, the “national pilgrimage site” seemed to disappear as soon as the church ceremony was over.

Generally, it can be said that the Catholic church festival in Biskupija was more in national than in local hands. The lead was taken by the Franciscan monastery in Knin together with bishops from other regions, most importantly the bishop of the military diocese. In their sermons the region was symbolically re-appropriated and reintegrated into the Croatian state territory, with special emphasis on the historical “roots” of the Croatian nation and the role of the Croatian army as “defenders” and “liberators” of Croatia from “Serbian occupation”. For the Croatian immigrants in the region, this festival was proof of being in a Croatian place, and a legitimisation of settling there; conversely, they believed that Serbs had lost their right to the place due to the war. Being aware of the national dimension to the festival, Serbs did not participate in the festival; most stayed at home or at least outside the church yard. For domiciled Croats, this festival was not as important as for settlers. In fact, it even had a conflicted meaning, as it put the re-established (friendly) relations with their Serbian neighbours on trial.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> For the relation of people to their “home” Povrzanović Frykmann (2003) distinguishes home in the local and the national sense. While discussing notions of home in war and postwar Dubrovnik, she stresses that during the war notions of home change, as the formerly intimate place becomes a potentially dangerous place. However, people who have an emotional relation to the place they inhabit, the place which they often inhabited during the war, too, define this place in local rather than in national terms. Povrzanović Frykmann states that “it is important to note that region here is meant in terms of *zavičaj*, which is Croatian for ‘Heimat’ (the German concept of home and homeland), but defined strictly as local region. In the Croatian language the concept of *zavičaj* (home – Heimat) cannot be extended to the national territory (which is called *domovina*, homeland)” (2002: 86).

<sup>22</sup> In this village acts of bodily violence during the war were rare, which facilitated the possibility to recreate interethnic community ties after war. In other areas, in which interethnic violence was stronger, the reestablishment of interethnic relations between former neighbours was far more difficult (see Jansen 2000).

### ***Proslava Svetog Anta (Celebration of Saint Ante) in Knin***

Another important Croatian church festival in the region of Knin was the celebration of St. Ante, the patron saint of the Catholic church of Knin. In contrast to the celebration of *Naša Gospa*, it had always had a local rather than a national meaning. As the protector of livestock as well as of the health of the people, St. Ante was also worshipped by local Serbs (Miličević 1966: 483). In pre-socialist times, large sectors of the population, Croats as well as Serbs, visited the “*sajam*” (fair) including a cattle market, and joined the festive dancing and socialising taking place in front of the church. In socialist times the cattle market was still held on the day of St. Ante, but the religious component was largely relegated to the private sphere.<sup>23</sup> Still, not only Croats but also Serbs visited the festival, and both donated money to the church on this day for the well-being of their animals and the health of their families. During the war in the 1990s, when Serbs occupied Knin and expelled Croats, the Catholic church of St. Ante was however not spared from Serbian aggression and was destroyed. Like other Catholic festivals, St. Ante’s day was not celebrated during this period.

In postwar times, the church was renovated and the religious meaning of the festival was re-established. At the same time, the celebration of St. Ante became a Croatian event, attended by Catholic bishops from other parts of Croatia, some politicians of Croatian national parties<sup>24</sup>, and both local Croats and Croatian settlers in Knin originating from Bosnia and from other regions of Croatia. In fact, the number of Croats taking part in the festival multiplied significantly in comparison to socialist and even pre-socialist times, due to the immigration of the Croatian settlers.

In 2000 the festival started with a church procession through the town of Knin, ending at the Catholic church St. Ante in the centre of Knin. As in the festival mentioned previously, due to the masses taking part in the blessing and church service, the service had to be held in front of the church building. In the sermons, the national connotation of the church festival could not be overlooked. The bishops directed their sermons to the Croats of Knin and gave them moral support to stay in Knin and to carry their load in the bad times they had to face. As during the other festivals, they remem-

---

<sup>23</sup> Compare the Orthodox *sbors* or *sabors* in Bulgaria, which had been religious festivals to worship the village or town’s saint. During socialism they became socialist village or town festivals in which the religious dimension diminished in importance. Instead, they were used for socialist propaganda or stayed rather unnoticed by the public authorities and lost their public character (Pimpireva 2001).

<sup>24</sup> Generally, the Catholic Church supported Croatian nationalist parties, especially the Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica (Croatian Democratic Union), in their strife for political power (Perica 2001).

bered the happy time of the “liberation” of the Serb-held territory in 1995. They stressed the importance of the Croatian home and homeland as well as the (Croatian) catholic faith, which could also be a help in bad times. One of the priests for example said:

What do we hope for today? From whom do we ask for help? Where do we put our hopes? After we finally got Croatia, no one who asks “how are you” would get the answer “good”. It is difficult now, life is difficult, we can not go on and we do not know what comes next. Like there is an insecurity which came into the honourable and fighting Croatian people. I remember how our sons went along these streets after *Oluja*<sup>25</sup>, how proud they were, and not only through this town, but also Vukovar and Dubrovnik.<sup>26</sup> They were sure they were (they believed) doing something good, that they liberated their homeland, that they saved their *ognjište*<sup>27</sup>, and what happened with us in only a few years? Why did we lose faith and hope? I know that it is difficult, that the misery is pressing, but I fear that many Croats have lost their belief now.

Nevertheless, for most of the local inhabitants of Knin it was not the “Croatian national” meaning of the festival that stayed in the foreground, but the pastoral care for their family and close ones. And although Serbs did not participate personally in the procession in postwar times, they showed respect for the Catholic festival and avoided working in their fields or hanging laundry outside. Several Serbs gave some money to their Croatian neighbours to be donated to the shrine, so that they would benefit from the power and protection of the saint as well, as they had done in socialist and pre-socialist times. However, in postwar times this Serbian respect for a catholic holiday was not necessarily appreciated by the Catholic priests and the city council (which was dominated by members of Croatian national parties). At least in the eyes of one Serbian politician, they took care to exclude Serbs from the public celebration. When after the 2001 local elections a few Serbs became members in the city council, the traditional council supper, which was held in earlier years in honour of St. Ante, did not take place. The Serbian politician suspected that the supper was cancelled because of the possible attendance of Serbs, which was for him a sign of the deliberate exclusion of Serbs from the catholic town’s festival. On a political

---

<sup>25</sup> The Croatian military action to regain the Serbian held territories in August 1995 was called *Oluja* (‘Operation Storm’).

<sup>26</sup> Both Croatian towns, Vukovar and Dubrovnik, were heavily shelled by the Serbian army and especially in the town of Vukovar many people died. Since then, in the Croatian public view both towns serve as a symbol for ‘Serbian aggression’ against the Croatian nation.

<sup>27</sup> Stove or fireplace in a house, also used as a synonym for home.

level, Croats as well as Serbs tried to imbue the festival of St. Ante with national importance. On a private level, however, for the majority of people the wish to receive personal protection from the saint remained central.

### **Orthodox Religious Festivals**

Following this discussion of the two Croatian festivals, I now turn to two Serbian festivals and their different meanings for the inhabitants of the region of Knin.

#### ***Slava Preobraženja (Festival of Transfiguration) at the Krka Monastery***

The festival of transfiguration takes place in August at the orthodox Krka Monastery near Kistanje, a provincial town about 15 km from Knin. For centuries the monastery of Krka was the spiritual pillar of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Dalmatia, but also held an important position nation-wide. It hosted a theological school where a large number of Orthodox priests and monks were educated (Mileušnić 1994: 36-9). The festival of transfiguration was the biggest Orthodox festival in the region of Knin and traditionally attracted many priests as well as believers not only from the region but also from other areas in Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia. On the evening before transfiguration the festival commenced with a church service and many pilgrims spent a night at the monastery. Another church service took place the next morning, and was attended by even more believers. The celebration ended with a lively community festival, in which Croats from the region also took part.

This tradition was interrupted during World War II, when the monastery was devastated. It was renovated during socialism, in the early 1960s, and the theological seminary was reopened in 1964. In the following decades the school premises were enlarged several times (Mileušnić 1994: 39-40). During the four annual festivals at the monastery of Krka, large numbers of guests took part in the church services and the festive gatherings. As in pre-socialist times, most of them were Serbs from the region, as well as from other places of former Yugoslavia. Members of other national groups also took part in the festivities, for example local Croats from the neighbouring village of Promina (Krnetić 2002: 32). However, many local Serbs also avoided taking part in the church service as it was difficult to reconcile this with socialist party policy. That the religious festival could also be used for Serbian nationalist goals was proved in 1989, when hundreds of political hardliners from Serbia were among the guests, and fuelled national conflict



between Croats and Serbs in the region of Knin. During the war which followed in the 1990s, when Serbian forces held the territory, the monastery and theological school continued to function.

After the Croatian military action in 1995 and the flight of the Serbian population, the monastery was abandoned and devastated (but not destroyed). More than a thousand Croats from Kosovo had settled in the nearby provincial town of Kistanje, which before the war was predominantly Serbian. They occupied Serbian houses, which made it especially difficult for Serbs to return.

The Transfiguration Day was celebrated for the first time after the war in 1998 with however only a few visitors. This reflected the small number of Serbs who had remained or returned to their homes in the region of Kistanje and Knin. In 1999 many more Serbs attended, among them politicians from the Serbian National Council (*Srpski Nacionalni Vijeće*) (Lunić 1999). Although Orthodox priests had invited local Croatian officials and Catholic priests to join the festive lunch after the church service, they did not show up. In fact, relations with the Croatian settlers were rather tense; this forced the orthodox priests to centre the festivities around the monastery, remotely situated near the Krka River, and not in the town of Kistanje. This was very different from pre-war times, when the festival at the monastery was accompanied by a festival and a service in the Orthodox church in the centre of Kistanje (Krnetić 2002: 35).<sup>28</sup> It was feared that the Croatian settlers who built up the majority of the population in postwar Kistanje would feel provoked by the festive presence of the Serbs.

In 2000, after the consolidation of the political situation for Serbs, up to a thousand visitors came for the Transfiguration Day, and the festival was attended by high officials of the Orthodox Church, like the Dabro-Bosnian Mitropolit Nikolaj and the Dalmatian Vladika Fotije, as well as by prominent Serbian politicians. The majority of guests came from the region itself and were Serbian returnees. Many of the guests, however, had come from Western countries or from Serbia, where they either had gone as refugees or worked as migrant labourers, or both. They used the festival as an occasion to visit their home-place, sometimes for the first time since the war. With these emigrants and refugees coming home for a few days, the festivities had the atmosphere of a community and family reunion, in which people exchanged memories of pre-war times as well as news about the current situation. In these stories, localised notions of home and home-land were constructed. They stood alongside national ones, in which the religious gather-

---

<sup>28</sup> In fact, Croatian settlers started to build a Catholic church in the centre of the town of Kistanje, which would then be larger than the demolished Orthodox church nearby. See Krnetić, Ilija, 2002: 39.

ing was linked to the re-establishment of the Serbian nation. Serbian politicians as well as church authorities stressed publicly the century-long history of the Krka monastery, which was seen as proof of the long Serbian “roots” in the region. Unlike the other Orthodox festivals in the region of Knin, the Krka *slava* had a national media presence and became a political event for the Serbian minority in Croatia. Following the church service, the church authorities as well as the representatives of the Serbian parties were interviewed by national TV reporters and asked about the situation of the Serbian minority. Although they criticised the Croatian state for not working hard enough on the possibilities of the Serbs’ return and social integration, the peaceful and happy festival at the monastery was seen as evidence of the resettlement of Serbs in the region of Knin and in Croatia in general, and the reestablishment of Serbian culture (Krnetić 2002: 31-40). At the same time they showed willingness to integrate into and to acknowledge the Croatian state. This was also visible in the prayers and sermons during the church service, which took account of the Croatian experiences of war and displacement. Mitropolit Nikolaj, for example, asked the people to pray for all those who returned home and for all victims of war, and asked the visitors to show sympathy with the settlers in these regions who themselves went through war, displacement and misery, and to live in reciprocal love and respect. This open approach to the other groups was quite different from the Catholic sermons previously described. However, I would argue that this open approach of the Orthodox Church and Serbian community towards Croats was very much linked to the political and social position of Serbs in Croatia, who after the war had to struggle for recognition as an ethnic minority, and had no choice of achieving their rights without respecting the Croatian side.

In this environment, almost no Croat joined the festivities. For most of the Croatian settlers from Kistanje, this festival was an orthodox one, which belonged to the Serbs exclusively. The few who showed up mainly came because of business relations: they wanted to sell *janjetina* or other trade-goods. The exception were a few Croats who were married to Serbs, and two of them even sang Serbian songs. Serbs were very happy to have these two around and the account of local Croats joining the celebration and singing Serbian songs spread soon and found a very positive echo in the Serbian community. Nevertheless, such cases were rather exceptional. Despite the political attempts of Serbian politicians and priests to integrate the Croatian view on the recent war history and create a platform for reconciliation and mutual respect with local Croats and Croatian settlers, for most Croats the Serbian national meaning of the festival was paramount, as Serbs from all over the country as well as foreign countries joined the celebrations. How-

ever, for Serbs, the festival also had a local meaning in so far as it gave Serbian returnees from different neighbouring villages the possibility to meet and celebrate together, and attracted Serbs who had left the region during the war or during socialist times to visit their homes and families again.

### ***Slava Svete Trojice (Festival of Holy Trinity) in Biskupija***

In Biskupija, the *slava* of the Orthodox church is held on the Day of the Holy Trinity, 50 days after Easter. Traditionally, the festival started with a church service in the morning and developed into a lively festival for the whole community lasting until late. Often smaller celebrations were held at the individual household level with visits by friends and relatives. Up to the time of World War II, such church *slavas* had been the main village festivals and were the most important occasions at which to look for marriage partners. During socialism the church service was still held, but it was usually attended by elderly women only. The following *sajam* was joined by all villagers as well as by many people, mainly Serbs but also Croats, from other villages in the region. In the late 1980s the revaluation of the church took place and resulted in the renovation of the church building. The revaluation of the church and religion continued during the war.

After the war in 1999, local Serbian returnees started to celebrate their village-*slava* again. In that year it was very small and low key, not least because few younger people had returned. A year later, in 2000, the *slava* was celebrated with greater publicity. In the morning it started with the usual fast and pealing ringing of the church bells, which kept on for the whole day in a special rhythm. The church service was held by the Dalmatian Vladika, monks from the monastery Krka and the Orthodox priest of Knin. Like during Transfiguration Day, not only villagers, but also relatives from outside, sometimes even from exile in Yugoslavia or the *Republika Srpska* in Bosnia, arrived. Some were re-entering their home region for the first time since fleeing in 1995, while for others the church and village festival was a good occasion to visit their home village once a year. Many of the exiles and emigrants were very touched by the experience of the festival “at home again” and some cried when they saw friends and relatives for the first time after their flight – occasions for which they had longed for years. Others were overwhelmed because they had not expected ever to “come home” and participate in a joyful celebration again, as they connected their home-region with the devastating experiences of flight and fear which they went through in the times of Croatian re-integration. For them, the experience of the festival helped them to realise that the war was over and overcome the memories of flight from the region. Some people asked the priest to bless the graves of their ancestors after the church service. Commemorating and

honouring the ancestors had a special meaning during this festival and re-established personal ties to the family, the land and the home-community.

However, as was the case in socialist times, not everyone attended the church service. The young men especially tended to stay outside the church chatting and playing games, rather than attend the service. For them, the main celebration started after the church. In the morning, they had already started to prepare two lambs (*janjetina*) for communal grilling in front of the church. The Serbian returnees had collected money to pay for the meat and to invite all visitors to come. The joint table in front of the church and the inviting of guests had an important sacral meaning for them. That the group was nearly exclusively male underpinned the meaning of ancestry, which is transmitted through the male line. At the same time, the festival made them feel entitled to be in the home place, to be proud and happy to be able to celebrate in their home village again.

On the part of the Serbian villagers, these actions and sentiments were not necessarily weighted with national connotations. However, the public gathering of Serbian men for an Orthodox village festival in a Croatian controlled region only a few years after the war created a situation which was not relaxed, but rather burdened with the fear of what might happen. This was one, although not the only, reason why Orthodox villagers were very proud that in the afternoon some local Croats joined them. Together with their Croatian neighbours they sat together in front of the Orthodox village church, drinking wine, eating *janjetina*, singing and playing. A small incident which occurred during the socialising reflects very clearly the ways that discourses about home and belonging were continually negotiated and shifted between localised and national notions:

A Croatian settler came along to complain about the ringing of the church bells. He lived near by and felt disturbed by the “noisy and never-ending sound”, as he put it. A Serb who was present answered that they (the Serbs) would not complain about the church bells of the Catholic church during any kind of celebration, although they would of course hear them, too. When the settler replied that the bells of HIS church would not ring as aggressively, the Serb answered shortly that he did not know what the settler meant, as both churches, the Orthodox as well as the Catholic, would be THEIR churches. This would be THEIR village; they were locals here, while the settler would be the newcomer who did not own any property in this locality. In his reply, the Serb made it clear where the border crossed in his mind: between settlers and locals, not between Catholic and Orthodox or Croat and Serb. Local Croats present during this conversation did not intervene.

While the festival helped to re-establish a local community, including local Serbs as well as local Croats, Croatian settlers felt excluded. They noticed instead that with the festival Serbs re-created a Serbian national community in the locality of Biskupija, which they saw as a threat.

## Conclusion

Since the 5<sup>th</sup> of August, 1995, the town of Knin had served as a nation-wide symbol for Croatian “liberation” from war-time Serbian occupation and has held a special place in Croatian public representation. It is often called the cradle of the Croatian nation, since Knin had been a royal and Christian religious centre in medieval times. However, the local reality in Knin since the end of the war in the 1990s is much more complex. It is inhabited by a mix of different people who call on very different experiences of peaceful and violent times: local Croatian returnees, Croatian new settlers originating mainly from Bosnia and local Serbian returnees live next to each other in the region of Knin. They have to (re)build (a) local community/communities and have to (re)define their place in it. At the same time they refer to the national (Croatian as well as Serbian) communities which gained great significance during the war. As many people are displaced and live in other countries, these communities have partly to be established transnationally.

Religious festivals, Catholic and Orthodox, traditionally shape the interethnic relations in Knin and in a wider context also influence community-building processes. In pre-socialist and socialist times, religious festivals already had different functions: As bearers of a national tradition and culture they were often politicised and served as national markers for Serbs as well as Croats. But religious festivals also had alternative social meanings for the local population, often including members of the other nation. For example they served as social platforms for local youth to meet for dances, or more generally to socialise during fairs, like the cattle-market at St. Ante, which was visited by Croats as well as Serbs.

After the war in the 1990s public Catholic as well as Orthodox church festivals referred more explicitly than in socialist times to national discourses and imaginations. They were often bound to recent war-time experiences of violence and discrimination by the other national group as well as to century old national myths. With these discourses, the locality of Knin could be linked up to the national level. The professional ritualisation of the acts and the interweaving of national symbols into the festivals were as important as the national discourses, as was shown by the Catholic festival of *Naša Gospa* in Biskupija.

Religious festivals supported Croats as well as Serbs in their claims to be “at home” in the region and constructed communities along national lines.

This was especially important for Croatian settlers, who were not native to the region and who could use discourses of the experience of war, displacement and suffering of Croats to legitimate their occupation of Serbian houses and more generally their settlement in the region of Knin. Such national aspirations were put forward as exclusive claims to rights to a place by some Croatian priests and politicians. For Serbs who had fled the region in 1995 or had left even earlier and had not returned yet, such notions of a national home played a role as well. Nevertheless, Serbian politicians and priests also expressed the wish for reconciliation and tolerance of the other national groups, as was shown during Transfiguration Day at the monastery of Krka. This was partly linked to the weak political position of Serbs in Croatia, who after war had no alternative but to redefine their place in the Croatian state and society or to remain in exile outside the country.

It could also be argued that during Croatian as well as Serbian festivals, local people referred to and negotiated alternative meanings, which were based on shared pre-war memories, joint experiences and traditional local habits how to celebrate these festivals. In this sense, alongside the public discourse stressing the national meaning of these festivals, in private discourses the importance of nationality diminished while reference to the localised home and community became more important and was sometimes opposed to notions of a national home and community. Simultaneously, and perhaps because of such discourses, personal connections to members of the other nation based on family, kinship and neighbourhood were partly kept alive and enabled people to disregard or circumvent the national borders of religious festivals and official national propaganda and to visit the festivities of 'the other side'.<sup>29</sup> These visitors were, however, few in number, and from festivals dominated by public national discourses they were almost entirely missing.

Still, the gap between the local and national discourses became more and more visible in the years following the war, and led to communities with overlapping group-borders, first of all along national lines of Serbs and Croats, and secondly along lines of domiciled, local people and newcomers. In each of these discourses, images of space and time were drawn on to evoke memories of the time before the war, as well as the divisions and trauma of the war itself. Many of the local inhabitants of Knin were familiar with and used both discourses and images. Referring to such diverse images, they expressed their conflicting political claims and aspirations in relation to the Croatian newcomers in Knin.

---

<sup>29</sup> Kin groups as well as neighbours and friends often share common experiences made in and based on the locality in which they had grown up. These experiences are often opposed to the de-localised, culturally based constructions of a nation.

### Acknowledgements

Fieldwork in the region of Knin (2000/2001) was carried out within the framework of PhD research and was supported by the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology. Several considerations of this paper are based on a chapter of my PhD thesis as well as on the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology Working Paper No 17, 2000: Politics, Religion and Remembering the Past: the Case of Croatian Serbs in the 1990s. I would like to thank the PhD group and Chris Hann of the MPI as well as Hannes Grandits for commenting on an earlier version of the paper, and Haldis Haukanis, Deema Kaneff and Frances Pine for their useful comments on and editing of the final draft.

### References

- Barth, F. 1969. Introduction. In F. Barth (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, pp. 9-38. London: Allen & Unwin.
- Bezina, P. 1998. *Ljetopis Samostana Svetoga Ante u Kninu 1904-1963*. Zagreb: Hrvatski Institut za Povijest, Dom i Svijet.
- Bringa, T. 1995. *Being Muslim the Bosnian Way. Identity and Community in a Central Bosnian Village*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Cohen, A. 2000. *The Symbolic Construction of Community*. London: Routledge.
- Connerton, P. 1989. *How Societies Remember*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Creed, G. W. 2002. Economic Crisis and Ritual Decline in Eastern Europe. In C. Hann (ed.), *Postsocialism. Ideals, Ideologies and Practises in Eurasia*, pp. 57-73. London: Routledge.
- Denich, B. 1994. Dismembering Yugoslavia: Nationalist Ideologies and the Symbolic Revival of Genocide. *American Ethnologist* 21 (2): 367-390.
- Đjurić, T. 1995. Knin – Hrvatski Kraljevski i Biskupski Grad. *Hrvatski Zemljopis: Časopis za Zemljopis, Povijest i Prirodu*. 2 (11): 39-44.
- Elwert, G. 1995. Boundaries, Cohesion and Switching. On We-Groups in Ethnic, National and Religious Form. In B. Brumen, and Z. Šmitek (eds.), *Mediterranean Ethnological Summer School, Piran, Slovenia 1994-95*, pp. 105-120. Ljubljana: Slovene Ethnological Society.
- Glasnik Sv. Ante. 2000. *Glasilo Samostana i Župe Sv. Ante Knin*. God. I, Božić, Br. 1, pp. 12-13. Proslava Gospe Velikog Hrvatskog Krsnog Zavijeta.
- Grandits, H. 1998. Über den Gebrauch der Toten der Vergangenheit als Mittel der Deutung der Gegenwart – Betrachtungen zum Krajina-

- Konflikt 1991-1995. In S. Heyer, and J. Koehler (eds.), *Anthropologie der Gewalt*, pp. 179-186. Berlin: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik.
- , and C. Promitzer. 2000. "Former Comrades" at War: Historical Perspectives on "Ethnic Cleansing" in Croatia. In J. M. Halpern, and D. A. Kideckel (eds.), *Neighbors at War. Anthropological Perspectives on Yugoslav Ethnicity, Culture, and History*, pp. 125-142. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- , and C. Leutloff. 2003. Discourses, Actors, Violence: The Organisation of War-Escalation in the Krajina-region of Croatia 1990-91. In J. Koehler, and C. Zuercher (eds.), *Potentials of Disorder: New Approaches to Conflict Analysis*, pp. 23-45. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Gunjaca, S. 1992. S.O.S. for Biskupija near Knin. *Večernji List*, 15.6.1992.
- Ivas, Ante. 2000. Propovijed Sibenskog Biskupa Mons. Ante Ivasa. *Glasnik Sv. Ante, Glasilo Samostana i Župe Sv. Ante Knin*. God. I, Božić, Br. 1, pp. 16-17.
- Jezerinac, J. 2000. Propovijed Vojnog Biskupa Jurja Jezerinca. *Glasnik Sv. Ante. Glasilo Samostana i Župe Sv. Ante Knin*. God. I, Božić, Br. 1: 14-15, 44.
- Halbwachs, M. 1985. *Das kollektive Gedächtnis*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag.
- Hann, C. 1998. Religion, Trade and Trust in South-East Poland. *Religion, State and Society* 26 (3-4): 235-249.
- . 1998. Postsocialist Nationalism: Rediscovering the Past in Southeast Poland. *Slavic Review* 57 (4): 840-863.
- Hayden, R. 1994. Recounting the Dead. The Rediscovery and Redefinition of Wartime Massacres in Late- and Post-Communist Yugoslavia. In R. S. Watson (ed.), *Memory, History, and Opposition under State Socialism*, pp. 167-184. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.
- . 2002. Intolerant Sovereignties and 'Multi-Multi' Protectorates: Competition over Religious Sites and (In)tolerance in the Balkans. In C. Hann (ed.), *Postsocialism. Ideals, Ideologies and Practises in Eurasia*, pp. 159-179. London: Routledge.
- Jansen, S. *The Violence of Memories: Local Narratives of the Past after Ethnic Cleansing in Croatia*. Paper presented at the workshop "Intersecting Times: The Work of Memory in Southeastern Europe", Swansea, June 2000.
- Kaser, K. 1993. Ahnenkult und Patriarchalismus auf dem Balkan. *Historische Anthropologie* 1: 93-122.



- Katičić R. 1995. Serbokroatische Sprache – Serbisch-Kroatischer Sprachstreit. In R. Lauer und W. Lehfeldt (ed.), *Das Jugoslawische Desaster: Historische, Sprachliche und Ideologische Hintergründe*, pp. 23-80. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Krnetić, I. 2002. *Klijanje Života iz Spaljene Zemlje: Reportaže i Razgovori*. Kistanje: Biblioteka Pamćenje.
- Leutloff, C. 2002. Claiming Ownership in Post-war Croatia: The Emotional Dynamics of Possession and Repossession in Knin. *Focaal* 39: 73-92.
- Leutloff-Grandits, C. 2002. Housing Relations after Ethnic War: National and Social Dimensions of Home in the War-torn Region of Knin/Croatia. *Ethnologia Balkanica* 6: 95-116.
- . 2003. Coping with Economic Devastation. Agriculture in Post-war Knin, Croatia. In C. Hann and the "Property Relations" Group, *The Postsocialist Agrarian Question: Property Relations and the Rural Condition*, pp. 143-170. Münster: Lit Verlag.
- Lunić, N. 1999. Povratak Nade. Praznik Preobraženja u Manastiru Krki. *Identitet. Srpske Nezavisne Novine* 33: 26-27.
- Mappes-Niediek, N. 1995. "Ethnische Selbstäuberung?" Der Exodus der Serben aus Kroatien vom 4. bis 8. August 1995. *Südosteuropa* 44 (9-10): 585-592.
- Milanović-Litre, F. 2000. Gospa Velikog Hrvatskoga Krsnog Zavijeta Zastitnica Vojne Biskupije. *Glasnik Sv. Ante. Glasilo Samostana i Župe Sv. Ante Knin*. God. I, Br. 1, pp. 18-19.
- Mileušnić, S. 1994. *The Monastery of Krka*. Belgrade: Monastery of Krka: Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church.
- Miličević, J. 1967-68. Narodni Običaj i Vjerovanje u Sinskoj Krajini. *Narodna Umjetnost*, Knjiga 5-6, pp. 433-511. Zagreb: Institut za Narodnu Umjetnost.
- OCESS, 2000. (Svibanj). *Pravo na Povratak & Ostanak*. Bezplatna Informativna Brošura Manijenjena Hrvatima Koji su Izbjegli ili Prognani iz BiH, a Danas su Smješteni u Republici Hrvatskoj. Split: STINA.
- Okuka, M. 1998. *Eine Sprache – viele Erben. Sprachpolitik als Nationalisierungselement in Ex-Jugoslawien*. Klagensfurt: Wieser Verlag.
- Paić, P. 1998. *Knin, Hrvatski Kraljevski Grad*. Sibenik: Tisarka Kačić.
- Parochismo Pismo God.* 2001. Srpska Pravoslavna Parohija u Kninu. O Vaskrsu, III (4).
- Perica, V. 2001. The Catholic Church and Croatian Statehood. In V. Pavlaković (ed.), *Nationalism, Culture, and Religion in Croatia since 1990*, pp. 55-70. Seattle: University of Washington.

- Pimpireva, Ž. G. 2001. The Village Fair (sabor) as a Socialist Holiday. *Ethnologia Balkanica* 5: 101-107.
- PULS, Market, Media and Public Opinion Research. January 2001. *Survey on Returnee Population in Croatia*. Zagreb (unpublished document).
- Povrzanovic Frykmann, M. 2002. Violence and the Re-discovery of Place. *Ethnologia Europaea* 32 (2): 69-88.
- Radić, R. 1998. Die Kirche und die „serbische Frage“. In T. Bremer, N. Popov, and H.-G. Stobbe, *Serbiens Weg in den Krieg: Kollektive Erinnerung, Nationale Formierung und Ideologische Aufrüstung*, pp. 183-203. Berlin: Berlin-Verl. Spitz.
- Radulović, S. 1989. Dostojanstvo u Sjenci Incidenata. *TVIK, List Poduzeca Tvornivcev Ijaka Knin*. God. II, Broj 16.
- Rheubottom, D. B. 1976. The Saint's Feast and Skopska Crna Goran Social Structure. *Man, New Series* 2: 18-34.
- Slobodna Dalmacija*, August 4, 1998: Storm in Knin Maternity Ward.
- Soldo, J. A. 1988. *Biskupija. Mala Monografija*. Split: Glasnik „Marija“.
- Sundhaussen, H. 1994. „Ethnoradikalismus in Aktion: Bemerkungen zum Ende Jugoslawiens“. In H. J. Puhle (ed.), *Nationalismen und Regionalismen in Westeuropa*, pp. 402-423. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Turner, V. W. 1969. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- UNHCR field office Knin, 9.5.00. *Number of Returnees and Remainees According to Village, Municipality and County* (Unpublished statistics).
- Večernji List, 22.5.2001, p. 19. *Neslušbeni Rezultati Izbora za Županijske Skupštine i Gradska Vijeća. HDZ je Osvojilo 312 od 927 Županijskih Mandata*.
- Vučinić Nesković, V. 2001. Public Burning of Yule Logs in the Bay of Kotor, Montenegro. *Ethnologia Balkanica* 5: 109-123.
- Žanić, I. 1996. Zvonimir na Remotu. *Politika kao Pučka Književnost. Erasmus* 15: 56-62.



## ***Chapter 11***

# **Evangelical Transformations of Forgetting and Remembering: The Politics of Gitano Life**

Paloma Gay y Blasco

Roma have long been portrayed by academics as a people unconcerned with the past who, by contrast with the non-Roma, live carelessly for the present. In some accounts this orientation to the 'now' translates itself into a reluctance to accumulate property or to treat material culture as a carrier of Roma identity (Kaprow 1991). In others, it has been described as a result of the Romas' particular 'temperament':

As a creature of his culture, the Gypsy continues to live in the 'here and now', little knowing or caring about his historical past or his historical future. Physically strong, dynamic, and vigorous, his acting out of the Gypsy way is characterised by the same extremes of passion that mark his human relationships. ... Although he lives on the fringes of history, he lives there as a hero in his own eyes, proud and aloof (Quintana and Floyd 1972: 113-4).

Whilst describing the Roma as a people careless of the past, non-Roma academics and lorists in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have been overwhelmingly concerned with their origins and history (Okely 1983). This interest in the Roma past has repeatedly been translated into a series of taxonomies that separate 'true' Roma (those that can be 'proven' to have linguistic and biological ties with India) from 'fake' ones (local populations who took to the nomadic life style, or else 'true' Roma that allowed their culture and blood to become so diluted as to become unrecognisably Romany) (Mayall 1988). Non-Roma approaching the study of Roma, then, have often and for a long time monopolised History and relegated the Roma to the category of a-historical, 'cold' peoples (Lévi-Strauss 1966) – people, moreover, who 'feel' rather than 'think' (Moreau 1996).

The Gitanos of Jarana, the Roma neighbourhood of Madrid where I first carried out fieldwork in the early nineties<sup>1</sup>, might at first sight appear to fit this present-focused picture: most of them seldom talk about their personal pasts and show no interest in the origins or history of their people; they accumulate little property and what they have has a remarkably short life. Their attitude to the 'before' (*antes*), however, should not be confused with the kind of 'natural' disregard for the past characteristic of a people who live for the moment, as Roma have too often been portrayed. Instead, the Gitanos of Jarana are deeply preoccupied with the past and attempt to contain its overflowing into the present and into their shared self-representations through practices that are at once mnemonic and geared toward obliteration. As I have explained at length elsewhere and outline below (Gay y Blasco 2001), these practices of containment are essential to the processes through which these Gitanos sustain and reproduce 'the Gitano people' (*el pueblo gitano*) as an imagined community and as a community realised in everyday life through particular socio-political relations. In other words, the Gitanos' sidelining of the past in their self-representations and everyday life lies at the core of the mechanisms through which they survive as a distinct community in the face of enormous pressures to assimilate.

Precisely because of the importance of containing the past to the Gitanos' particular political modality – the overall pattern of social relations that provides the structural support for their shared sense of self – it is striking that some Gitanos in Jarana are beginning to relate to the past in novel ways. Unlike their neighbours and relatives, Evangelical pastors, their wives, and a few particularly keen members of their congregations are displaying a growing interest in the past and origins of their people. In response to my questions, these committed converts told me that the Gitanos are in fact Jews who became lost during Moses' forty years of wandering through the Sinai Desert: the Bible is their history. They also described to me the origins of Evangelism, and talked in particular about its 'founder', Luther who was, according to some, the same person as Martin Luther King. They gave me a small text to read, written by a Gitano convert, which related the story of the Roma Evangelical Church from its beginnings in France in the 1950s (Cano 1981).

The incipient interest in their origins on the part of these Gitanos goes hand in hand with an also incipient and novel way of conceiving 'the Gitano people' and of attempting to organise sociable and political relations in the

---

<sup>1</sup> I carried out fifteen months of fieldwork in Jarana in 1992-1993. Since then I have visited the neighbourhood an average of 4 times per year, for visits of 3 to 4 days at a time. In addition, I talk on the phone with my closest informants approximately once every four weeks.

neighbourhood and beyond. Non-converts avoid interacting with unrelated Gitanos for fear of feuding among patrigrups and see social fragmentation as essential to their experiences of what they call 'the Gitano way of being' (*la manera de ser Gitana*) and I call Gitano-ness.<sup>2</sup> By contrast, converts reject intra-community violence and strive to bring about the political, social and religious unification of all Gitanos. It is therefore significant that Evangelical Gitanos who are proposing a new political modality – in fact, a whole new model of Gitano-ness – should have also found it necessary to claim for themselves a myth of origins and a sequential history. Against the Gypsologist accounts outlined above, this invented tradition points to how important the past is to the particular ways the Gitanos choose to position themselves in the world – whether to be suddenly 'remembered', as among these converts, or to be privately memorialised and collectively obliterated, as among their non-convert relatives.

In this article I discuss the political implications of these Gitano Evangelical innovations, focusing on what the converts' statements about the past tell us about their new understanding of 'the Gitano people' (*el pueblo Gitano*) and on the mechanisms through which they attempt to bring this entity about. My premise is that imagined communities both depend upon and sustain particular kinds of social and political relations (Gellner 1983; Anderson 1991). I therefore explore the Evangelists' vision for 'the Gitanos' (*los gitanos*) as a 'people' (*pueblo*) in relation to the non-convert understandings, concentrating both on attitudes towards the past and on the kinds of social and political relations that each particular imaginative modality fosters and upon which each depends.

### **The Gitanos of Jarana, Converts and Non-Converts**

In 1992, when I began my fieldwork in Jarana, the local government in Madrid found itself in the midst of a massive campaign to solve once and for all 'the Gitano issue' (*la cuestión gitana*). Gitanos began to move in large numbers to the capital in the 1950s when, along with other rural migrants, they responded to the country's growing industrialisation and the concomitant decline of the countryside. Once in Madrid, they were pushed by successive administrations to the most isolated and marginal fringes. There they had little option but to build huge shanty towns that eventually became to

---

<sup>2</sup> 'The Gitano way of being' (Gitano-ness) is, according to the people of Jarana, the set of practices and moral evaluations that distinguish Gitanos from non-Roma. It is essential to their particular way of constructing 'the Gitano people' as an imagined community premised on the performance of a gendered morality and on the construction of metonymic links between and the group (see Gay y Blasco 1999, 2001).

non-Roma eyes master symbols of urban poverty and decay, so-called foci of illness, ignorance, danger, and drug-addiction.

In the late 1980s the local government made a complete census of the Gitano population living in shanty towns, and deployed large teams of social workers to evaluate and classify it as a preamble to their resettlement campaign. Those Gitanos who were perceived to be most reluctant or most unable to live among the non-Roma were to be temporarily housed in 'special colonies for marginal population' (*colonias especiales para población marginal*). In anticipation of the popular protests that often accompany Gitano resettlements in Spain, these colonies were usually built in isolated areas, far away from the nearest populated zones. Once there, the Gitanos were to be subjected to intensive social work and compulsory re-education schemes. When their re-education was complete, the official line went, these Gitanos would be resettled among the non-Roma (Gay y Blasco 2003).

Jarana was built in 1989 as one such 'special colony'. By the time I begun my fieldwork, 80 Gitano and mixed families from all over the city had been living there for three years. Most were very poor and earned a meagre living street selling fruit, vegetables and textiles, through scrap collecting, or through searching at the municipal rubbish dump. All had to attend compulsory re-education classes in the local social assistance centre. Then in 1995 the priorities of the local government changed, and Jarana was de-classified as temporary accommodation. Although the social workers have long left and the classrooms are closed, the Gitanos who were forcefully resettled in Jarana in 1990 have been living there for over ten years. There is now no question of housing for them being made available anywhere else.

Approximately one third of all the Gitanos who live in Jarana consider themselves converts to Evangelism and in fact a handful converted in the 1960s in response to the first mission that was carried out in the city. The Gitano Evangelical Church (*Iglesia Evangélica de Filadelfia*) is part of the wider Roma Pentecostal movement that has swept through Western Europe over the last twenty years. In the early 1960s, French Roma missionaries, themselves the product of a mission campaign carried out by a non-Roma in the 1950s, came down to the Peninsula to preach 'the Word of God' to the Gitanos (Cano 1981; Jordán Pemán 1990; Williams 1991). The Spanish Gitano Evangelical movement begun slowly to grow, was recognised by the State as a Church in 1969 and, as has also happened in France, England and Italy, has experienced its greatest expansion during the late 1980s and 1990s. Currently there are no data as to the number of Gitano converts (who call themselves *cristianos* (Christians) and are called by others *aleluyas*) but there is a church in every area where Gitanos live in any significant num-

bers. In Jarana Evangelism is, even if only indirectly, part of the daily experience of all the people of the neighbourhood.

The Iglesia of Filadelfia is premised on an ideal of simultaneous transformation and continuity with what, in the eyes of the Gitanos, being a Gitano involves – that is, the ‘Gitano way of being’ (*la manera de ser gitana*) or the ‘Gitano laws’ (*leyes gitanas*). Like the Manouche converts among whom Williams worked (1991), the *aleluyas* of Jarana stress that not only does one continue to be a Gitano once one converts, one becomes a ‘better Gitano’. During services ministers preach the rejection of those aspects of the Gitano life-style that do not conform to the Evangelical ideal of love and forgiveness, while simultaneously encouraging converts to act according to the key Gitano values of ‘knowledge’ (*conocimiento*) and ‘respect’ (*respeto*) (Gay y Blasco 1999). Gitano Evangelism is indeed best conceptualised as an emergent mode of being in the world, both for the self and in terms of the networks of social relations that converts construct. Although the Church is no longer a new phenomenon, it is in the midst of a new and massive expansion: converts see themselves as the spearhead of an emergent politico-religious movement that will eventually transform the lives of Gitanos everywhere. And yet, in Jarana as elsewhere in Madrid *aleluyas* find themselves deeply immersed in the non-convert Gitano life that they aim to transform. Most often families include convert and non-convert members, and the impact of Evangelism on all sorts of areas of daily life, from whom to join in an economic enterprise to how to deal with a blood feud, has to be explicitly negotiated. The ‘Christian way of doing things’ (*la manera cristiana de hacer las cosas*) often conflicts with the ‘Gitano laws’ (*leyes gitanas*) and particular individuals find themselves having to choose to act according to one or other of either ideal model.

### **Containing the Past: How Non-Converts Manage the ‘Before’**

The inhabitants of Jarana have experienced at first hand many of the radical social transformations that have swept through Spain over the last seventy years. Most of the older people of the neighbourhood grew up in rural areas and lived through the ‘rural exodus’ (*éxodo rural*), the huge migration movement that, in the fifties and sixties, led several million people to abandon the countryside in response to the nation’s incipient industrial development (Cebrián Abellán 1992). Before that, some Gitanos had been nomadic or semi-nomadic horse-dealers or peddlers, others had worked as agricultural labourers or had held stable jobs as miners, bricklayers or shopkeepers. They and those of their neighbours who had already taken up residence in the cities survived the Civil War and the ‘the hunger years’ (*los años de hambre*), the extended period of deprivation that followed it. With their children,



they experienced the worst of the Francoist dictatorship, when Roma were turned into targets of public control by a government eager to establish a firm grip upon the people. Through the sixties and seventies they survived the abandonment of the horse trade, the growth of huge shanty-towns on the edges of Madrid, and successive and often violent resettlement campaigns (San Román 1994). Since the mid-seventies and with the establishment of democracy they have been the targets of repeated re-education schemes and yet more resettlements, and they have witnessed the massive spread of drug addiction among young Gitano men and the rapid growth of the Iglesia de Filadelfia.

And yet, the people of Jarana seldom talk about the past, be it to discuss how their lives have changed or to reflect more generally upon the 'history of the Gitanos' (*la historia de los Gitanos*). In response to my questions about the 'before', some Gitanos told me to stop paying attention to issues of no interest: "you are really stupid, you could have been a lawyer or a doctor, and here you are, asking about things nobody cares about". Those who knew me better took longer and explained that they do not talk about the past because to do so is painful: it invariably involves talking also about the 'beloved deceased' (*difuntos allegados*). Reminiscences, these Gitanos said, bring to mind relatives whom they deeply loved and who are now dead: the resulting sadness is so overpowering that it is best avoided. And indeed, much of what the people of Jarana do and say in relation to the dead seems aimed at erasing their memory, and with it the memory of the recent past.

Like some other Roma (Williams 1993) the inhabitants of the neighbourhood are reluctant to discuss their own deceased relatives or companions and go out of their way to avoid making others think of theirs, removing from sight as many material reminders as possible. The belongings of the dead are burnt or broken and thrown away, photographs of deceased relatives are either hidden from view or destroyed, and the dead are only referred to rarely and obliquely, by kinship terms rather than by their names. These practices, the Gitanos say, are aimed at preventing the image of the 'beloved deceased' from appearing in the mind of the living (*para que el difunto allegado no se represente*). At a broader level, these practices prevent discussions of the dead in daily life and, with them, discussions of people's personal pasts.

And yet, this kind of communal obliteration of persons and past occurrences in fact masks an elaborate but essentially private form of commemoration. It is, the Gitanos say, because one loves that one should strive to forget but it is also because one loves that one *cannot* and indeed *should not* forget: a series of personalised mnemonic practices work to keep the 'beloved deceased' in the minds of their relatives. Thus, for example, the close

kin of a man who, while alive, loved to sing, for years will refrain from singing the songs he liked best or even from singing at all. They will also avoid eating the foods he liked best, going to the bars he preferred and hunting with his favourite dog. They will not discuss their silence, but its reason will be clear to those who knew the deceased intimately, and to them alone. It will give this group of relatives a common frame of reference composed of elements that other Gitanos know must exist, but to which they cannot specifically point.

As a result of these practices, little information about past events is shared outside the immediate group of kin or passed on to the younger generations. Therefore, it can be argued, these practices also lead to the Gitanos' lack of knowledge of key occurrences in their communal history. However, we are clearly not talking here of an easy, careless abandonment of the past to live without worries in the present. Removing the individual dead and hence the personal, recent past from the eyes of the group requires heavy emotional and also conceptual work (cf. Taylor 1993). And indeed, these Gitano practices of simultaneous commemoration and obliteration are essential to the particular way Gitanos organise social relations in the present, and hence to the specific mechanisms through which they manage to survive as a distinct community in the midst of a hostile non-Roma society. In particular, the Gitano idea of love between relatives that lies at the core of their strategies for dealing with the dead and the recent past also works as the major organisational principle in Gitano social and political life: this tie of love between kin, I was told, is 'everything to us Gitanos'. As do Gitanos elsewhere in Spain, in the neighbourhood they organise themselves for political, economic and sociable purposes into shallow patrigrups (*razas*) (San Román 1976). These coalesce and come to oppose each other not through idioms of shared ancestry projecting into the past, but through the belief that love towards each other and towards particular 'beloved deceased' binds relatives in the present (Gay y Blasco 1999: 144-5).

Relations among patrigrups are structured around the threat of conflict, which is played out in the form of blood feuds and solved through the separation in space of the *razas* involved. In the current context, with Gitanos forcibly concentrated in peripheral urban areas, such spatial separation is difficult to achieve and in Jarana the Gitanos attempt to isolate patrigrups by severely restricting daily sociability to their own kin (Gay y Blasco 1999). And indeed, the people of Jarana deeply dislike living in the vicinity of other Gitanos: they often state that they would much prefer to live in small groups of kin dispersed among the non-Roma, and that they have only come together in an exclusively Gitano neighbourhood through the resettlement policies of the local authorities, as has happened to Gitanos throughout

Spain. By distancing themselves from their neighbours these Gitanos assert their belonging to their kin and reject cohesiveness with non-kin as foreign to the Roma and part of the non-Roma 'way of being' (*manera de ser*). They also remove attachment to place from their representations of themselves: they have ended up in Jarana, they say, just as they might have ended up in any of the other special Gitano neighbourhoods built by the State in the Madrid suburbs.

Avoidance of and very real antagonism towards non-kin, and love to close relatives are therefore major factors generating the radical fragmentation that characterises Gitano social and political life. Whereas other minority groups that survive within the framework of oppressive nation states, including other Roma (Stewart 1997), rely on ideals of group unity and coherence, the Spanish Gitanos premise their understanding of what makes them Gitano on social and political fragmentation and dispersal. The 'beloved deceased' are key emotive foci around which such fragmentation is organised. How is it then that Gitanos reach out imaginatively to each other and come to see themselves as part of a single, enduring and encompassing entity, the 'Gitano people'? Again, exploring Gitano attitudes towards the past proves revealing.

Just as it is through kinship, and in particular through patrigroup affiliation, that social fragmentation is created and objectified among the Gitanos, it is through the way they deal with dead kin that this fragmentation is circumscribed to the present and the recent past. One's beloved deceased are kept apart from unrelated Gitanos, who should never refer to them or mention their names or even know about them. And, as I have said, the love of particular groups of people towards particular 'beloved deceased' helps unify them. Ultimately, however, the individual dead are soon removed from the eyes of the Gitano collective and this kinship-based, intra-community fragmentation that is so important in shaping Gitano life fails to be projected onto the Gitanos' images of their shared as opposed to their individual past.

As I have already explained, the Gitanos of Jarana seldom talk about this collective past. When they do – most often in the form of brief, stereotyped and hastily delivered descriptions – they refer to an a-historical, changeless period of unknown duration called *la vida de antes*, 'the life of before'. Before, I was told, the Gitanos lived in the countryside, moving from village to village: they were always on the roads (*siempre por los caminos*). They were very poor and had a difficult existence. They stole from the non-Roma and suffered at the hands of the *Guardia Civil*, the rural semi-military police. 'The life of before' tells of a *longue durée* separated from the present and lacking temporal markers, a 'past without contours' (Zonabend 1984: 2), rather than of a developmental or a generative period. It

is a description of a way of life, permanent and unchanging, not of a progression through time and, most importantly, it is devoid of both events and heroes. None of the 'Gitanos of before' (*los gitanos de antes*) are named: rather, they appear as a homogeneous, undifferentiated group of people who shared a way of life and a standpoint vis-à-vis the non-Roma majority. These are nobody's and yet everybody's 'beloved deceased'.

The lack of heroes or figure-heads from 'the life of before' corresponds closely to the ways the inhabitants of Jarana portray 'the Gitanos' as a group in the present, and themselves as part of this entity. They see 'the Gitano people' both in the 'before' (*antes*) and in the 'now' (*ahora*), as a scattered aggregate of persons, of undefined size, origin and location, who despite the antagonistic relations they have with each other rule their lives by the 'Gitano laws'. As a consequence, they are equally morally positioned vis-à-vis the rest of the world. In Gitano representations of the 'before', as indeed in the lived reality of the present, it is the sense of moral correspondence between Gitanos that links the person to the group against a social context governed by strong centrifugal forces, by the weakness of structural ties linking unrelated Gitanos and, most importantly, by the absence of any notion of intra-community harmony or solidarity as premises for the realisation of Gitano-ness. As in the Gitanos' representations of their shared past, 'the Gitanos of now' as a particular kind of imagined community is premised on the belief that each Gitano man and woman upholds the Gitano morality in the here and now, or the there and then (Gay y Blasco 1999). The ideal of the group thus revolves around the ideal of the person – an anonymous person, never a hero. Divisions and fragmentations are not seen as impediments to the realisation of this entity, and there is no sense that they must be resolved in order for the sense of moral commonality to exist.

Essential to this emphasis on the person as the creator of the difference between Roma and non-Roma are not only a strong lack of interest in the physical location, boundaries and size of the group, but also the practices of containment of the past that I have briefly outlined. These practices have effectively enabled the reproduction of 'the Gitano people' as a very particular kind of community: *el pueblo gitano* is a collection of people who perform the same morality whenever and wherever they may be, rather than a group of people who look to the past for the justification of their present existence. It is also not an ordered amalgamation of positions or statuses, a social order made up of slots to be emptied by the dead and filled by the living. Thus, whilst the commemoration and obliteration of the 'beloved deceased' facilitates the Gitanos' practical and imaginative dispersal among the non-Roma (San Román 1976, 1994), 'the life of before' demonstrates that this fragmentation does not completely dominate the imagined commu-

nity. When looked at together, these two ways of representing and addressing the past locate mimesis as the point of reference that enables Gitanos to recognise each other in the midst of a hostile world. Containing the past, and eventually obliterating much of it, therefore enables Gitano-ness to endure across space, time and social transformations, unthreatened by the death of individual Gitanos and by the very different conditions under which Gitanos live and have lived throughout Spain.

### **Looking Towards the Past: The Evangelical Vision for the Gitanos**

It should be clear from the description above that Gitano attitudes towards the past are part and parcel of a wider socio-political modality – a particular way of being in the world and constructing a community around notions of commonality rather than communion. This modality is premised on social and political fragmentation and on moral correspondence, and consequently also involves a strong egalitarian ethos. Gitano hierarchies and inequalities beyond the basic difference in status between men and women are constructed more on the basis of achievement than of ascription. Feuding is the only institution that brings patrigrups together only to separate them after a brief and violent encounter and Gitanos therefore strongly resist the imposition of control or authority from outside the patrigrup. Relations within patrigrups are often controlled by elderly and particularly skilful men who, nonetheless, are very heavily dependent on the acquiescence of their male and female relatives. Some of these men – called ‘men of respect’ (*hombres de respeto*) in direct reference to their perceived moral calibre – may be called upon to arbitrate in feuds among patrigrups other than their own, but their suggestions for resolution can never be imposed and may well be contested.

Gitano converts to Evangelism are attempting to develop a political modality that significantly transforms both this way of organising political relations among Gitanos – in particular how male prestige and authority are distributed – and, more widely, the very way ‘the Gitano people’ is conceptualised. At the core of this innovation is a novel way of thinking about and relating to the past. As in the non-convert context that I have described, among the converts of Jarana attitudes towards the ‘before’ point to the particularities of the imagined community and also to the socio-political relations upon which such community is built.

Evangelical Gitanos, particularly those with a better knowledge of Evangelical doctrine and the Bible, often talk about the Gitanos as a lost

tribe of Israel. Jaime, a young man from Jarana, was the first person to explain this theory to me:

In the Bible there is a tribe – well, I don't know if it's a tribe or half a tribe, perhaps it's half a tribe, ask the pastor. This tribe got lost, and nobody knows where they are. And the same, nobody knows where the Gitanos came from, some people say from Egypt because of the word *egipciano*. Yes. But many very wise theologians, many educated men, and the pastors, say that the Gitanos are that half tribe. Because the thing is that the Gitanos do many things that appear in the Bible, you've seen them because you've been here a while. For example, the betrothal (*pidia*), which is not done by the *Payos*. And the women keep themselves for their husbands, the same, you know that *Payos* (non-Gitanos) don't do that either. And in the Bible it appears a lot.

Pastors quote the Bible in detail in connection with the Gitanos' supposed Jewish origins. They take Biblical descriptions of the wanderings through the world of the people of Israel as direct references to the Gitanos. Americano, a pastor in his mid-thirties, put it as follows:

Look, Ezequiel chapter 34 verse 5: 'And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth'. You see, it's clear it's the Gitanos. And it appears a lot in other places, it appears a lot in Zechariah. So that the Gitanos are Jews. And what happens is that in all the time that they were lost in the desert, which was forty years, well one group must have gone right when the others went left. And those are the Gitanos.

Although very committed converts tend to embrace this version of the past, not everybody in Jarana is fully convinced and it can become the focus of speculation, as in the conversation that I transcribe below. Tío Juan and Tía Tula are married and in their seventies and have, for the last ten years or so, attended the local Evangelical church with some regularity. However, Tío Juan also heads the largest and most powerful patrigrup in Jarana, the 'Juanes', most of whom are not converts. The two explained to me how, for them, participating in the Church is to a very large extent a strategic move: they must make sure that such an important arena for the negotiation of local politics stays as far as possible within their remit. Their statements convey both their scepticism and, in Tío Juan's final comment about his praying abilities, their more generally utilitarian approach to the Iglesia de Filadelfia:

Tio Juan: Who knows about all those things!

Tia Tula: Ja! They are lies, inventions. They lie a lot, them.

Tio Juan: Some people say there's another world down there, under the earth. And heaven. Where is it? On top of us?

Tia Tula: One would see something, I say.

Paloma: I'm not sure about seeing something. The pastor said that in heaven is where the souls are, and that the souls are invisible.

Tia Tula: The soul is the blood, it dries when you die, and into the hole you go.

Tio Juan: And now it happens, they say in church, that the Gitanos are Jews, I had never heard that before. My son-in-law Ernesto the husband of Teresa says you see it clear in the Bible.

Paloma: What's that?

Tia Tula: Ja! Stories! They all lie, Ernesto the first.

Tio Juan: What I'd like is to know well how to pray, aloud; every time it's my turn I get into a tangle. The others can do it really well – smooth, you know?

Tia Tula: They're lies, only lies.

Both Tío Juan and Tía Tula are very well aware that the converts' claim to a Jewish past and Jewish ancestry fits within a wider and novel way of thinking about both the meaning and the manner of 'being Gitano' (*ser gitano*) that stands in tension with the one they and the Juanes more widely are seen to stand for in the neighbourhood. Converts build upon the sense of difference and uniqueness that lies at the core of the Gitanos' experiences of Gitano-ness, but add a new and fundamental dimension: as not only Jews, but as Gitanos and as born again Christians, the members of the Iglesia de Filadelfia are God's *truly* chosen people. They, and they alone, as the elite of the Gitano and Christian communities, will bring about God's plan for humanity. By contrast with the representations of the past that are embodied in the 'the life of before', converts claim for themselves a history – which draws on the Bible and on a handful of written accounts about the birth and growth of the Church (such as Cano 1981) – that is developmental and generative, as well as prophetic. It includes not only a description of the 'before', but a clearly spelled-out outline of the future.

At the core of this outline lies the revolutionary notion that all Gitanos must unite, leaving aside their enmities and differences and also downplaying and eventually rejecting the influence of the patrigrup. This is certainly novel and not always to the taste of Tío Juan and Tía Tula, whose patrigrup owes its position – they manage to influence much of what goes on in the neighbourhood – to its numerical strength and to the intimidation of others. Since they moved to Jarana in 1989, the old couple have witnessed the more committed converts around them attempting to create alternative arenas for

the generation and acquisition of political influence, as well as new patterns of daily sociability. Their efforts, which challenge the Juanes' status in the neighbourhood, are made visible across multiple contexts of everyday life. Activating links with Gitanos outside the kin group, for instance, is of particular significance to *aleluyas*, who come together not only at lengthy daily services but also at anti-drugs campaigns both in the neighbourhood and elsewhere, and at summer trips to the river to celebrate baptisms. The converts who are most active within the Church – ministers, trainees and their families, but also many others – often build up close relations with non-kin, and in the process transform the non-convert pattern of daily sociability: they visit each others' houses for coffee and prayer, go out to the fun park in same-sex groups or in sets of married couples, and even co-operate in economic activities. They also display an interest in establishing contact with unrelated Gitanos who live elsewhere in Madrid, in Spain, and even beyond, visiting churches in other neighbourhoods or provinces, and sometimes volunteering as missionaries to go to North Africa, the Canary Islands and South America, where many Gitanos migrated in the 1950s and 1960s. Every year thousands of converts come together in huge religious assemblies called *convenciones* which are national or transnational in character, bringing together Gitanos and Roma from Spain, Portugal and France.

Most importantly, feuding as a method for structuring and dealing with conflict is rejected by the members of the Church. This does please Tío Juan and Tía Tula, who have repeatedly suffered the consequences of feuding, but it also frightens them. After all, Tío Juan is a very well known conflict mediator, a 'man of respect', and if feuding declines, so will his status. And the themes of mutual forgiveness and repentance *are* among the *aleluyas*' favourites. Both during services and in more informal contexts, they tell endless stories about long-life enemies dramatically forgiving each other after embracing Pentecostalism: they pride themselves in dealing with confrontation through dialogue and reconciliation, rather than through revenge. Although this ideal is by no means always reached, when committed converts find themselves in the midst of a feud or a serious conflict they do attempt to put pressure on their kin to avoid revenge and escalation, and often call on pastors to act as mediators together with or instead of the 'men of respect'. In fact, it is on this undermining of feuding that the novel pattern of sociability I have described is built. It is only when unrelated Gitanos are no longer perceived as being necessarily a threat that interacting more closely with them becomes possible.

In broader terms, these developments mean that patrigrp affiliation is no longer seen by converts as the only or even the main basis of intra-community relations. The Gitano-*aleluya* imagined community is still dif-



fuse in its size and location, but no longer revolves around internal tensions and hostility, as happens in the non-convert world. Moreover, it is an imagined community whose very structural basis is the Church itself and has, at its core, a new political hierarchy of roles and statuses. This hierarchy is meant to transcend ties of kinship, region of origin and economic status and to bind converts in any particular area with Roma converts elsewhere within a world-wide, God-given plan for action. It has a 'president' (*presidente*) at the top, 'regional delegates' (*delegados regionales*) below him, and then local pastors (*pastores*) and trainees (*candidatos*) at its lowest levels. The specific workings of this hierarchy are obscure to most converts as are the relation of the Church in Spain to the rest of the Roma Evangelical movement outside Spain. However, all converts know that the regional delegate and the president keep a close eye on each local church and make pastors, whose numbers far exceed those of available churches, regularly circulate between congregations.

To the people of Jarana it is clear that pastors are increasingly competing with the 'men of respect' for the positions of highest authority and prestige within the community. The best known pastors – for example, those with a reputation for casting off demons, prophesising or orating – are often called to mediate in serious conflicts, either on their own or with one or more 'men of respect'. This is the case even though these men tend to be considerably younger than the traditional mediators, and even though their knowledge of the 'Gitano laws' and their experience of dealing with angry parties in the midst of heated disputes are limited. Tío Juan, for example, who is considered one of the best 'men of respect' in Madrid, has sometimes been called by local families to mediate together with his nephew Basilio, who is a famous pastor but only in his early forties. Like other male converts, in his daily life Basilio attempts to distance himself from Gitano stereotypes of youthful masculinity, with its connotations of irresponsibility, lack of good sense and unreflecting bravery, and behaves much more like the men of his uncle's generation. Unlike young non-converts, who tend to fulfil those ideals of Gitano masculinity that focus on sexual promiscuity and physical bravery, young converts model themselves upon the ideal figure of the 'man of respect': a self-controlled, reliable, truthful older man. In so doing they also draw upon dominant Gitano discourses of prestige and authority, which focus on moral righteousness as the basis for ascribed male status (Gay y Blasco 2000). And it is remarkable how convinced non-converts tend to be by their performance: non-convert mothers often push their daughters into attending the daily services regularly, in the hope that they will catch the eye of a young *aleluya*.

These transformations in ways of organising daily sociability, of dealing with conflict and of allocating prestige and authority demonstrate how converts are beginning to transform the very structure of Gitano socio-political relations. They are revising certain key institutions and developing new ones: by creating an ideal of social cohesion to be built upon the hierarchies of the Church, *aleluyas* are in fact creating a new project for 'the Gitano people'. This project is much closer to anthropological notions of 'society' as a cohesive body of institutions, statuses and roles than the ideals of community as commonality embraced by the non-converts. At its core lies a new conceptualisation of the past and the written word as the places where the codification of the new Gitano-ness is to be found. Texts have consequently become enormously important: converts are in the midst of a literacy revolution that causes envy and amazement to the social workers who have tried teaching Gitanos to read through repeated programmes and schemes. The core text is not merely the Bible, but a particular Bible: the *Biblia de Referencia Thompson* (1991). This Protestant Bible, translated from an American version by a Spaniard in the 1960s, includes long archaeological and historical supplements as well as outlines of sermons and detailed suggestions for pastors in their ministry.

The *aleluyas'* interest in the past does not mean, however, that the performance of the Gitano morality in the present has become irrelevant or that the person has been completely displaced from the Gitanos' understandings of themselves as a 'people' (*pueblo*). Rather, salvation in the eyes of the *aleluyas* comes first through acceptance of Christ as saviour and second through a changed way of life. Gitano-ness still has to be performed but now the 'true' Gitano-ness exists in a new, Christian incarnation. However, time has become particularly important for the *aleluyas*, who talk of themselves as existing on a particular point of a trajectory that extends into the future: they are 'ahead' of the non-converts around them but also awaiting the conversion of all Gitanos and the end of time. And they speak of the present that they, but not the non-converts, inhabit in terms of 'modernity' (*lo moderno, la vida moderna*). They see themselves as 'modern' (*modernos*), 'advanced' (*avanzados*) and 'civilised' (*civilizados*), but they talk of non-converts – including Tío Juan's sons and grandsons, the Juanes – as 'rancid' (*rancios*), 'backwards' (*retrasados*) and 'uncivilised' (*sin civilizar*). In the eyes of the *aleluyas*, non-converts have failed to move on from the past, a time when all Gitanos 'lived in ignorance, fighting each other like cats and dogs' (*vivian en la ignorancia, peleandose como los gatos y los perros*). Converts, by contrast, refuse to engage in feuds, and in so doing testify to their modernity just as they do by their dress, their forms of address, the

establishments they patronise and the entertainments they engage in (cf. Gay y Blasco 1999).

### Concluding Remarks

In their everyday lives converts constantly find themselves having to negotiate a path between the Evangelical and non-convert 'ways of being' (*maneras de ser*). Even for the most committed *aleluyas*, being a convert is never a total identity. Rather there is a tension between the position of the convert and the demands of the non-convert world. These demands in turn most often become concrete as loyalties to non-convert kin. By the same token, the Evangelical vision for the Gitanos competes with, but has by no means disposed of, the non-Evangelical imagined community that I described in the preceding section. This means that the ways of dealing with the past through the 'beloved deceased' and 'the life before' that I outlined above are still very much alive, among converts as well. What happens is that the form and periods of mourning are relaxed so as to sanction the activities of the Church: meeting hundreds of other Gitanos to pray and sing is not considered a breach of mourning, for example. In other words, expressions of love and allegiance towards the 'beloved deceased' are modified to allow for the expression of love and allegiance towards God and hence the new, cohesive ideal of 'the Gitano people'. And 'the life of before' is incorporated into the linear, progressive histories that the *aleluyas* put forward: it is effectively taken to describe the long period of wandering through the world that preceded the Gitanos' awakening to their true origins and destiny.

Jarana is therefore a testing ground where two alternative models of Gitano-ness are being tried out. Each proposes a very different way of being in the world as a Gitano, both for the self, and for 'the Gitano people' as a whole. At first sight, and especially after an evening at the local church, watching and listening to the enthusiasm of the converts, it is tempting to assume that Evangelism and Gitano-ness will soon, as the *aleluyas* predict, become synonymous. This would mean that the particular Gitano way of linking individuals to groups, which non-converts like the Juanes incarnate and which has enabled the Gitanos to subsist at the edges of a powerful and encroaching nation-state, will soon succumb to the ravages of globalisation. It will shift not only in its form, but also in its content, to fit into dominant Euro-American models of identity (cf. Wilks 1995). And yet, although it is clear that the Iglesia de Filadelfia is spreading at an extremely rapid pace and extending its influence over the lives of the growing numbers of Gitanos, its future is not altogether clear. Many people in Jarana, and among them Tío Juan and Tía Tula, and their children and grandchildren, find the gregariousness of the Church too grating, and its dogmas too overwhelming and un-

compromising. They and others are likely to hold onto the fragmentation and dispersal, with their concomitant downplaying of the 'before', precisely to resist and challenge the vision that Evangelists hold for 'the Gitano people'.

## References

- Anderson, B. 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Biblia de Referencia Thompson con Versículos en Cadena Temática*. 1991. Deerfield, Fl.: Editorial Vida.
- Cano, L. 1981. *Un Pentecostés en el Siglo XX*. Sabadell: Cano.
- Cebrián Abellán, A. 1992. *Marginalidad de la Población Gitana Española*. Murcia: Universidad, Secretariado de Publicaciones.
- Gay y Blasco, P. 1999. *Gypsies in Madrid: Sex, Gender and the Performance of Identity*. Oxford: Berg.
- . 2000. The Politics of Evangelism: Hierarchy, Masculinity and Religious Conversion Among Gitanos. *Romani Studies*, 10 (1): 1-22.
- . 2001. 'We Don't Know Our Descent': How the Gitanos of Jarana Manage the Past. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 7 (4): 631-647.
- . 2003. 'This is Not a Place for Civilised People': Isolation, Enforced Education and Resistance among Spanish Gypsies. In C. Strange, and A. Bashford (eds.), *Isolation: Places and Practices of Exclusion*. New York: Routledge.
- Gellner, E. 1983. *Nations and Nationalism*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Jordán Pemán, F. 1990. *Los "Aleluyas": Descripción y Valoración*. Madrid: Secretariado Nacional Gitano.
- Kaprow, M. 1991. Celebrating Impermanence: Gypsies in a Spanish City. In P. de Vita (ed.), *The Naked Anthropologist: Tales from around the World*, pp. 218-231. Belmont: Wadsworth.
- Lévi-Strauss, C. 1966. *The Savage Mind*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson.
- Mayall, D. 1988. *Gypsy-Travellers in Nineteenth-Century Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Moreau, R. 1996. *The Rom: Walking in the Paths of the Roma*. New York: Key Porter.
- Okely, J. 1983. *The Traveller-Gypsies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Quintana, B. B., and L. G. Floyd. 1972. *Qué Gitano! Gypsies of Southern Spain*. New York: Hold, Rinehart & Winston.
- San Román, T. 1976. *Vecinos Gitanos*. Madrid: Akal.

- . 1994. *La Diferencia Inquietant: Velles i Noves Estrategies Culturals dels Gitanos*. Barcelona: Alta Fulla.
- Stewart, M. 1997. *The Time of the Gypsies*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press.
- Taylor, A. C. 1993. Remembering to Forget: Identity, Mourning and Memory among the Jivaro. *Man* 28: 653-678.
- Wilks, R. 1995. Learning to be Local in Belize: Global Systems of Common Difference. In D. Miller (ed.), *Worlds Apart: Modernity Through the Prism of the Local*, pp. 110-133. London: Routledge.
- Williams, P. 1991. Le Miracle et la Necessité: À Propos du Developpement du Pentecotisme chez les Tsiganes. *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions* 73: 81-98.
- . 1993. *Nous, on n'en Parle Pas: Les Vivants et les Morts chez les Manouches*. Paris: Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme.
- Zonabend, F. 1984. *The Enduring Memory: Time and History in a French Village*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

## *Chapter 12*

# **Fighters, Martyrs, Victims: Political Conflict, Ambivalent Moralities and the Production of Terror and Modes of Governance in Contemporary Spain**

Susana Narotzky and Paz Moreno

This chapter is a first attempt to address the relationship between memories and silences about the past and present day political participation in Spain.<sup>1</sup> It compares violent political repression during the Francoist regime (1939-1975) with present-day political violence in Spain, with particular reference to the Basque Country conflict around nationalist sovereignty. We will analyse diverse practices and discourses concerning both realities. In particular we will stress the use of socially constructed memories of the past, in the production of conflictive moral domains. Finally, we will highlight the dialectics between the creation of ‘regimes of truth’ and the politics of diffuse forms of totalitarian governance (Foucault 1981).

We focus on the political confrontation produced around the actions of the Basque independentist group ETA after the assassination of the socialist Ernest Lluch in Barcelona on the 21<sup>st</sup> of November, 2000, and around the granting of public honours to the Francoist police torturer Melitón Manzanás in January 2001 two months later. We will also analyse the period preceding elections to the autonomous Basque parliament in May 2001 as well as the municipal elections of May 2003. Here, the forces of conflicting social memories – mostly of the Franco years and the transition period, and of the ‘victims’ of terrorist actions – can be seen at work. The main issue addressed in these public debates is the organisation of political and social space, voiced through a discourse of what is and is not legitimate “political” action,

---

<sup>1</sup> This paper was finished before the Spanish general elections of March 2004 that were lost by the conservative party (Partido Popular) that held power from 1996 to 2004. The research is in its preliminary stage. It has been funded by the Ministerio de Ciencia y Tecnología (Spain), project BSO2003-06832 “Culturas de la responsabilidad en los ámbitos económico y político”, duration 2003-2006. Susana Narotzky wants to acknowledge the inspiration of many years of intellectual conversation with Gavin Smith. Paz Moreno wants to thank Juan Aranzadi for his help.

particularly in respect to nationalist options. What is historical ‘truth’? How does it differ from partial ‘narratives’ of the past? What is the role of anthropologists in this debate as intellectuals and participants in the political arena through their construction of social memories and their transformation of material realities into discursive truths?

First, a word of caution: this is NOT a paper on “nationalism”, nor a paper about Spain either. It is a piece of ethnographic evidence on contemporary democracy. It is about the drive towards authoritarianism in a European democratic country today and the role of social memories in the production of particular forms of state hegemony and oppositional struggle. The country is Spain. Spain, you might think, is not a “normal” European country: it is a young democracy. Unlike Italy and Germany, whose fascist regimes ended in 1945 with the Allied victory in the Second World War, Spain had to wait until the death of Franco in 1975 to slowly become a western democracy. The Spanish “transition” from a dictatorship to a constitutional democracy was hailed by the world as a “model” process of peaceful political transformation.

### **A Model Transition: Expelling Conflict through a Pact of Silence**

The different institutional discourses on the Spanish transition (parties, unions, media and academia) are agreed in that 1) silencing the recent past (never specifically defined but implicitly starting with the declaration of the Republic in 1931 and including the period of the democratic Republic, the Civil War, and the Franco dictatorship) was necessary to effect the transition to democracy, and 2) that it was an example of peaceful negotiation, forgiveness and political reason. The ‘model’ silences were an important part of the historical realities of the past and of the transition period and in so doing constructs a particular truth of ‘good’ political practice, confronting it implicitly with past ‘bad’ political practice that brought the horror of the war. From the start the model of transition was intrinsically a moral one forgoing reality for the sake of peace. Some of the crucial realities that were officially forgotten in the process were the social and economic causes of the conflict of 1936 and the victims of the fascist repression during the Franco regime.

This stress on the ‘peacefulness’ of the transition relegates to a diffuse and private memory the extremely conflictive context of the transition years (Bermeo 1997). Eighteen months before the *Ley de Reforma Política* (Law for the Political Reform) of 1976 that set the way to a democratic regime, the dictatorship had decreed the ‘estado de excepción’ (state of emergency) in the Basque country; thirteen months before the same regime had executed five ETA activists despite massive demonstrations opposing the penalty all over Europe. The same year of the reform (after Franco’s death on the 20<sup>th</sup> of

November, 1975), the police killed three workers on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March while repressing a labour strike in Vitoria (Basque country). In January 1977, within the space of one week (the Black Week), two students were killed in a demonstration, five labour attorneys were killed in their office, and five policemen were killed. The year 1976 was fraught with conflict in labour terms with 3.6 million workers going on strike and a total of 110 million work hours lost, most of them in Barcelona, Madrid, the Basque provinces of Guipuzcoa and Vizcaya, and Asturias (Preston 1986; Molinero and Ysàs 1998: 96, 101-3; Ballester and Risques 2001).

With this knowledge, and ten years after the assumption of power by the social democrats in Spain (1982) that ‘concluded’ the transition period, the political economist Naredo (2001 [1992]) asked himself some questions about the ‘model transition’:

Is it possible that a dictator successfully plans his succession and that of the regime that he rules? That an autocrat names the Chief of State that will succeed him and opens the door to a ‘transition without trauma’ toward the stable settlement of a new political regime? In sum, is it possible for a dictatorship to transform itself into a democracy without the pressure of tumultuous actions and bloody repression and without demanding serious sacrifices to the established political class and to established economic interests? (2001: 158).

In his opinion this was possible because the Spanish transition avoided a genuine constitutional process though “cheating the people of the constituent process and submitting to a referendum a Constitution that had been manufactured outside it. Such procedure by the political parties conditioned the new democratic order and instituted it as a despotism renewed by an electoral simulacrum, which enabled politicians to act in the name of the people but without the people” (Naredo 2001: 159) (cf. also Bermúdez 1992; Ibáñez 1992).

However, this tutored transition that Naredo critiques seems to be central to ‘models’ of successful transition. According to Bermeo (1997) political scientists clearly favour ‘moderation’ in the models of political transition. From this perspective popular action is viewed either as irrelevant or as threatening to the passage to democracy and the models emphasise popular obedience to the political elite that promoted democracy as a way to legitimate their power (1997: 305-7).

We might ask then what is the objective of the ‘transition’ and what ‘democracy’ is its aim. Definitions of democracy are numerous and contested but a general and commonly accepted definition of Western democracies “emphasise(s) electoral and civic rights and the formal liberty and equality of the political system” (Barber 1987: 116). As Bobbio (1989: 151)



points out in reference to Tocqueville's definition, "what matters is that power is really in the hands of the people, whether directly or through representatives who enforce the 'law of laws' (that is, the principle of popular sovereignty)".<sup>2</sup> In a recent collection of essays, Chantal Mouffe (2000) has pointed to the paradoxical 'constitutive tension' between liberty and equality in the definition of democracy; between "the liberal tradition constituted by the rule of law, the defence of human rights and the respect of individual liberty" on one side and "the democratic tradition whose main ideas are those of equality, identity between governing and governed and popular sovereignty" on the other (2000: 2-3).<sup>3</sup> However, after the Second World War the term also came to designate the form of government brought to the vanquished countries (Germany, Italy) by the victorious forces, a political system legitimated 1) by its radical rupture from the fascist past and 2) its radical opposition to the Soviet regime rather than by its formal and substantive aims. In the short run this last point came to be the basic differential element, to the point that the United States started collaborating with the Franco regime in 1952 and fully recognised the dictatorship in 1959. However, in order to be fully accepted in the elitist club of Western democracies (membership in the EEC) the first point had yet to be achieved. This was the project of the transition 'fathers' and it relied on a rupture with the past and the establishment of strands of continuity that would not threaten point 2).<sup>4</sup>

### **Social Memory and the Production of Historical Truth**

The team of politicians selected to produce a democratic Constitution were significantly called 'Fathers of the Constitution' and included people linked

---

<sup>2</sup> However, this very basic principle has been consistently and 'legally' violated in Spain, first during the constituent period of the transition as Naredo pointed out, and presently through the Law of Political Parties illegalising parties presumed to be 'against' democracy (a law basically aimed at the dissolution of Herri Batasuna a party presumed to be related to ETA, although universal in its applicability) that has in fact broken the principle of popular sovereignty by rendering null the right of political participation of hundreds of thousand citizens in the Basque country that had voted for this then legal party in the 2001 elections (Pérez Royo *El País* 17-06-2003).

<sup>3</sup> Although Mouffe's arguments about the substantive transformation of the meaning of democracy by the Third Way proponents and the substitution of the 'constitutive tension' by a 'consensus at the centre' in present day western democracies support our ethnographic description of the Spanish case, we would want to ground our argument in history. There is, we think, a history to these developments in Spain, but also in other Western democratic countries and we try to unveil these historical connections.

<sup>4</sup> We should keep in mind that the only genuinely democratic regime in Spain in the twentieth century (that of the second Republic 1931-1936) gave force and institutional power to the radical forces of the working class.

to the dictatorship (such as Manuel Fraga), people of previously illegal parties (socialists like Peces Barba, communists like Solé-Tura or Catalan nationalists such as Miquel Roca) and three representatives of the 'new' heterogeneous centre-right party that had won the majority in the first elections of 1977 (Herrero, Pérez-Llorca, Cisneros). Significantly all of them were 'experts' in Law, and also significantly the Basque country nationalists were not represented, which made them campaign against the Constitution in the referendum that was to approve it in 1978. The work of the constitutional team centred around the construction of particular links with the past while highlighting the rupture with the fascist Francoist regime; that is, the production of a particular historical truth about the democracy that would provide it with legitimacy outside the 'legitimacy' of having been steered and in a sense granted by the dictator.

The Constitution (1978) only mentions the past in relation with two issues a) the Monarchy and b) the privileges conferred to particular Autonomous Communities. This is relevant in that while the Civil War and the Franco regime are conspicuously absent, two connections with the past are highlighted, one referring to the pre-Republican past, the other referring to the Republican past. In constituting the State as a Monarchy, the king Juan Carlos I appears already in place (he had been instituted by Franco) but he is described as "legitimate heir of the historical dynasty" (1978: 14). A strand of legitimacy of the 'new' democracy is thus associated with a 'historical dynasty' that had supported a fascist dictatorship (General Miguel Primo de Rivera) for seven years (1923-1930) and fled the country when the results of municipal elections favoured republican parties in the large towns and peaceful popular demonstrations proclaimed the Republic all over the country in 1931. Although this 'fascist' aspect of the 'historical dynasty' is silenced, it is significant that the historical loop that enables the legitimisation of a Monarchy imposed by Franco both de-legitimises the Republic (and with it popular sovereignty and the only previous democratic regime in the twentieth century) and silences its long standing connections with violent right-wing military coups to sustain the privileges of the wealthy and powerful.

The other mention of the past refers to the particular procedures of access to Autonomy within the State where "the territories that in the past would have affirmatively voted in a plebiscite projects of Autonomy Statutes" (1978: 45) would get their new provisional regimes of autonomy speedily instituted. This refers to the recognition of the condition of an Autonomous community that the Republic had granted under pressure from

territories with strong identitary<sup>5</sup> and politico-juridical bodies within Spain, to Galicia, the Basque country and Catalonia. Here what is silenced is the strong popular pressure during the first transition years in these three territories to go back to the *status quo ante*, that is, to their political situation during the Republic (Ballester and Risques 2001). But while legitimating the territorial division of the democratic State in the Republican legality, it simultaneously silenced the violent destruction of that legality by a military coup and the systematic and thorough repression, for forty years, of those that upheld the legitimacy of that democratic State.

However, what is extremely revealing in the historical accounts about the transition's reconciliation process is a) the lumping of the Republic, the Civil War and Francoism as the period that had to be both remembered and superseded for democracy to emerge, and b) the de-politicisation of the Civil War and its transformation into a collective tragedy, its displacement to a moral realm of shared responsibilities: a fratricidal war (Juliá 2003). In the historical truth that developed during the transition period then, the democratic regime of the Republic was in fact the beginning of the collective 'calamity', 'catastrophe', 'disgrace', 'tragedy' that followed it, and thus viewed as part of its cause. A major historian of that period, Santos Juliá (of socialist leanings), writes:

The role that the memory of the Republic, the war and the republican defeat played during the transition period has been highlighted with good reason. Basically, that memory was used 'as a negative model by the actors of the post-Francoist transition', it showed what should not be done and warned about the obstacles that could appear in the way (Juliá 2003: 20).

On the other hand, the displacement of the Civil War to a moral realm of the general condemnation of violence, contributed actively to silencing the economic and political issues that were at stake in the conflict. Paradoxically, through the insistence on the 'shared responsibility' of both sides (the legal republican army and the rebel army of Franco) in the fratricidal war (Juliá 2003: 18-9), real causes and responsibilities are ushered away and the Francoist past is diffused. The de-politicisation of the past introduces an implicit understanding of the organic unity of the political body, and explicitly expels conflict as a political procedure from the new democratic regime instituting consensus as the only possible way to supersede the tragic and immoral past.

It is not so much that silence over the recent past history was imposed during the transition, but rather that an historical truth was construed around

---

<sup>5</sup> We use this term here to mean having to do with 'identity'.

the moral issue of violence. The foundations of democracy, on the other hand, were not related to the democratic Republic that had preceded it, but instead were seen in the political ‘maturity’ of certain elites and the economic development that unfolded during the second half of the dictatorship, in what Santos Juliá has termed a ‘proto-history’ of the transition (2003: 19) (see also Aranzadi 2001: 544).

Many tensions and struggles obscured by the transition model and its historical truth, however, have become part of the social memories of present-day political actors. Memories about ‘victims’, perpetrators and ‘crimes’. Memories of the unequal forces of social actors in the production of a consensual (for some) or forced (for others) transition, where some victims (of the Civil War, of the Francoist regime) were more victims than others. Memories of violent struggle, in the street, in the workplace, during the first two years after the death of Franco. Memories of claims and conflicts. And, further back, memories of terror, of the totalitarian closure of public politics, of the criminalisation of peripheral nationalist options and of class politics, of the discourse of the salvation of the “unity” of the country; memories of the vanquished and the victors, of the institutionalisation of repression, of the use of force against words and against practices of dissent. During a long period, through a culture of fear the public space of political debate and non-violent conflict had been destroyed, forcing dissent and struggle into violent forms of action (the Maquis, the ETA) that felt ‘justified’ by the forceful annihilation of alternative yet communicable moral orders of justice. These violent forms of struggle further ‘legitimated’ repression, in a vicious circle.

The official present-day discourse presents the totalitarian past as irrevocably gone; many people, however, feel the fragility of Spanish democracy increasingly at stake since the absolute majority of the Popular Party (Conservative).<sup>6</sup> Many others use conflicting narratives of the past to further their concrete political interests in the present. And, with regard to the Basque country in particular, anthropologists have been vocal participants in the configuration of social memories for the interpretation of present-day realities.

### **Some Ethnographic Facts**

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of November, 2000, Ernest Lluch, an economics professor at the University of Barcelona, was killed by members of the ETA Basque nationalist group. Lluch was a socialist who had been Minister of Health in the first socialist government (1982-86). Many factors contributed to highlight his

---

<sup>6</sup> The Popular Party lost the general elections of March 2004.

death from among the other recent victims of the ETA. First of all, Lluch was a “normal” citizen with whom everyone empathised. Second, Lluch was involved in finding possible solutions to the Basque conflict in particular, and more generally to the problem of the articulation of the “historical nationalities” to the Spanish State. In sum, he was perceived as a man of dialogue and peace who did not renounce his basic political principles – socialism and nationalism – and participated in political action (as a member of the socialist party and of Elkarri, a Basque nationalist peace association). Third, the timing of his death was symbolically meaningful: the day before, on the 20<sup>th</sup> of November, Spain was commemorating the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of the dictator: “25 años sin Franco” was the headline of the major newspaper *El País*. The crime itself could be read as a macabre commemoration, bringing to mind the violent acts that nostalgic rightist gangs organised every year on the 20<sup>th</sup> of November. However, this action was not a statement about the past, but a statement about the present.

Two days later, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of November, 2000, political parties, unions, the municipality of Barcelona and the autonomous government of Catalunya called a public demonstration: one million people participated in silence, bearing signs asking for “dialogue, now”. After the demonstration, political leaders, journalists, intellectuals and ordinary people started to speak of the “Lluch effect” (*El efecto Lluch*), meaning Catalan civil society’s silent cry for a political dialogue to end violence. These statements by Catalan intellectuals proudly highlighted the ‘strength’ of ‘civil society’, ‘reason’, and ‘dialogue’ (vs. ‘state power’, ‘violence’ and ‘lack of communication’) as a traditional element of national (Catalan) identity, obviating the multiple political agendas of those concurring with the demonstration, including political parties.

We want to stress, however, that underneath, around and beyond the Basque issue, the main problems today are 1) the progressive closure of the public space for political debate, 2) the increasing co-option by the executive of legislative and judicial power, 3) the extension of corporatist forms of political action, and 4) the stress on territorial forms of collective identity. In order to understand these processes and their dialectical articulation with memory and space we need to sketch out briefly the present-day political context. We will do it through a simple chronological enumeration of a few events.

**September 1998.** The Basque nationalist parties (PNV, HB, EA, IU) and other social forces (unions ELA/LAB, associations such as Elkarri) sign a declaration, *Declaración de Lizarra* (referred to as ‘Pacto de Estella’ by the Spanish nationalist parties PSOE and PP), with the objective of ending violence and working towards political sovereignty through democratic

procedures and institutions. ETA declares an indefinite truce. One year later this coalition of nationalist forces institutionalises a “Basque decision-making domain” (*Ambito Vasco de Decisión*) expressed through the creation of the Assembly of Basque Municipal Elected Representatives (*Asamblea de Electos Vascos*).

**December 1999.** ETA ends the truce. From Dec. 1999 to Dec. 2000 ETA kills 23 people. Just to get a sense of proportion, in the same period 105 immigrants die trying to get across the Gibraltar Strait and into Spain, and over a thousand workers lose their lives in labour accidents because of failure to enforce security regulations.<sup>7</sup>

**March 2000.** The Popular Party (conservative) wins the majority in the national elections. In the previous legislature the PP only had a relative majority and relied on the support of the Catalan and Basque nationalist conservative parties (CIU and PNV).

**21<sup>st</sup> of November, 2000.** ETA kills Lluçh in Barcelona.

**23<sup>rd</sup> of November, 2000.** One million people demonstrate in Barcelona asking for “dialogue, now”.

**12<sup>th</sup> of December, 2000.** The PP and the PSOE (socialist party) sign a Pact “*Acuerdo por las libertades y contra el terrorismo*”. It is a formal, extra-parliamentary statement of policies (mostly repressive) and collaboration to end terrorism. There is no acknowledgement of a “political” problem. The signatories ask for the adhesion of other parties and social institutions, such as the unions, the church, etc. in a corporatist manner.

**15<sup>th</sup> of December, 2000.** The Senate approves the new Immigration Law (Ley De Extranjería), excluding illegal immigrants from basic civil rights such as association, reunion, union membership, etc. Left parties including the moderate PSOE denounce the Law as unconstitutional.

**19<sup>th</sup> of January, 2001.** The Government (PP) grants a posthumous decoration to the Francoist police torturer Melitón Manzanas on the grounds that the ETA killed him in 1968.<sup>8</sup> A week later, the Government, in application of the same law, grants indemnity to the family of Admiral Carrero Blanco,

---

<sup>7</sup> On the 24<sup>th</sup> of April, 2001, the PP voted against all the other political parties represented in the Parliament obstructing a motion to install diverse measures in order to prevent the very high rate of labour accidents (*El País* 25-04-2001, p.52).

<sup>8</sup> The justification for this act lies in the Law of Solidarity with the Victims of Terrorism that was voted by unanimity in the Parliament in October 1999 (during ETA’s truce). However, these two decisions by the PP government were read by the left as a violation of the transition pact that culminated in the Law of Amnesty (1977) for all political crimes (including those of terrorism as well as those of state repression of political dissent during the Francoist period) that had been committed before 1977. The decoration was implicitly a violation of the Law of Amnesty.

who had been the right hand of Franco since 1951 and was vice-president of the Francoist government when ETA killed him in 1974.

**20<sup>th</sup> of February, 2001.** The *lehendakari*, President of the Basque Autonomous Community, calls for anticipated elections to be held on the 13<sup>th</sup> of May. The PNV (Basque nationalist party) wins the election.

## Memories and Words

In the debate that followed Lluçh's death and the massive demonstration asking for "dialogue", memories of the Francoist past and of the transition period were increasingly used by people of all convictions to "ground" their arguments and justify their perspectives on political processes. These memories were moreover exalted by the commemoration of "25 years without Franco". One event contributed, more than anything else, to the positioning about the present-day problem of terrorism in terms of the Francoist past: the decoration of police torturer Melitón Manzanás and his exaltation as a 'victim of terrorism'. The left also conceived it as a symbolic statement of the PP Government in reference to the legitimacy of the Francoist regime, and its interpretation of political dissent. By transforming a Francoist torturer into a decorated hero and victim of terrorism, the distinction between fighting against a dictatorship and fighting democratic institutions was blurred, and the continuity of the State was assumed (and its unity).

For the left, the decoration of Melitón Manzanás was an unconstitutional, authoritarian statement on the part of the Government (M. Carrillo, *El País* 25-01-2001), an insult to those who fought for democracy during the Franco regime, and an insult to the great sacrifices that the left was obliged to concede during the transition in order to attain democracy. In particular the left had to renounce the right to legally demand accountability for their repressive actions from those that had collaborated with the previous regime. The left also resigned to rightfully claim political continuity with political figures, parties or modes of political action that had been legitimate during the democratic regime of the Republic. This resulted in the continuity of the Francoist political elite, the military, the judiciary and the police in the new "democratic" institutions and positions (Naredo 2001).

For the Basque it was even a greater insult because Manzanás had operated in the Basque country and had directly tortured many of the present-day democratic representatives. For the Catalan nationalist historian Cullà, the political saliency of the use of terrorism as an a-political qualification of violent acts against the state and its representatives raised a delicate issue: how could one distinguish between the heroic-type violent acts of the anti-Francoist resistance of the "Maquis" in the 1960s and the terrorist-type violent acts of the killers of Melitón Manzanás or Admiral Carrero Blanco in

the same period (Cullà, *El País* 26-01-2001)? How could they at the same time be described as fighting for and against democracy while doing the same type of action in the same historical moment? The decoration stressed the unequal forces of the participants in the pact of silence (*Pacto de silencio*) that made the transition possible.

The Catalan journalist Joan Barril wrote the following in “*El Periódico*” (22-01-2001) under the title “Honour and torture”:

Honouring the torturer makes us accomplices to a practice worse than that of the terrorist that killed him, because in the terrorist lies the craziness of a few, but in torture and its acceptance lies the State. ... They fill their mouth with the word transition and they do not recognise the toads and snakes that we democrats had to swallow making believe that we did not see the interested transformation of the slaughterers of old into well-behaved deputies. We decided to forget everything, forget the prisons, the death sentences ... the TOP [Francoist Public Order Court] and the Político Social police brigade (in charge of repression). But this Government that walked without noise (*de puntillas*) over the Constitution<sup>9</sup> has now taken out of the closet the cadaver of a torturer to make it shine. In sum, the right has as much bad memory as it has bad faith (*mala leche*) (cf. also Kepa Aulestia, *La Vanguardia* 21-01-2001; Viçens Navarro, *El País* 22-02-2001).

The memories of Francoist political repression were stimulated by the medal to Manzananas in the context of the cry for “dialogue” and the refusal on the part of the Government to consider peripheral nationalist parties as legitimate participants<sup>10</sup> of a democratic State, the refusal to address the Basque problem in “political” terms, and the increasing use of exclusionary practices in their discourse regarding nationalist projects.<sup>11</sup>

### **Victims, Perpetrators and Conflicting Truths**

Two years later, on the 7<sup>th</sup> of May, 2003, during the electoral campaign for the municipal elections, in a session of a control commission of the parliament, the speaker of the PNV (Basque Nationalist Party) Anasagasti blamed the Government (PP) for disregarding a parliamentary resolution of 1999 asking the executive branch of the state to assume responsibility for the

---

<sup>9</sup> In 1978, the now President Aznar wrote several newspaper articles against the Constitution.

<sup>10</sup> See note 2.

<sup>11</sup> Most nationalist parties are legal and some (PNV, CIU in Catalonia) have received the majority of votes in the Autonomous elections.



Spanish [Francoist] government's bombing of Gernika in 1937. Among other things he said:

Yesterday Aznar [prime minister] said that we had to remember the victims, well, the victims of the bombing of Gernika have been claiming justice with a unanimous cry for 66 years now" and he added that the present-day government "does not want to remember these things (...) ETA was born during the Franco dictatorship, that some of your co-religionists (*correligionarios*) supported, and we now want this dictatorship to end". The vice-president Rajoy answered: "We have other priorities that we hope you share with us. Our priorities are that the constitutional framework, the State of Law and the judicial decisions be respected; that democracy reaches the remotest villages (...). We are preoccupied with what is happening now or may happen in the future. We have sought your support for the victims of ETA and you have refused it; your first priority should be that there are no more victims" (El País, 8-05-2003).

As is clear from this quote, the concept of 'victims' is loaded with the diverse memories and the silencing of the past history of Spain, and very specifically the history of the Civil War and the repression that followed it. As is also clear, the question of who were and who are victims refers to the legitimacy of the present-day democratic regime and even to the voiced suspicion that in some way the dictatorship has not yet ended. The Basque nationalist speaker establishes a relationship between the silenced victims of the bombing of Gernika and the origins of ETA on the one hand and, implicitly, between the silencing of a particular history (and past political responsibilities) and the present-day victims of terrorist violence on the other. That relationship with the past history of Spain is explicitly refused by the PP vice-president of the Government that speaks only of present-day victims (explicitly of ETA) and of avoiding future ones. Both are producing particular narratives of the past through silencing and remembering. However, actual victims are not only part of narratives but have been and still are part of a brutal reality.

The different narratives of recent Spanish history present victims in a very different light: victims and perpetrators exchange roles in the discourses of the victors or the vanquished of the Civil War. Moreover, the forms of memory and silencing of those victims occupy very distinct spaces of the public arena.

For example, victims of the 'Red terror' during the first months of the Civil War, until the Republican government regained judicial control of the situation and stopped the illegal killings of presumed right-wing collaborators with the rebellion, were transformed into so-called 'martyrs' (and some

have been eventually canonised by Pope John Paul II) by the victors and commemorated publicly in every village in Spain for forty years (these sites of memory, decorated with crosses and fascist symbols, can still be seen at the entrance of churches today, the most relevant being the Cruz de los Caídos near Madrid, that dominates the entire landscape). Their martyrdom for the cause of Christianity and political order was inscribed in all school history textbooks until the end of the regime in 1975. Perpetrators of the 'Red terror' were killed in retaliation by falangist squads in the Francoist rearguard or were summarily tried and sentenced to death or life imprisonment after the war.

On the side of the victims of the 'Fascist terror', where the violence was perpetrated by falangist squads with the open support of the rebel forces during the war and after it by the 'legitimate' forces of the State, victims were never consecrated, mourning was forbidden by law, public memory was forcefully silenced and even private memory within families was often silenced in order to protect the survivors. Although located in known sites all over the Spanish landscape, the mass graves where many missing victims lie were never acknowledged or opened until after the death of Franco, and many are still undisclosed (Silva and Macías 2003; Reig Tapia 1990 for an account of the victims on both sides). Perpetrators were never brought to justice during or after the death of Franco thanks to the Amnesty that was granted in 1977 by the transition government of Suárez.

In the last years Spain has witnessed a flood of books, memoirs and TV programmes about the years of repression from the perspective of the vanquished. But the framework of the historical truth forged during the transition tends to actively de-politicise the impact of past realities in the present, except for their use by some parties as an instrument of democratic discredit during election periods. As a result, these works have not had an impact on the political consciousness of a majority of the population. While they do contribute to a general consciousness that 'justice is being made' through the exposure of that reality, of those crimes perpetrated by the victors, they do not contribute to produce a memory of the actual conflicts and political forms of action that prevailed in the past, of how politics was made in the past, who engaged in what sorts of political activities, what modalities of conflict were then open and in what way the transition highlighted some and silenced others. In sum the entrenched historical truth of the transition silences the political significance of the vanquished as precisely being part of a past of conflictive realities and diverse confrontational procedures.

Present-day victims of terrorism are interpreted in three distinct moral frameworks that, moreover, have changed through the years in relation to the

changing strategies of ETA and the historical and political developments. A first framework makes a clear distinction between the victims of ETA's actions during the dictatorship and those that occurred after the transition. For example in this framework, the deaths of Melitón Manzanas and of vice-president Carrero Blanco are not equivalent to the death of Lluç. In the second framework, these deaths are all equalised as being innocent victims of ETA's criminal activities disregarding the political context of their occurrence, a de-politicisation in line with the transition morality of shared responsibilities (thus emphasising the universality and a-historicity of possible targets, referring to a general humanist framework of 'the right to life', to a universal moral condemnation of violence). Those supporting the first framework, however, do join the latter in their moral valuation of the post-transitional activities of ETA. Yet a third framework (that of extreme Basque nationalist activists) does not see a rupture in the transition and would interpret ETA's actions today also as a 'fight for freedom'.

What these various interpretations of the 'victims' bring to the fore is the tension between politics and morality, and the equation of democracy with a universal morality that excludes violent political conflict, and in the Spanish case seems to exclude the possibility of political conflict in general. Moreover, the constant focus on ETA victims by the politicians and the media helps to obscure the existence of other 'victims' of repressive or anti-social policies such as immigrants, workers, etc. This produces a paradoxical effect of de-politicising real life through the saturation of public discourse with a political problem that is denied its political entity and transmuted into a moral issue.

### **Truth and Incommensurability of Political Moralities**

The demand for 'dialogue' in the Barcelona demonstration after Lluç's death was immediately dismissed by the government. Refusal of the dialogue proposed by the Catalan civil society was based on two premises: a) the de-legitimisation of all nationalist political projects (as being unconstitutional) and b) the military strategy against terrorism. In an interview (*La Vanguardia* 26-11-2000), the Minister of the Interior Jaime Mayor Oreja (in 2001 the PP's candidate to the Presidency of the Autonomous Basque Community) speaks of "dialogue" in military terms. The dialogue is an "ambush" (by the nationalists in order to attain political objectives, i.e. sovereignty), one has to "distinguish between peace and cowardice", the government "cannot have any doubts nor hesitations in its fight against terrorism", the

government must “attain peace without surrender and rendition”.<sup>12</sup> Thus state violence against threats to the ‘unity of the nation is legitimated’.

However, the enemy is increasingly and explicitly not ETA but the conservative Basque nationalist party (PNV) as the major (and democratic) representative of nationalism, and the battlefield in this case was the autonomous elections to be held in May 2001.<sup>13</sup> The problem is that delegitimisation of nationalist options is re-creating a strong division between “peripheral nationalism” and “central nationalism, *españolismo*”, which is referred to by those supporting it as ‘constitutionalism’ (opposing ‘nationalism’). This in turn strongly recalls some of the confrontational positions during the Republic that were used as one of the main arguments in Franco’s ‘Crusade for the salvation of the unity of Spain’. The result is a re-construction of political space in terms of territorial and identity notions, around the contrast between central (Spanish) and peripheral nationalism (Catalan, Basque), obscuring other struggles set in terms of exploitation and exclusionary practices.<sup>14</sup> In this process, as was clear in the Declaration of Lizarra and in the centralist “*Acuerdo por las libertades y contra el terrorismo*”, organic<sup>15</sup> forms of political expression pervade political life, reducing political complexity to a mere confrontational duality set in terms of a homogeneous, often corporatist, political identity. The legitimacy of conflict within a liberal pluralist democracy is thus substituted by various notions of ‘organic democracy’ (Mann 1999).

---

<sup>12</sup> This militaristic perspective sadly recalls Franco’s declaration of victory that was hung in every village plaza in Spain during the dictatorship: “En el día de hoy, cautivo y desarmado el Ejército Rojo, han alcanzado las tropas nacionales sus últimos objetivos militares. La guerra ha terminado” (F. Franco, 1939: I-IV).

<sup>13</sup> The same discourse has resurfaced with increasing force, adding to it, in the campaign for the 2003 municipal elections, the threat of a supposed ‘social-communist’ coalition that recalls the Popular Front that won the February 1936 elections and ‘caused’ (and implicitly ‘justified’) the national-catholic military rebellion four months later leading to the Civil War.

<sup>14</sup> Thus in Catalunya, many voices point out the “pactist” and dialoguing tradition of “the Catalans” expressed in the anti-Francoist inter-class alliance of the Assamblea de Catalunya, and forgetting the violent class struggles that have pervaded political life.

<sup>15</sup> We take the definition of an ‘organic’ form of democracy from Michael Mann (1999): “... I distinguish two rather different ‘peoples’ implicit in democratic practice; a *stratified* and an *organic* people. Whereas both tend to conceptualise ‘foreigners’ as ‘others’, the organic people may also exclude many persons who might otherwise be considered citizens. If the people or nation is conceived of as being internally stratified, the state’s main role is to mediate and conciliate amongst its competing interest groups. Such a state preserves diversity among its citizens’ body and so is relatively unlikely to encourage ethnic and political cleansing among it. Yet, if the people or nation are conceived of as organic, as a ‘perfect union, one and inseparable’ (as in The American Creed), then some leaders and movements may be tempted to seek to enhance the ‘purity’ of the organic people or nation by suppressing the real-world diversity of its seeming members” (pp. 31-2).

The major expression of memories of the past in the present debate arises around the increasing definition of the present political situation as “fascist” and “totalitarian”, and in the reference to “fear” (*miedo*) as the main component of the political environment in the Basque country. These terms are used by the government (PP), by Basque socialist politicians (Redondo, *El País* 9-03-2001) and by intellectuals (Savater, *El País* 14-12-2000; Arteta, *El País* 15-12-2000) to qualify the situation that ETA’s terrorism has produced in the Basque country. According to these accounts, in the Basque country people are afraid to voice their opinion, and have to conceal their ideas or walk around with personal guards for fear of being killed, or harassed by the street vandalism (*Kale borroka*) of nationalist youth gangs. The tension thus created by repeated acts of violence that pervade everyday life creates fear, a culture of fear that annihilates public political space, and can be defined as “fascism”. In these accounts, fascism is presented as the inherent result of the nationalist drive toward hegemony within the Basque territory, a process that is described as creating an insidious and pervasive form of violence and the closure of the public political space.<sup>16</sup>

In the discourses of the centralist Spanish-nationalists (PP and PSOE, but not PSC – the Catalan branch of the socialist party – nor a part of the PSE – the Basque branch of the socialist party), individual freedom is opposed to fascism; individual rights are opposed to collective rights; constitutionalism is opposed to nationalism; democracy is opposed to totalitarianism, and the rule of Law (based in a universalistic morality of individual Human Rights) is opposed to dialogue. In Catalunya and the Basque country, how-

---

<sup>16</sup> In an article titled “Between fascism and freedom” the socialist candidate to the position of Lehendakari, Nicolás Redondo Terreros (the son of a famous anti-Francoist fighter, and key figure of the transition through his control of the socialist union UGT) writes: “Fascism is not the exclusive result of a radicalised and minority group, that we might call terrorism; fascism extends like oil, when fright, fear, seclusion of freedom transcends into the whole of society through social, religious, political groups and even elements in power. (...) We have a nationalism that has not wanted to defend democracy and freedom that are materialised in the Constitution and in the Estatuto; it has refused both and it thinks that crying for dialogue with the terrorists, with secession as the background for that dialogue, justifies its condition of governing party” (*El País* 9-03-01, see also Savater, *El País* 14-12-2000).

While President Aznar, the grandson of Manuel Aznar, a notorious Francoist collaborator, declares: “I want to remind everyone that the terrorists want the constitution of a totalitarian State where those that do not agree integrally with its postulates would be refused civil rights. (...) With conviction I declare that I will not participate in a dialogue if what is meant through that dialogue is to break the constitutional and statutory framework (...); to accept, as does nationalism, that there is a supposed political conflict that directly or indirectly legitimates terrorism (...). We are celebrating 25 years of a collective success. At the same time 25 years of the demise of a totalitarian project. Each stands in its place: some defending liberties and others denying them with pistols...” (*El País* 25-11-2000).

ever, nationalist parties and various other social groups<sup>17</sup> vindicate their capacity *both* to be democrats and to have a nationalist project, including sovereignty-seeking projects.<sup>18</sup> Meanwhile the heirs of the 'Communist' Party (Izquierda Unida, Iniciativa per Catalunya, etc.) voice the occluding process that sets all conflict in terms of 'nationalist' confrontation and 'sovereignty' issues instead of highlighting other social conflicts (namely neo-liberal policies affecting workers, and exclusionary policies affecting immigrants' rights and producing a segmented market in identity modes increasing exploitation generally, etc.)

### Conclusion: Truth, Violence and Conflict

Dialogue seems to be the dividing line between two different styles of dealing with political conflict in Spain. On one side is a paradoxical denial of political 'conflict', its exclusion from the arena of public legitimate politics and its inclusion into illegitimate politics (fascism) and criminal procedures (terrorism), that is its definition as 'violence'. On the other side is an attempt to open without restriction the arena of public politics. Dialogue implies communication, that is commensurability or the implied possibility of reaching an abstract level where equivalencies can be produced and justice can be achieved (Boltanski 1990). Violence is confrontation outside the possibility of reaching any level of equivalence, confrontation in a realm of incommensurable regimes of truth:

It is the impossibility to converge towards a principle of equivalence that makes the difference between the dispute in violence from the dispute in justice. The dispute in violence sets itself outside equivalency (Boltanski 1990: 111).

For Boltanski the other extreme is the regime of pure love (*agapè*) which also sets itself outside equivalence (1990: 114-5). It is interesting to recall that although apparently in conflicting positions in their political engagements, Basque anthropologists Zulaika (1990, 1991, 1993) and Aranzadi (1981, 1993, 2001) both recount confrontation as situated in a sacred realm of unnegotiable practices (sacrament, milenarism, ritual) based on unnegotiable faith (particular collective identity, individual universal rights). However both of them sense, in the concrete cases they use<sup>19</sup> the verbalised

---

<sup>17</sup> Elkarri or Fòrum Cívic pel Diàleg and some strands of socialists Odon Elorza, Maragall, Solé Tura.

<sup>18</sup> Conservative Basque nationalists of the PNV recall their fight for the Republic and their resistance against Franco during the dictatorship as historical credentials of their democratic spirit, something, they add that is not in the Popular Party's pedigree.

<sup>19</sup> Buesa's widow for Aranzadi; his own mother for Zulaika.

reactions of people close to particular victims, that there is a gap between 'reality', the violent action that results in the death of a particular person, and 'truth', the discursive regimes that 'make sense' of it and construct it as part of a coherent whole. Thus Aranzadi quotes (*El Correo* 13-07-2001) the widow of Fernando Buesa (a socialist), emphatically saying "My husband did not give his life, it was taken away from him", in an attempt to protect him from the position of 'martyr' that the PP gives to the victims of ETA. Or, Zulaika's mother says "But how is this possible?" when witnessing the death of a close neighbour in an action of ETA, expressing the refractory unmanageability of reality (Zulaika 1990). 'Reality' will unavoidably enter a particular regime of truth or be forgotten and exit the present; however the process of transforming reality into truth is laden with political conflict and is seldom definitively settled. Lluch's daughters forbidding politicians from the PP (that is, who explicitly opposed their father's political agenda) to march with them or to 'use' their father's death for their own political agenda is a case in point; by these acts they attempt to control the political uses of the victim as 'martyr of a cause'.

Fascism and terrorism, as expressed in a culture of fear predicated on violence that is both material and ideological, and in corporatist forms of politics and totalitarianism, as a practice excluding political dissent and conflict, are qualifications that are not confined to descriptions of the environment in the Basque country, created by the ETA and *Kale borroka* actions. They can be used as well to describe the exclusionary and oppressive environment created by the government which affects such diverse social groups as immigrants, workers, squatters, nationalist parties in and out of the Basque country, environmentalist, peasants and in general those that harbour political dissent for various reasons, mostly related with access to resources and civil rights.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> In an interview (*La Vanguardia* 26-04-2001) Mercedes García (Asociación de Mujeres Progresistas del Ejido), speaking of the pogrom-like events of the 5<sup>th</sup> of February, 2000 against North African immigrants in the PP governed town of El Ejido, Almería, declares: "In the municipality of El Ejido another racist outburst is being plotted by the local media controlled by the local PP and the mayor, and with the complicity of the entrepreneurs of Agroponiente. ... Entrepreneurs benefit [from this situation] because they repress any form of association or claim among the immigrants...the mayor is their accomplice because he impedes integration and promotes racism. He knocks down their houses without giving them a place to live, he knocked down their mosque, for example. He creates an atmosphere of social alarm through his local Television channel and in the street: frequently immigrants are accused of non-existent crimes. ... During the events of the 5<sup>th</sup> of February, my family had to escape and hide, they came for us. Since then the mayor has tried to make our lives difficult. There is fear in the town. Where do the baseball bats come from if we never played the game? The brother of the mayor went around distributing cell-phones to the attackers. There was a preconceived plan to impose terror...Fascism has occupied the street in El Ejido".

What seems important to highlight here is that the hegemonic regime of truth is increasingly expelling 'conflict' and substituting it with 'violence' in the accounts of political reality. The consequence is that confrontation appears then set outside equivalence, beyond negotiable justice in a realm of incommensurable moralities. For the idea and practice of democracy this means a shift from 'liberal democracy' based in the idea of conflict and negotiable justice, to 'organic democracy' based in the corporate solidarity of the political body and the trivialisation of conflict (TV debates, elections) or its exclusion from legitimate political practice (violence) (Mann 1999; see also Mouffe 2000).<sup>21</sup> On a methodological level, what this paper seeks to present is the tension between 'reality' and 'truth', between our work as anthropologists producing knowledge but engaged in political reality and the construction of historical truth.

## References

- Aranzadi, J. Víctimas y Voces. *El Correo*, 13-07-2001.  
 ———. 1981. *Milenarismo Vasco. Edad de Oro, Etnia y Nativismo*. Madrid: Taurus.  
 ———. 1993. Sangre Simbólica e Impostura Antropológica. *Antropología* 6: 65-96.  
 ———. 2001. *El Escudo de Arquíloco. Sobre Mesías, Mártires y Terroristas*. Madrid: A. Machado Libros.  
 Arteta, A. 2000. ¿De Pie o de Rodillas? *El País*, 15-12-2000.  
 Aulestia, K. 2001. Mirar Hacia Atrás. *La Vanguardia*, 21-01-2001.

---

<sup>21</sup> Violence is defined in the Collins English dictionary as "the exercise or an instance of physical force, usually effecting or intended to effect injuries, destruction, etc.; powerful, untamed, or devastating force: the violence of the sea; great strength of feeling, as in language, etc.; fervour; an unjust, unwarranted, or unlawful display of force, especially such as tends to overawe or intimidate; do violence to inflict harm upon; damage or violate: they did violence to the prisoners to distort or twist the sense or intention of: the reporters did violence to my speech [C13: via Old French from Latin violentia impetuosity, from violentus VIOLENT]". Conflict is defined as "a struggle or clash between opposing forces; battle; a state of opposition between ideas, interests, etc.; disagreement or controversy; a clash, as between two appointments made for the same time; Psychological opposition between two simultaneous but incompatible wishes or drives, sometimes leading to a state of emotional tension and thought to be responsible for neuroses; to come into opposition; clash; to fight [C15: from Latin conflictus, from confligere to combat, from fligere to strike]". It is apparent from these standard definitions that while conflict is set in the realm of rationality and justice, violence is set in the realm of natural forces, irrationality and injustice.



- Aznar, J. M. 2000. Texto de la Declaración del Presidente del Gobierno. *El País*, 25-11-2000.
- Ballester, D. and M. Risques. 2001. *Temps d'amnistia. Les Manifestacions de l'1 i el 8 de Febrer a Barcelona*. Barcelona: Edicions 62.
- Barber, B. R. 1987. Democracy. In D. Miller (ed.), *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Political Thought*, pp. 114-117. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Barril, J. 2001. Honor y Tortura. *El Periódico*, 22-01-2001.
- Bermeo, N. 1997. Myths of Moderation: Confrontation and Conflict during Democratic Transitions. *Comparative Politics* 29 (3): 305-322.
- Bermúdez, X. 1992. Abstención ¿Para qué? *Archipiélago* 9: 68-70.
- Bobbio, N. 1989. *Democracy and Dictatorship: The Nature and Limits of State Power*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press
- Boltanski, L. 1990. *L'Amour et la Justice Comme Competences*. Paris: Éditions Métailié.
- Carrillo, M. 2001. La Condecoración Ignora la Constitución. *El País* 25-01-2001.
- Constitución Española*. 1978. Aprobada por las Cortes el 31 de Octubre de 1978. Referendum Nacional 6 de Diciembre.
- Cullà, J. B. 2001. De Héroes y Terroristas. *El País*, 26-01-2001.
- El País*, 25-04-2001.
- El País*, 08-05-2003.
- Foucault, M. 1981. *Un Dialogo Sobre el Poder y Otras Conversaciones*. Madrid: Alianza.
- Ibáñez, J. 1992. Nada Para el Pueblo, Pero sin el Pueblo. *Archipiélago* 9: 59-67.
- Juliá, S. 2003. Echar al Olvido. Memoria y Amnistía en la Transición. *Claves de Razón Práctica* 129: 14-24.
- La Vanguardia*, 26-11-2000 [interview with Mayor Oreja].
- La Vanguardia*, 26-04-2001.
- Mann, M. 1999. The Dark Side of Democracy: The Modern Tradition of Ethnic and Political Cleansing. *New Left Review* 235: 28-45.
- Molinero, C., and P. Ysàs. 1998. *Productores Disciplinados y Minorías Subversivas. Clase Obrera y Conflictividad Laboral en la España Franquista*. Madrid: Siglo XXI de España Editores.
- Mouffe, C. 2000. *The Democratic Paradox*. London: Verso.
- Naredo, J. M. 2001 [1992]. Ilusión Democrática y Decepción Política en la España Postfranquista (1976-1992). In J. M. Naredo, *Por una Oposición que se Oponga*, pp. 149-177. Barcelona: Editorial Anagrama.
- Navarro, V. 2001. *El País*, 22-02-2001.
- Pérez Royo, J. 2003. Callejón sin Salida. *El País*, 17-06-2003.

- Preston, P. 1986. *The Triumph of Democracy in Spain*. London: Methuen.
- Redondo Terreros, N. 2001. Entre el Fascismo y la Libertad. *El País*, 9-03-2001.
- Reig Tapia, A. 1990. *Violencia y Terror. Estudios Sobre la Guerra Civil Española*. Madrid: Akal.
- Savater, F. 2000. Alocución de Estrasburgo. *El País*, 14-12-2000.
- Silva, E., and S. Macías. 2003. *Las Fosas de Franco*. Madrid: Temas de Hoy.
- Zulaika, J. 1990. *Violencia Vasca. Metáfora y Sacramento*. Madrid: Nerea.
- . 1991c. Reyes, Políticos, Terroristas: La Función Ritual de ETA en Relación al Nacionalismo Vasco. In C. L. Tolosana (ed.), *Antropología de los Pueblos del Norte de España*, pp. 217-230. Madrid: Universidad Complutense de Madrid.
- . 1993. Violencia, Texto y Parodia. *Antropología* 6: 37-64.



## Contributors

**John Eidson** is a researcher at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle. His published research to date has addressed various aspects of local and regional life in modern Germany, including civil society, the politics of identity, social memory, agrarian transition and changing rural property relations. Under the working title, *Thrice Told Tales*, he is currently completing a manuscript about the representation of history in the public sphere of a German “home town”.

**Paola Filippucci** is a Lecturer at the Department of Social Anthropology, University of Cambridge. She has conducted research in urban Northern Italy on the role of the past in perceptions of place, see e.g. ‘Acting Local: Two Performances in North-East Italy’ in M. Crang and S. Coleman (eds.) 2002, *Tourism: Between Place and Performance*, Oxford: Berghahn Books. Her more recent research in North-Eastern France concerns perceptions of ‘cultural heritage’, of the historic and archaeological past and of landscape.

**Paloma Gay y Blasco** trained as an anthropologist in Cambridge where she also was a Junior Research Fellow at Girton College from 1995 until 1998. After teaching at Queen’s University Belfast, she moved to the Department of Social Anthropology, University of St. Andrews. Her book *Gypsies in Madrid: Sex, Gender and the Performance of Identity* came out in 1997. She is currently writing a second Gitano book, and with Huon Wardle a textbook monograph on the place of ethnographic writing within anthropology.

**Haldis Haukanes** received her doctorate in Social Anthropology from the University of Bergen in 1999. She is currently a senior researcher at the Centre for Women’s and Gender Research at the University of Bergen. She is the author of the book *Velká Dramata – Běžné Životy. Postkomunistická na Českém Venkově* (Grand Dramas, Ordinary Lives. Postcommunist Experiences in the Czech Countryside, SLON 2004), and the editor of *Women after Communism. Ideal Images – Real Lives* (University of Bergen, 2001), as well as various articles based on her Czech research.

**Deema Kaneff** received her PhD from the University of Adelaide and was a post-doctoral fellow at Cambridge before taking up her current position as a researcher at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle. She has carried out extensive research in Bulgaria during the socialist and postsocialist periods, and published widely on this material, including *Who Owns the Past? The Politics of Time in a ‘Model’ Bulgarian Village*, Berghahn, 2004. She has also carried out fieldwork in Ukraine and is currently writing up this material, focusing on issues of property and inequality.

**Carolyn Leutloff-Grandits** is a PhD candidate at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle. She has done research on property conflicts and community building in the former war area in Croatia and has recently published ‘Claiming Ownership in Post-War Croatia: The Emotional Dynamics of Possession

and Repossession in Knin' in *Focaal* 39, 2002; and 'Coping with Economic Devastation. Agriculture in Post-War Knin, Croatia' in C. Hann and the "Property relations" Group, *The Postsocialist Agrarian Question: Property Relations and the Rural Condition*, Münster: LIT Verlag 2003.

**Paz Moreno** is Profesor Titular (Associate Professor) of Social Anthropology at the Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED), Madrid. With Susana Narotzky she has co-authored 'Reciprocity's Dark Side. Negative Reciprocity, Morality and Social Reproduction' (2002) in *Anthropological Theory*. She is a member of the research group "Culturas de la responsabilidad en los ámbitos económico y político: moralidad, reciprocidad y circulación de recursos", Programa Nacional de Promoción General del Conocimiento, Ministerio de Ciencia y Tecnología, Spain.

**Susana Narotzky** is Profesor Titular (Associate Professor) of Social Anthropology at the Universitat de Barcelona. She is co-author (with Gavin Smith) of 'Being 'Político' in Spain. An Ethnographic Account of Memories, Silences and Public Politics' (2002) in *History & Memory*, and of an ethnography *Immediate Struggles: People, Power and Place in Rural Spain* (forthcoming). Her last book is *La Antropología de los Pueblos de España. Historia, Cultura y Lugar* (2001). She is Project Leader of the research group "Culturas de la responsabilidad en los ámbitos económico y político", Ministerio de Ciencia y Tecnología, Spain.

**Vlad Naumescu** was trained as a psychologist in Bucharest and obtained his MA in cultural anthropology at the National School of Administrative and Political Studies, Bucharest. He is a PhD candidate at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology currently undertaking research in Western Ukraine and Romania on issues related to the revival of Greek Catholic communities in both countries. His interests cover the field of anthropology of religion and possible interactions between anthropology and psychology.

**Frances Pine** received her PhD from the London School of Economics. She has done research in Poland, during and since the socialist period. Between 1988 and 2001 she taught in the Anthropology Department at Cambridge. Currently a researcher at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle and professor at the Centre for Women's and Gender Research at the University of Bergen, she is involved in research on exclusion and inclusion in contemporary eastern Europe. She is the co-editor of *Surviving Post Socialism: Local Strategies and Regional Responses in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union*, and has published widely on eastern Europe, kinship, gender and work and economic change.

**Giovanni Pizza** of the Sezione antropologica of the Dipartimento Uomo & Territorio, Università degli studi di Perugia, has a PhD and is a full researcher, and lecturer in Medical Anthropology at the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy and at the Faculty of Medicine. He did fieldwork in southern Italy and in Romania, on illness and

religious symbolism, embodiment, spirit possession, cultural production. His works include *Figure della corporeità in Europe* (Rome 1998); *European ethnology meetings* (Napoli, 1998, with C. Papa and F. M. Zerilli [eds.]); *La ricerca antropologica in Romania* (Napoli, 2003, with C. Papa and F. M. Zerilli [eds.]).

**Tanya Richardson** has done research in various sites in Ukraine and is currently is completing her doctoral dissertation in the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of Cambridge on history, place and nation-building in Odessa.

**Galia Valtchinova** has a PhD in History and is currently a senior research fellow at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. Between 1989 and 1999 she lectured in ethnology and anthropology at several Bulgarian Universities. Since 1995 Galia has conducted fieldwork in Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia exploring issues of religion and identity. She has published a book titled *Local Religion and Identity in Western Bulgaria* (Sofia 1999), as well as various papers in international journals. Her current research is focused on religious mediations in processes of social change and violence in Balkan Orthodox cultures.

**Ina Vogelsang** is associate researcher in the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of Manchester. On completion of her PhD thesis in 2002 she gained a postdoctoral fellowship from the ESRC. She is currently engaged in furthering her research on remembrance and on forced and voluntary population movement.



# Index

- acceleration of history 14
- amnesia 8, *see also* forgetting, silence
- Annales School 9n
- Anne Frank 16
- anthropology/ical 6, 7, 8, 24, 138n, 140n, 199-203, 203n, 205n, 206, 210, 212-3, 219, 273n, 289, 289n; identity 203, 203n, 219; involvement in local (political-cultural) processes 24, 135, 204, 206, 207-10, 215-9, 215n, 274, 289-90; Italian 199-202, 207-10, 210-2, 213, 218-9; and memory 9, 20, 24, 135, 201, 203, 204n, 206, 208, 210, 274
- Antze, P. 8; and Lambek, M. 32n
- Aranzadi, J. 273n, 289n, 290
- art of memory 9, 139
- Assmann, J. 14-5
- Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit* 59n, *see also* past, coming to terms with
- authorities 39, 73, 76, 94, 96-7, 103, 106, 162, 164, 168, 215
  
- Badone, E. 140n
- Bakhtin, M. 4, 15, 95
- Bal, M. 19
- Bartlett, F. 18
- Basque 18, *see also* Spain; ETA
- belief 5, 75, 127, 143n, 150, 157-9, 160n, 162-4, 165n, 165-7, 169-75
- Benjamin, W. 15, 19-20, 20n
- Berlin 17, 19, 73
- Bloch, Marc 9n, 10
- Bloch, Maurice 9
- blood feuds, *see* Gitanos
- Boas, F. 202
- Boltanski, L. 289
- borders 36, 49, 50-1, 143n, 172, 231n, 248, 249-50
  
- Bourdieu, P. 83, 203n; and J. C. Passeron 112, 129
- Boyarín, J. 3, 33
- Brezhnev, L. 123, 161, 163, 167, 175
- Bulgaria/n 5, 153, 179-197 *passim*; history 179, 180n, 183, 185, 190-5, 191n, 192n, 193n; identity 24, 179, 180, 183n, 188, 190, 192, 193n, 194, 195; Institute of Suggestology 182, 185, 189; Orthodox church 183, 185, 194; religion 5, 23-4, 179, 180, 183, 186, 188-9, 190, 191n, 194; and socialism 179, 181n, 182-3, 183n, 185-6, 188, 188n, 190-5; thracology 190-1, 191n, 193; value of historians 191, 191n; Zhivkova, L. 191, 191n, *see also* popular religion
- burials 137-8, 138n, 146-8, 146n, 147n, 169, 172, *see also* funerals
  
- Carpitella, D. 204-5, 215
- Catholic church 5, 64-5, 66, 73-4, 73n, 78, 81-2, 85, 119, 137-8, 141-51, 153-4, 142n, 143n, 145n, 147n, 150n, 199-200, 232-3, 234, 235-43, 236n, *see also* Greek Catholic, Roman Catholic
- Centre Party (Zentrum) 65-6, 65n, 85
- Christian Democrat 66, 75, 82, 85
- Christian/ity 4, 5, 73n, 86, 139-40, 140n, 143n, 148-9, 159, 161, 169-70, 172-3, 172n, 175, 184, 188n; domestication of 134; history of 139-40, 159; as ideology 139; martyrs 140; relation to memory 139-40
- civil war 7, 173, 189, 259, 274, 277, 278-9, 284, 287n
- clairvoyant 23, 179, 183n, 185, 186, 194, *see also* seer



- cognition and memory 9, 18-20  
 Cohen, A. 231, 232  
 Collard, A. 7  
 collective memory 2, 9-11, 14-6, 23, 140  
 collectivisation 97-102, 104, 105, 107, 127n, 174n; opposition to 98, 127n, 174n  
 Cole, J. 9, 18  
 commemoration(s) 3, 6, 10-1, 14, 16, 17, 18-9, 24, 31, 35, 39, 42, 43, 44, 46, 60, 79, 127, 139, 140, 141, 151, 151n, 154, 159, 170-3, 179, 187-8, 194-5, 226; of the dead 23, 24, 35, 39, 42, 43, 44, 137, 139-40, 140n, 141, 170-3, 170n, 174, 187-8, 194-5, 246-7, 260-3, 284-5; religious 139-41, 151, 179, 194, *see also* religion, seer  
 commodification 201  
 communism/communist 2, 5, 6, 7, 10, 17, 20, 22, 23, 86, 93, 94, 96, 97, 98, 99, 104, 106, 114, 118, 121, 127, 137, 142, 143, 145, 148, 149, 152, 152n, 157, 158, 159n, 160n, 162-7, 163n, 168, 169, 169n, 170, 173, 179, 181, 191, 277, 287n, 289  
 Communist Party 65n, 66, 97, 100, 102, 104, 105, 106, 114, 114n, 127, 142, 159n, 165n, 166, 181, 191, 289  
 community/ies 54, 62, 64, 66, 67, 69, 73, 77, 79, 81, 85, 101, 109, 111-2, 113, 116, 117, 118, 123, 129, 130, 137-9, 138n, 140, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 147n, 148, 149-50, 150n, 151, 153, 154, 186, 188, 193n, 195, 206, 207, 210, 213, 217; imagined 109, 112, 118; the importance of festivals/rituals for 188n, 194  
 conflict 3, 35, 37, 40, 46, 49, 53, 54, 81, 99, 101-2, 125, 130, 138, 212, 215-9, 291, 291n  
 Connerton, P. 9, 10-11  
 converts/non-converts, *see* evangelism, Gitano, religion  
 counter memory 1, 3, 8, 16, 143, 152  
 Crimea 15, *see also* socialism, Soviet, Soviet Union  
 Croatia 15, 24, 226, 229-50; and Catholic church 230, 232, 233, 235-43, 241n; identity 229; immigrants/newcomers/refugees 234, 238, 240, 245, 249; nationalism 226, 237, 239, 245, 248, 249n; nationalist parties 235; and Serb relations 24, 232-5, 233n, 236, 238, 239-40, 241, 242-3, 244-6, 244n, 247, 249; Serbs in 226, 229, 229n, 234-5, 236n, 243-8  
 cult of St. Paul, *see* tarantismo  
 cultural producers/production 200, 201, 201n, 202  
 culture 14-8  
 Czechoslovakia 21, 22, 32, 93, 95, 96, 96n, 97, 99, 102, 103, 105, 106; 1968 invasion 97, 102-4, 105, 107, 190  
 dance 161, 199, 200n, 201, 204-5, 207, 211, 213, 214, *see also* tarantismo  
 dead/death 24, 41, 54, 137, 138, 139, 140, 140n, 141, 140n, 163, 168, 170-3, 172n, 174, 184, 186-8, 187n, 192, 194-5; bodies 6, 137; commemoration 7, 35, 39, 40, 42-3, 44, 187-8; communication with 23-4, 184, 186-7, 192-4; and gender 187-8, 194; memory 139-41, 168, 170-4, *see also* seer  
 de Martino, E. 24, 199-217, 200n, 204n, 205n, 215, 217; "cultural fatherlands" 202-3; revitalisation 202, 203, 204, 205; as symbol 201, 202-5  
 democracy 115, 227, 274, 275-6,

- 276n, 277, 278, 279, 283, 286, 287, 287n, 288, 291; and Tocqueville 276
- detotalitarianism 2n
- dialogical 95, 106
- dictatorship 152, *see also* Spain
- disciplining 112, 112n, 119, 125, 129-30
- displacement 42
- domination 94, 106-7, 111
- Durkheim, E. 10, 11, 15
- education 22-3, 66, 83, 95, 96, 104, 109-10, 112, 114-5, 114n, 115n, 119-20, 129-30, 139, 141, 153, 166; reeducation of Roma 258, 260; schools 53, 60, 64, 66, 67, 68, 73, 76-7, 85, 96n, 98, 100, 102; and state history 109-10, 114-5, 115n, 119-20, 130
- Eliot, T. S. 1, 19
- elite 24, 64, 65n, 82, 85, 138, 152, 153, 158, 173, 182, 183, 186, 191, 279; intellectual 182, 183, 186, 191-2; Party 183, 191-2, 275, 276-7, 279, 282; religious 138, 153, 266, *see also* Communist Party
- embodiment/embodied practices 10, 18, 143, 154
- ethnographic memory, *see* memory, ethnographic
- ETA, *see* Spain
- Evangelical, Evangelism 21, 25, 139, 148, 226, 256, 258, 268, 271; anti-feuding 267, 268, 269; changing Gitano way of life 269-71; converts and the past 264-6, 269-70; Gitano converts 25, 256, 257, 258, 259, 264-70; and prestige allocation 264, 268, 269; transcending kinship relations 266-8
- exile 23, 146, 148
- fascism 2, 2n, 7, 10, 15, 20, 276, 285, 287-8, 288n, 290
- Febvre, L. 9n
- First World War 3, 7, 16, 20, 22, 31, 32, 35, 37-9, 42-54, 71, 72, 82, 104, 109n, 110
- folk culture 5, 69
- food 45, 71, 100-1, 127n, 160-1, 161n, 168, 170-2, 170n, 174, *see also* Soviet
- forgetting 1, 13, 17, 24, 25, 35, 124, 124n, 135, 143n, 151, 171, 227, 260, *see also* amnesia, memory
- Foucault, M. 8, 12n, 105, 111-2, 111n, 129, 152n
- France 5, 13, 22, 32, 35-55
- Franco, *see* Spain
- Freud, S. 8, 9
- funeral(s) 137, 146-9, 147n, 151, 172-3, 188, 188n
- Gallini, C. 202, 203, 204
- Garnizov, V. 188
- genre 63, 67-9, 81, 81n, 82-3, 93, 94, 95, 102, 104, 105-6, 107, 113
- German/y 3, 15, 21, 22, 32, 37, 40, 49, 60-86, 69n, 101, 111, 120, 121, 121n, 126, 128
- Gitano 255-271, 257n; and assimilation policies 256; blood feuds 257, 259, 261, 264; community 256, 263-4, 266, 269, 270; converts and the past 256, 257; death 260-1, 262, 263, 270; egalitarian/hierarchical ethos 264, 268; and Evangelism 258-9, 264-70; fragmentation/cohesion 257, 262, 264, 269, 270-1; history of 257-8, 259; identity 257, 259, 262-3, 266, 269, 270; kingroups 257, 261, 262, 264, 267; non-converts 257, 259, 259-64; and the past 255-6, 257, 260, 262-4, 270; poverty 258, 259, 262, *see also* Roma

- Goffman, E. 75, 76  
 Gramsci, A. 4, 8, 15  
 Greek Catholics 16, 23, 137-54,  
   142n, 143n, 145n, 147n, 150n;  
   history of 142-6, 142n, 143n, 148,  
   154
- Halbwachs, M. 9-11, 18, 139, 141  
 Hann, C. 137, 159  
 Havel, V. 13  
 healing 184, 185n, 189, *see also* seer,  
   tarantismo  
 Heimat 68, 70-1, 240n  
 heritage 38, 52, 66, 82, 159, 191, 193,  
   216  
 Hill, C. 4  
 Hirsch, M. 7, 16  
 historians 12, 43, 61-2, 63, 63n, 67-9,  
   71, 77-8, 81, 83, 84n, 85, 93, 94,  
   105, 106, 110n, 113, 120, 138,  
   190-1, 191n, 192n, 278; amateur  
   62; local 22, 62-3, 63n, 67-9, 71-2,  
   77-8, 81, 83, 93, 94, 105, 207,  
   214, *see also* Bulgaria  
*Historikerstreit* 84n  
 history/ical 8, 43, 45, 50, 53, 54, 61-3,  
   61n, 62n, 63n, 64-6, 64n, 65n, 75-  
   9, 81-4, 93-5, 97, 102, 104, 105,  
   106, 107, 109, 110n, 112n, 114n,  
   115n, 118-9, 119n, 120, 122-30,  
   138, 141-2, 142n, 143n, 145, 148-  
   9, 152, 154, 167, 179, 183, 185,  
   190, 191n, 193n, 194, 195; ac-  
   counts 4, 22, 93, 106, 113; af-  
   firmative 82, 84; of anthropology  
   200, 202-5; consciousness 67;  
   continuity 206; counter 2, 120;  
   curriculum 112, 114-5, 119-20;  
   definition of 31, 113, 191, 266;  
   education 31, 110, 112, 114, 115n,  
   119, 120, 122, 125, 127, 129-30;  
   genres 22, 68; heroes 183, 192;  
   and identity 4, 33, 130, 192, 195,  
   214, 270; imagination 179;  
   knowledge 110n, 111-2, 112n,  
   113, 114, 177, 119; and legitima-  
   tion of state 4, 105, 195; linear  
   270; local 17, 21, 22, 31-2, 63,  
   67-8, 71-4, 75, 77-9, 81, 83-4, 93-  
   4, 96n, 105-7, 142; and memory 9,  
   11-4, 23, 31-2, 36, 54, 93, 109,  
   112, 113-4, 119-20, 123-5, 125n,  
   130, 138-9, 145, 152, 194-5;  
   meta- 4, 8, 15; morality 274, 278-  
   9, 286; narrative(s) 2n, 12, 14, 32,  
   61, 63, 94, 112, 113, 117, 123,  
   125n, 129-30, 159, 192, 284; na-  
   tional/ism 4, 8, 15, 17, 21, 22, 32,  
   62, 97, 105, 114, 116-7, 119,  
   119n, 125, 130, 141, 152, 159,  
   179, 180n, 190-4, 195; plurality  
   11, 22, 32; and religion 141-3,  
   142n, 143n, 148-9, 154, 191n,  
   194, 195, 266, 270; representa-  
   tions 62n, 69, 82; rewriting of 32,  
   152, 154, 158, 278; Russian 117;  
   school 111, 119-20, 122-5; and si-  
   lence 274, 279, 284, 285, 286; so-  
   ciety 68, 74, 77-8, 79, 80, 84, 85;  
   Soviet Union 114-5, 119n, 122,  
   167; state/official 4, 8, 15, 21, 22,  
   23, 24, 31-2, 61, 68, 93, 104, 106-  
   7, 112, 115-7, 119-20, 122-5,  
   129-30, 274-9, 283-5, 291; and  
   state hegemony 2, 8, 20, 22, 23,  
   31-3, 277-8, 285, 289-90, 291; as  
   symbol 113, 117, *see* Ukraine, *see*  
   *also* Bulgaria, France, Romania,  
   Spain, Ukraine  
 Hitler 65, 69, 74, 84  
 Hobsbawm, E. 4, and T. Ranger 193n  
 Holocaust 1, 7, 8, 16, 18, 19, 22, 75,  
   82, 85, 86, 124n, 153, 154  
 homeland 115n, 116-7, 244  
 Huyssen, A. 17
- identity 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 14, 15, 32n, 35,  
   42, 110, 130, 135, 143, 151, 157,  
   175, 179, 180, 183n, 188, 190,  
   192, 193n, 194, 195, 202, 203,

- 203n, 209, 213, 214, 215, 219,  
229, 230n, 231, 233, 238, 255,  
270, 276, 278n, 280, 287, 289
- ideology 2n, 7, 11, 21, 22, 23, 69, 75,  
94, 102, 121, 127, 139, 152, 157-  
9, 164-6, 165n, 169-70, 172-3,  
173-5, 191, 230n, 231, 236n; So-  
viet 121, 158-67, 165n, 170, 172-  
3
- individual and social 9-11, 13
- Institute of Suggestology 182, 185,  
189, 190, *see also* Bulgaria
- Italy/ian 20, 24, 199-219, 205n, *see  
also* anthropology, de Martino,  
tarantismo
- Jedlowski, P. 138n
- Jeggle, U. 70n, 80-81
- Jewish museum 16, 17
- Jews; in Germany 64-6, 65n, 73n,  
76-9, 82, 86; in Holland 124n; in  
Ukraine 110n
- Juliá, S. 278, 279
- kin/ship 8, 52, 147
- Klaniczay, G. 186
- Kligman, G. 157-8, 171n, 172
- Kosellek, R. 189
- Kulturkampf* 81-2
- Kundera, M. 19, 225
- Lambek, M. 3
- landscape 22, 62, 153, 188, 192n
- Lane, C. 160n, 161n, 170n
- Lapassade, G. 200, 205, 205n, 215n
- Lass, A. 12-3
- Le Goff, J. 139, 139n
- Leach, E. R. 81, 81n
- Lefèvre, G. 9n
- Lenin 17, 94, 115n, 118, 162, 163,  
165n, 166, 172n
- Lévi-Strauss, C. 12, 14, 202
- Libeskind, 17-8
- lieux de memoire* 13
- local history 53, 54, 63, 67-8, 71-3,  
75, 77-9, 81, 83-4, 93-4, 96n,  
105-7, 142
- locality 55, 182
- Lori Novak 16
- madeleine* 19
- Mann, M. 287, 287n
- marginal/ity 6, 38, 53,  
125, 150
- Marxist theory 8
- Matsuda, M. 138n
- memory/memories 2n, 7, 8, 18-20, 24,  
35-6, 39, 43, 44, 47, 54-5, 62, 80,  
93, 106, 112-4, 119-20, 122-5,  
124n, 125n, 127, 129-30, 137-41,  
138n, 140n, 143-6, 143n, 148,  
149n, 150-3, 152n, 158, 160, 173,  
175, 179, 183, 187, 194, 195, 287;  
architecture 16-8, 139, 183; and  
change and continuity 24, 138-41,  
151-4, 158, 175, 215-9, 225; col-  
lective 9-11, 23, 54, 61, 138, 138n,  
139, 140, 150, 151, 152, 153;  
community construction 24-5,  
230-1, 276-9; contested 41, 62,  
112, 114, 122, 129-30, 144, 152,  
154; counter 1, 3, 8, 12, 15, 16,  
143, 152, 152n; cultural 14-5, 18,  
151-2, 154, 212; definition of 19-  
20, 113-4; and democracy 227,  
274, 277, 279; during socialism  
151-4; ethnographic 6, 201, 202,  
204, 204n, 208, 215-9; fad-  
ing/disappearing 35, 47, 54; fam-  
ily 10, 18, 21, 23, 25, 43, 112,  
119-20, 122-3, 125, 127, 129, 143;  
and forgetting 13, 16, 17, 24, 124,  
135, 151, 227; and history 8, 11-4,  
23, 24, 31, 32, 36, 44, 93, 112-4,  
119-20, 122-5, 125n, 129-30, 138,  
145, 152, 154, 195, *see also* his-  
tory; and identity 35, 203, 231;  
individual 140, 150, 152, 194-5;

- local 16, 22, 32, 204, 207-10, 249;  
 and marginality 35; memorial  
 landscape 16-7, 22, 39, 41-2, 153;  
 memory politics 1, 2, 15, 16, 202;  
 national 22, 36, 39, 249; personal  
 47, 54, 106, 113, 119, 129-30,  
 152; as a political resource 22, 54,  
 201, 215; politics of 202, 215-9,  
 283-6; practices 9, 15; preserva-  
 tion 24, 82, 141, 145; private 152;  
 production 54, 137-8, 151, 154;  
 projects 151, 153; public 3, 138,  
 rebuilding state 25, 225-6, 276-9,  
 282-3, 284; recovery 24, 152, 153;  
 religious 139-41; social 8, 9-11,  
 13, 18, 35-6, 44, 54-5, 113, 138-9,  
 149n, 150-2, 194, 274; and space  
 1, 3, 4, 14, 35, 54, 139-41, 143-6,  
 151, 154, 249; and state hegem-  
 ony 25, 274, 277-8, 279, 284-5;  
 and tourism 217; transmission 10,  
 123-5, 138, 139, 141, 150, 153;  
 traumatic 8, 16, 17, 54, 80, 111,  
 153, 188; and war/conflict 22, 32,  
 35, 41, 43, 54, 123, 225-6, 250,  
 273, 274
- memorials 17, 38-42, 153-4
- mnemotechnics 8, 9, 138, 139, 145,  
 151, 152
- monuments 13, 14, 16, 39-43, 41n,  
 44, 140n, 160, 166; Soviet 160
- moral issues 59, 73, 80-1, 83, 86, 114,  
 125n, 159, 163-4, 165n, 166, 173,  
 174-175; memory as moral prac-  
 tice 18-9, 39
- morality 112, 159, 162-4, 165n, 167,  
 174-5
- Mouffe, C. 276, 276n
- museum(s) 14, 17, 41, 42, 44, 78-9,  
 153
- music 161, 191, 199, 200, 201, 202,  
 204, 205, 206, 210, 212, 213, 214,  
 216, 217, 218, 219
- narrative 8, 14, 18, 19, 20, 41, 42-3,  
 44, 46, 61, 63, 86, 93, 94, 112,  
 113, 117, 123, 125n, 129, 130,  
 143, 152-4, 159, 181n, 192; alter-  
 native 143, *see also* history
- nation-building, nation state 2, 3, 14,  
 17, 25, 48, 49, 95, 109, 111-2,  
 115-9, 130, 141, 146-8, 149n,  
 183n, 188n, 191-5, 191n, 192n
- national history 62, 83, 116, 129,  
 140n, 141-142, 152, 159, 179,  
 180n, 190-1, 192n, 194-5, *see*  
*also* history, national
- national socialism, Nazism 17, 22,  
 59-61, 59n, 61n, 62-3, 64, 65n,  
 68-70, 70n, 70-7, 77n, 79-81, 82-  
 4, 84n, 85-6
- national subject 62, 111, 115, 124,  
 125, 130
- nationalism 24, 72n, 115-6, 120,  
 126, 138, 191n, 195
- Nazism, *see* national socialism
- neighbours 84-5, 169, 181
- neighbourhood(s) 67, 68, 76, 80, 84-5
- Nora, P. 9, 13-4, 145
- occupation 37, 49n, 71, 103, 181
- Olick, J., and J. Robbins 10n, 138n
- organisation of Ukrainian nationalists  
 (OUN) 111, 120, 126, 129, *see*  
*also* Ukraine
- Orthodox church 5, 141, 142, 145n,  
 151n, 157, 157n, 167, 169, 170,  
 170n, 173, 174, 185; and baptism  
 during Soviet times 5, 167, 168,  
 172; Bulgarian 185-88, 195; and  
 commemoration of dead 170-3,  
 174; Easter celebrations 158, 167,  
 168, 170-2, 173, 174; and genera-  
 tional difference 169; Greek 180n;  
 history of in Soviet times 167-8;  
 in Croatia 232-3, 235, 237n, 243-  
 8; in Romania 141, 142, 145n,  
 151n; Russian 157, 167-73, 170n,
- Naredo, J. M. 275, 276n

- see also* Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania
- past 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 14, 15-6, 18, 24, 35-6, 42, 43, 46, 47, 48, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 59-61, 59n, 60n, 63, 68, 69, 69n, 78, 79, 80, 83, 84n, 85, 86, 93, 94, 104, 105, 106, 109, 110n, 112, 113, 118, 119, 120, 122, 125, 158; coming to terms with 59-61, 59n, 60n, 69, 69n, 79, 84-6; depolitisation of 278; local 52, 53, 93; transmission of 21, 22, 112, 119, 125, 137, 138, 138n, 140, 143, 145, 150, 152-4, 158, 159, 163-4, 170, 174, 179, 187-8, 191-4, 194-5
- peasants/peasant society 8, 13, 14, 144, 181
- photographs 16, 37, 46, 52, 79; state portraits 18
- place 18, 35-6, 38, 40, 41, 42, 44, 46-7, 48, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 107, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 144, 145, 146, 147, 149, 151, 154, 172, 192, 195
- places of memory 16, 35-6, 41-2, 44, 48, 54, 139-41, 144, 145, 146, 151, 154, 195
- Poland 3, 5, 109n, 111, 120, 121n, 233n
- politics 1, 2, 4, 5, 18, 20, 65-6, 77, 97, 101, 137, 142, 167, 191, 273-4; local 65-6; national 76-7
- politics of memory 15-18, 18-9, *see* memory
- popular religion 5, 134, 140, 140n, 179-95, 185n, 186, 193n
- Popular Party, *see* Spain
- Portugal 7
- possession 53, *see also* tarantismo
- postmemory/ies 7, 16
- postsocialism 7, 137, 138, 151, 154, 158, 183
- Povrzanović Frykmann, M. 240n
- power 4, 5, 11
- Prague Spring 102-3
- preservation 62, 67, 77, 78, 82, 138, 141, 145, 174, 193, *see also* heritage
- private 18, 20, 39, 52, 93, 133, 134, 135, 143-4, 164, 173, 187, 241; and capitalism 134-5; chronicle/s 104-7; during socialism 133-4; farming 98, 99, 101; memory 134, 152; space 39, 143
- prophet/prophecies 179, 183, 186, 187, 190, 192, 193, 194, 195, *see also* seer
- protestants, protestantism 64, 66
- Proust, M. 19, 20n
- psychoanalysis/psychoanalytic theory 8-9, 81
- public 5, 13, 20, 39, 43, 46, 105, 106, 127, 133, 134, 135, 138, 140, 143, 145, 147n, 148-9, 152, 153, 154, 158-9, 164, 165, 183, 185-6, 187, 189; and capitalism 134-5; commemoration 158, 159; discourse 147, 148; domain/space/sphere 5, 17, 23, 38, 41n, 62n, 67, 82, 105, 140, 143, 148, 149, 151, 152, 153, 183, 226, 234, 279, 280, 285, 288; memory 23, 138, 280, 284; during socialism 133-4
- Ransel, L. D. 172
- recollection 12
- reconciliation 15, 142n
- religion/ious 4-7, 15, 23-4, 96, 100, 139-41, 140n, 157, 157n, 158, 159, 165-6, 165n, 167-70, 172, 172n, 173-5, 174n, 179, 180, 182n, 183, 184-90, 186n, 191n, 193, 194-5; commemoration of dead 23, 24, 35, 39, 42-3, 44, 137, 140, 170-3, 174, 194; converts/non-converts 73n, *see* Evangelism, Gitano; domestication 134, 143, 179; as ethnic marker 230, 233, 233n, 240-1, 246; festi-

- vals 24, 168, 226, 229-50, 231n, 241n, 248-9; and generational difference 169-70; and memory 139; and nationalism 236-8, 236n, 240, 241, 248-9; popular 134, 140, 140n, 179-195, 185n, 186n, practices 137, 138, 139-40, 140n, 146-8, 151, 157, 158, 167-73, 194; and relation to socialism 23, 134, 167-77, 190-5, 233; resistance of 173
- remembrance 12, 15, 35-6, 39, 42, 46, 54-5, 79, 139-40, 139n, 140n, 143, 148-51, 152, 153, 154, 157, 231
- resistance 16, 73, 73n, 76, 93, 99, 101-2, 107, 143, 150, 157, 159, 173, 174, 174n
- rhetorical devices 69-70, 163-4; avoidance 70-8; dissociation 70, 72-6; engagement 70, 76-9
- ritual(s) 5, 6-7, 9, 10, 18, 139, 140, 157, 157n, 159, 160, 160n, 162, 164, 165n, 167, 170, 170n, 172n, 173, 187-8, 188n, 195, 230n, 231; local 135; political 140; Soviet 23, 157, 160, 160n, 162, 164, 167, 170, 173, 188; tarantism as 199-200, 205, 215-9, *see also* tarantism
- Roma 1, 18-9, 20-1, 24-5, 226, 255-6, 260, 262, 267, 268, *see also* Gitano
- Roman Catholics, Roman Catholicism 22, 64-6, 73-4, 73n, 78, 81-2, 85
- Romania/n 5, 23, 109n, 110n, 121n, 137-54, 157, 172, 191; identity 141-2, 146-9, 149n, 157; Klein, I. M. 138, 141, 146-51; Todea, A. 146-51
- Rome 146, 147, 148, 150n
- rural marginality 38
- saints 139, 140, 140n, 144, 150n, 151, 166, 172n, 180-1, 186, 193n, 194-5
- Saunders, G. 202
- schools 53, 60, 64, 66, 67, 68, 73, 76-7, 85, 96n, 98, 100, 102, 109, 110n, 111-2, 111n, 113, 114, 115, 115n, 117, 118, 118n, 119-125, 126, 128, 129, 141, 160, *see also* education
- Second World War 17, 22, 32, 37, 38, 42, 60, 67, 71, 72, 80, 82, 97, 104, 106, 109n, 111, 119, 120, 123, 126, 128, 130, 134, 162, 167, 173, 174n, 180, 188, 189, 225, 229n, 236, 243, 246, 274, 276
- secularism, secular states 5, 6
- seer/prophet(ess) 23, 179, 180, 181-3, 181n, 182n, 184-7, 189n, 190-4, 195; communication with the dead 180, 184-90; relation to religion 184-90; role as healer 189, *see also* popular religion, Vanga Dimitrova
- silence 1, 4, 7, 16, 18, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 43, 71, 110, 122-5, 125n, 127, 144, 226-7, 261, 274-6, 277, 280, 283, 284, 285
- social democrats, social democracy 65n, 66, 73n, 82, 85
- social memory 8, 9-11, 10n, 13, 14, 18, 35-6, 44, 54-5, 113, 138, 139, 149n, 150, 151, 152, 194, 274, *see also* memory
- socialisation 114; of agriculture 97, 99, 101-2, 104, 106
- socialism/t 1, 2n, 5, 20, 22, 23, 94, 97, 105, 151, 152, 154, 158, 159, 162, 167, 169, 175, 179, 181n, 182, 183, 183n, 188, 188n, 191n, 194, 195, 243; and festivals 237, 241n; nationalism 233; religion 23, 134, 167-77, 190-5, 233, 237, 241, 246
- Soviet 97, 157-75, 192; ceremonies/festive days 6, 23, 157, 158, 159, 160, 160n, 162, 163-4, 167, 173; food (importance of) 161, 170-2;

- and generation 164, 169; ideology 114, 121, 134, 158, 159-60, 164, 165, 165n, 166, 170, 172-73, 174; morality 174, 175; morality and generational difference 159, 162, 163, 164-5, 166, 170-1; persistence of ceremonies 157-175; and religion 23, 157n, 167-73, 173-5; as religion 165-6; work (importance of) 162, 163, 165
- Soviet Union 2n, 6, 103, 109, 109n, 111, 114, 115n, 118, 119, 120, 121n, 134, 143n, 157-67, 165n, 169, 173, 175
- Spain/Spanish 7, 25, 227, 273-91; and Basque sovereignty 18, 25, 273, 274, 277, 278, 279-82, 283, 286-9, 289n; civil war 227, 274, 277, 278, 279, 284, 287n; constitution 25, 274, 276-7, 283n; and democracy 25, 275-6, 276n, 277-8, 279, 282-3, 286, 287, 287n, 288-9, 290-1; ETA 25, 274, 279-82, 284, 285-6, 287, 288, 290; and Franco/ist 25, 227, 260, 273, 274, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283-4, 285, 286n, 287, 287n, 289n; governmental policy towards Roma 257-8, 259, 260, 262; Lluch, E. 273, 279-80, 282, 286, 290; Madrid Roma 255-71; Manzanás, M. 273, 281, 282, 286; Popular Party (PP) 279, 279n, 281, 281n, 282, 283, 284, 286, 288, 289n, 290, 290n; terrorism 281, 281n, 282, 285, 286, 288, 288n, 290, *see also* Evangelism, Gitano, Roma
- spirit possession, *see* tarantismo
- Stalin/Stalinism 2n, 17, 18, 97, 111, 118, 120, 123, 127n, 165-6, 167, 175
- Starn, R. 12
- state 2, 5, 6, 20, 25, 37, 39, 42, 48, 49, 51, 53, 61, 62, 64, 67, 73, 77, 82, 93, 94, 95, 96, 100, 103, 104, 106, 107, 109, 109n, 110, 111, 112, 112n, 113n, 114n, 115, 116, 117, 119, 119n, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 129, 130, 143, 143n, 151, 152, 157, 158, 159, 164, 175, 182, 183, 185, 189, 191, 192n; and church 5; definition of 112; ideology 23, 133, 134, 175; socialist ideology 133-4; Soviet 111-2, 119, 157-77; Spanish 25, 277-8, 283, 286, 289-91, *see also* Spain, Ukraine
- Stewart, M. 18-9
- tarantismo 20, 24, 199-219, 205n; Chiriatti, L. 210-12, 214, 216; commodification of 202, 205, 215, 216; de Giorgi, P. 213-4; Di Lecce 206-7, 214; di Nardo, M. 207-210, 211; history of 199; identity 202, 215-9; preservation of 210, 214, 215, 216-8; revitalisation of 201, 204, 205, 206, 210-214, 215-9
- terrorism, *see* Spain
- Thompson, E. P. 4
- Thracology 190, 192n, 193, *see also* Bulgaria
- totalitarianism 2, 2n, 11, 143, 143n, 152, 273, 279, 288, 288n, 290
- tourism 38, 39, 49, 51-2, 66, 71n
- tradition 82, 139, 168, 170, 172, 173, 174, 175, 192n; invented 82, 193n; religious 139, 168, 170, 172, 173, 174, 175
- trance 187, 194, *see also* seer, tarantismo, Vanga Dimitrova
- transition 116, 164, *see also* post-socialism
- Transylvania 138, 141, 142, 143, 172, *see also* Romania
- trauma 7, 16, 81, 249; narrative 152-3
- traumatic memory 7, 54, 153, *see also* memory, traumatic
- truth 39, 97, 112, 113, 113n, 115, 116,



- 119, 122, 124, 129, 144, 152, 183,  
190, 290, 291; state claims over  
97, 115, 124, 129, 152  
Tumarkin, N. 164, 166
- Ukraine/ian 15, 21, 23, 32, 109-130,  
109n, 110n, 112n, 113n, 114n,  
115n, 119n, 127n, 157-75, 157n,  
163n, 174n; famine of 1932-33  
111, 120, 123, 127, 128, 129, 161,  
161n, 174n; history 112n, 114n,  
119n, 122-30; Organisation of  
Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN)  
111, 120-2, 124, 126; Ukrainian  
Insurgent Army (UPA) 111, 120-  
2, *see also* socialism, Soviet, So-  
viet Union  
United Kingdom 5
- Vanga Dimitrova (baba) 23, 179-195  
180n, 181n, 182n, 183n, 186n,  
188n, 189n, 192n, 193n; biogra-  
phy 180-3, 180n, 182n; engage-  
ment with history 179, 180n, 183,  
185-6, 190-5, 191n, 192n; en-  
gagement with state 185-6, 189-  
90  
Vatican 74, 146, 150n  
Verdery, K. 94, 137, 146, 147n, 149n,  
158, 171n, 172  
*Vergangenheitsbewältigung* 59n, 153,  
*see also* past  
victims 7, 16, 40, 45, 71, 72, 73, 86,  
103, 111, 123, 206, 227, 238,  
238n, 245, 273, 274, 279, 280,  
281n, 282, 284-6, 290  
village history/chronicles 62-3, 93,  
95-7, 104, 105, 106, 107, *see also*  
history  
village/villages 36, 37, 39, 40-1, 42-3,  
45, 50, 52-3, 62, 74, 93-107, 96n,  
98n, 127, 167, 168, 169, 171, 180,  
185, 192, 192n  
violence 18, 20, 22, 25, 46, 188, 241n,  
273, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282-7,  
288, 289-90, 291n  
Virginia Woolf 19
- Wanner, C. 7, 159, 163n  
war 2, 3, 17, 22, 24, 35-55, 59, 60, 61,  
66, 70, 71, 72n, 73, 75, 79, 80, 82,  
96n, 97, 101, 104, 105, 106, 110,  
111, 120, 123, 126, 128, 130, 162,  
164, 167, 173, 174n, 180-1, 180n,  
188-9, 233-4, 237, 240n, 244, 245,  
246, 249, 278  
war memory 35, 41, 43, 54, 123, *see*  
memory, war  
war tourism 43-7  
Watson, R. 2n, 3, 12  
Wolf, E. R. 4  
World War I, *see* First World War  
World War II, *see* Second World  
War
- Yates, F. 9, 10, 139  
Yugoslavia (former) 2, 179, 180n,  
189n, 225-6, 230n, 233, 236, 246
- Zemon Davis, N. 12  
Zhivkova, L. 191, 191n, 192, *see also*  
Bulgaria/n  
Zulaika, J. 289, 289n, 290

# Halle Studies in the Anthropology of Eurasia

---

*"... anthropology needs a broader vision. It needs to shake off its strong association with the primitive and the exotic and become genuinely global in its comparisons. From this perspective, more sustained attention to Eurasia and a renewed focus on its underlying unity might launch the transformation of our parochial scholarly traditions into a mature cosmopolitan science."*

– Chris Hann, in his Preface to this series

## **Memory, Politics and Religion The Past Meets the Present in Europe**

This collection of essays focuses on the haunting themes of religion, politics and remembering the past. Spanning Europe from Ukraine to Spain, the authors consider ways in which memory is used, at the local level, both to legitimate and to contest claims to power, status, and social and cultural capital. The result is a rich and innovative set of texts on memory and silence, on the place of the past in the present, and on the ideologies and practices which constitute memory at the local level.

### **Contributors:**

John R. Eidson, Paola Filippucci, Paloma Gay y Blasco, Haldis Haukanes, Deema Kaneff, Carolin Leutloff-Grandits, Paz Moreno, Susana Narotzky, Vlad Naumescu, Frances Pine, Giovanni Pizza, Tanya Richardson, Galia Valtchinova, Ina Vogelsang

