

Book Reviews

Gypsies and other itinerant groups. A socio-historical approach. *Leo Lucassen, Wim Willems and Annemarie Cottaar.* London: MacMillan; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998. 226 pp. (Cloth). ISBN 0-312-21258-5.

Reviewed by Aparna Rao

It has been a pleasure reviewing this book and reconsidering much of the data presented here. All chapters, except the Introduction and Chapter 10, are indeed, modified versions of earlier publications, but I would like to stress that this in no way detracts from the value of the present book. The bringing together of these various chapters enables us to better grasp the theoretical perspectives and arguments offered.

The authors begin with pragmatic definitions of their topic: Gypsies are 'those who lead an itinerant way of life and who are stigmatized as Gypsies or who have been given similar labels' (p. 2). An itinerant lifestyle is defined as consisting of travelling with one's family, while 'spreading . . . goods and services' that were either not offered, or not offered so cheaply, by sedentary people. The aim of the chapters as a whole is to question earlier assumptions about such communities—notably the image of the criminal, marginal, poverty-stricken Gypsy (the 'riff-raff image') and the idea of all such communities sharing a common 'origin' ('the diaspora image')—and then go on to suggest that it has been precisely their stigmatisation that has 'influenced group formation' (p. 6). It is very ably shown how scholars, and 'Gypsologists' in particular, have played a major role in this stigmatisation by their attempts to 'label' people. Thus emerged the concept of 'the Gypsy people'—a concept that has, as we all know, been used and misused time and again; has enabled governments to develop inevitably negative policies to deal with 'distinct groups'; has led to such communities being considered 'exotic', rather than part and parcel of European history and culture. The discussion of the stigmatisation, construction, and formation of social

Aparna Rao is social anthropologist at the Institut für Völkerkunde, Universität zu Köln, Albertus-Magnus-Platz, D-50923 Köln, Germany. E-mail: aparna.rao@uni-koeln.de.

Romani Studies 5, Vol. 10, No. 1 (2000), 77–81. ISSN 1528–0748

groups in response to, or as a result of, state policies—here ironically the processes of democratisation and nationalism that led to defining the criteria of citizenship (and concomitantly then, of non-citizenship)—is still of great pertinence in many Third World countries where nomadic communities of pastoralists, foragers and peripatetic traders face this problem. But here two remarks are in place: nowhere in their discussion do the authors deal with the centuries-old role of the Church(es) in the construction and maintenance of stigmatisation and/or group formation, nor do they even refer to that played by a variety of Human Rights and political groups that have espoused ‘Gypsy causes’ since World War II. At least a brief discussion of the use and misuse of the label ‘the Gypsy people’ by ‘Gypsy leaders’, or by those aspiring to be so, should also have been included here. In their criticism of interpreting ‘Gypsy culture’ as exotic, one also wishes that the authors had gone further and situated this criticism in the larger framework of that new form of scholarly racism known as ‘culture studies’.

The book is divided into three parts: *Images and Representations, Stigmatization and Government Policies*, and *Socio-economic Functioning*. Each of these parts is, again, subdivided into two to four chapters, each of which has a detailed section of notes placed at the end of the volume. In a way, the chapters in Part I set the stage for the rest of the study. Chapter 2 argues forcefully for the irrelevance, both academic (except of course, for linguistic research) and political of the ‘origin(s)’ of Gypsies, and traces the various attempts made to define and label these groups as one people from one exotic homeland. Apart from the fact that the notion of the unique ‘Indian origin’ is based on highly dubious historical- and ethno-logic, most ‘exotic groups’ (including those labouring under acute stigmatisation) have, at some point of time, ceased to be considered ‘exotic’. Then, why not Gypsies? It is the pan-European search for authenticity, for ‘the true Gypsy’ which, via the rejection of ‘less true’ Gypsies of ‘mixed blood’, ultimately led to the concentration camps and gas chambers of Nazi Germany. Chapter 3 confirms for Dutch encyclopaedias the conclusions reached by others (Rao and Casimir 1993) about similar German works of reference—namely that the information given consists largely of a mixture of racist stereotypes and vague statements.

Part II has four chapters (4 to 7). The first of these discusses stigmatisation by public authorities from the Middle Ages onwards (1350–1914), and draws interesting links between concepts about travelling groups and economic developments in the larger society. After a brief survey of western Europe as a whole, the next chapter goes into more detail about Germany for the period 1700 to 1945 and discusses attitudes and relations

with the police. This is a somewhat brief survey of the development of policing in this area, and the historical data, though valuable, would have perhaps benefited by being embedded in a larger discussion of the broader political transformations that Germany was undergoing at the time. Also, comparisons for the same period with neighbouring Holland or France, with different types of polity, would have helped highlight the specificities of the German situation and draw out the commonalities of the treatment to which Gypsies and similar groups were subjected across great stretches of western Europe. The next chapter (Ch. 6) does discuss Dutch policing, but it does so for a much later period (1969–89); the conclusions drawn here by Willems and Lucassen are once again, probably, largely applicable to most of western Europe.

Chapter 7 (Part II) and Chapter 10 (Part III) both deal with aspects of 'Dutch Traveller' life. They discuss the development of the community of Dutch 'caravan dwellers', who have their own identity, and also offer goods and services. Both inside and outside perspectives are presented by the author (A. Cottaar), who also discusses the concept of 'indigenous' versus 'foreign' Travellers—an issue that has been raised in neighbouring countries too. In her interesting study Cottaar shows that there has been no 'linear development' among these Travellers; time and again, studies of spatially mobile communities outside Europe have stressed that nomadism and sedentism are not evolutive ends of a continuum. For both theoretical and political reasons it is essential that this point be driven home in the heart of Europe as well.

Part III starts off by documenting to what extent the historiography of such communities still remains a 'blind spot'; it also very plausibly suggests why. Gypsy history has always been reconstructed from documents on crime and poverty. Once again it is the 'linear perspective of society, in which travelling is seen as a sign of being uprooted and vagrant . . .' (p. 151) that is at the root of this attitude. In addition, by the early twentieth century at the very latest, 'nomadism, or rather 'wandering' had come to be associated with 'Wanderlust', which itself was increasingly being explained as genetically based and hence incorrigible' (Gould 1998). These explanations and attitudes crossed all theoretical, ideological, and political frontiers, and came to be applied throughout Europe and in European colonies across the world. While historians working on colonial records have, nevertheless, increasingly tended to examine the link between labour and mobility, in Europe, as Lucassen shows in this well written chapter, the link between say, seasonal labour and seasonal mobility is yet to be considered in depth. In

the following chapter (Ch. 9) he examines the economic roles played by these communities in the labour market of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These data suggest that first of all, there were few specific 'Gypsy occupations', with non-Gypsies (some of them even itinerant) practising many of them. Secondly, it would be misleading to consider that all Gypsies were poor; true, some were destitute and a few were even beggars and criminals, but most earned a modest living, and there were some, such as the coppersmiths and horse dealers, who were even wealthy. It would also be wrong to suppose that Gypsies have always been rejected or considered outcasts; the goods and services they offered—partly as nomads, but sometimes also as seasonally sedentary communities—were in demand. It would have been interesting had the authors tried to co-relate, even in qualitative terms, the degrees of requirement and acceptance; similar studies for peripatetics in South Asia, for example, show a clear correlation between perceived economic need and acceptance, and a dramatic fall in the latter with infrastructural changes leading to decreasing need (cf. Rao and Casimir forthcoming). Finally, it was not industrialisation, as is often assumed, that adversely affected all occupations practised by Gypsies, for given their flexibility, many took on new professions. It was only after World War II that structural transformations in the labour market accompanied by specific legislative measures forced them into more or less helpless economic circumstances. An issue that remains open, especially in diachronic terms, is that of passing (cf. Kaminski 1987)—were attempts made on a large scale to 'move out' of the stigmatised group and thereby also do better in the changing labour market?

This slim volume is of a high academic standard, and is a must for all those studying stigmatised communities in western Europe. It is to be hoped that it will inspire others to make similar comparative studies in eastern Europe. For a clearer understanding of a variety of theoretical concepts in anthropology and sociology, it is also to be hoped that the authors' plea to compare Gypsies with comparable groups in Europe and elsewhere—a plea made by others before them, but one that appears to have fallen largely on deaf ears—will be heard.

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In search of the true Gypsy: From Enlightenment to final solution.
Wim Willems. London: Frank Cass, 1997. 368 pp. £18.50 (Paper). ISBN 0-714-64222-3.

Reviewed by Colin Clark

Wim Willems is a member of what has been referred to as either the 'Dutch school', or the 'radical social constructionists' (Acton 1998: 5). This grouping of Dutch historians and sociologists have challenged the dominant discourses in a growing sub-area of ethnic and racial studies, that is Romani ('Gypsy') studies. In many ways, they issue a challenge to the majority of the international Romani studies community in much the same way (but with not so much originality) that Judith Okely (1983) did in her monograph *The Traveller-Gypsies*. Simplifying it to some extent, the central thesis of the 'Dutch school' and Willems's most recent book appears to be that 'Gypsies' as we have come to use and understand the term in contemporary Western Europe do not in fact exist at all as a real entity or collection of ethnic group(s). For Willems, such groups can be reduced to what he has called elsewhere 'paper Gypsies' (Lucassen, Willems and Cottaar 1998: 20). That is, they are the mere invention of scholars such as Grellmann, Borrow and various other figures from the historical world of Romani studies, like the Gypsy Lore Society (GLS). 'Gypsy identity' (p. 293) Willems argues is primarily European (not Indian) in origin and has been constructed by these scholars (Grellmann in particular). In so doing, they created a language of unity 'in ways of thinking about diverse population groups' (p. 293) which, Willems suggests, can still be found in the way government officials, policy-makers,

Colin Clark works as a lecturer teaching Romani studies at the Department of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 7RU, England. E-mail: colin.clark@ncl.ac.uk.

and academics define 'Gypsies' as 'one people'. The very idea of a common ethnic identity for Romanies has been a response by non-Gypsy policymakers and Romani intellectuals to persecution and discrimination and there is, according to the Dutch school, no 'ethnic' foundation or connection between those groups identified as 'Gypsy'. This is the central thesis of the text.

In Search of the True Gypsy: from enlightenment to Final Solution is a huge book in many ways; it is well over three hundred pages long with six chapters on key thinkers in the history and development of Romani studies (including Grellmann, Borrow and most of the great and the good of the GLS). He also includes a footnote-heavy chapter on the work of Robert Ritter, the infamous Nazi eugenicist and criminological biologist, which, it has to be said, does seem very out of place in the book. Positioning Ritter next to the likes of Grellmann and Borrow was just a little hard for this reader to swallow; Ritter is quite clearly in a league of his own when it comes to 'Gypsy research'. His aims, methods and approach were all bound up with the search for the Nazi 'Final Solution'.

On a different level, the archival research undertaken for this book is staggering in places; footnotes and annexes abound and the list of works cited is indeed impressive. This serves to give the reader the impression of hours of scholarly research and digging around in dusty library basements to find old bones long since forgotten about. However, as David Scheffel (1999) has pointed out in relation to Willems work more generally, though his footnotes are numerous they are not always beyond reproach. For example, at one point Willems claims to have unearthed Grellman's extensive use of the ethnographic material collected by Samuel Augustini ab Hortis (1998: 20–21 and also note 9). Willems forgets that it was in fact the Slovak (not Hungarian as he suggests in footnote 107 (p. 89)) ethnologist Viera Urbanová that provided this evidence well ahead of himself (1994). Strangely, her publications on Grellmann do not make an appearance in his otherwise full bibliography. Such gaps and errors are not alone in this text unfortunately. For example, Willems does not deal with Johann Rüdiger (1751–1822) in any great detail. Arguably, the empirical work of Rüdiger, a linguist, was of critical importance in tracing the Indian origin theory of the Romanies and Willems should have dealt with his work in far more detail than he did. Seventy pages on Grellmann and four pages on Rüdiger is simply not justifiable (see Matras 1999).

It was Thomas Acton (1998: 5) in his inaugural lecture in June 1998 who pointed out, quite rightly, that the clever postmodern theories and (de)

constructionisms of the Dutch school, and Willems's own book in particular, would not be sustainable if they 'had a more extensive acquaintance with Gypsies themselves, or Romani dialects'. This touch of realism in the proceedings, when confronting the grand ideas and theories (some might say historical revisionism) proposed in *In Search of the True Gypsy: from enlightenment to Final Solution* delivers a shattering blow. When viewed from this perspective we can begin to appreciate the strength and power of lived experience and the bonds of ethnic identity; in essence, what it means to be Romani in a *gaujo* (non-Gypsy) world. Ultimately, we can see, as Angus Bancroft (1999) has put it, 'no matter how well meant, deconstructing 'ethnicity' can be politically damaging to the ethnic group on the receiving end, especially when their deconstruction is followed by a reconstruction as a socially delinquent subculture'. As Hancock (1997: 42) has also argued, it is a real question of where the power lies to define oneself and one's ethnic identity; for Romanies this basic self-ascriptive right has been beyond their grasp (through no fault of their own) and they have been relatively powerless, until recently, to challenge such scholarly deconstructions and representations of themselves.

At a time in Europe when groups of people known as Romanies and Gypsies are being shunted from one country to the next under the label of 'bogus' refugees and asylum seekers, the Willems book may seem an affront to those Romani families at the sharp end. Context, I would argue, is everything; academic questions around the subtle nuances of postmodern identity politics seem far removed from the lived reality of being openly discriminated against due to perceived racial and ethnic identity. To be clear, certain academics may be unsure about the 'true' ethnic identity of those we 'know' as Romanies and Gypsies, but the racists who harass them and the governments that deport them are clearly not so uncertain about who 'they' really are. Such academic deconstructions of Romani ethnic identity do not begin and end on the pages of books and journal articles; they filter down into the wider public arena and have real implications for those affected. Some acknowledgement of this, I would suggest, is urgently required by Willems and his colleagues.

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Rassenutopie und Genozid. Die nationalsozialistische 'Lösung der Zigeunerfrage'. [Race utopia and genocide. The Nazi 'solution of the Gypsy problem']. *Michael Zimmermann*. *Hamburger Beiträge zur Sozial und Zeitgeschichte*, Band 33. Hamburg: Hans Christians Verlag, 1996. 574 pp. DM 68.—. ISBN 3-7672-1270-6.

Reviewed by Gilad Margalit

Michael Zimmermann's impressive book is the most elaborated research ever published on the persecution of the European Romanies under the Nazi regime. It continues the author's research on this subject as presented in his first book *Verfolgt, vertrieben, vernichtet* [Persecuted, deported, exterminated], (Zimmermann 1989). The book under review reflects a trend that characterizes German historical research of the Jewish Holocaust in the 1990s (e.g. Pohl 1996, Gerlach 1998). This trend integrates two schools of historical research focusing on the Holocaust of European Jewry: on the one hand the Intentionalists, who argue for a direct connection between Hitler's antisemitic ideology and wish to exterminate the Jews and the actual implementation of the Final Solution, and on the other hand the Functionalists or Structuralists, who do not agree that antisemitic ideology alone directly

Gilad Margalit lectures on German history at the University of Haifa, Israel. Correspondence address: Dept. of General History, University of Haifa, Mount Carmel, Haifa 31905, Israel. E-mail: margalit@research.haifa.ac.il

led to the extermination of the Jews. The Functionalists maintain instead that the destruction of European Jewry was a result of a quest for power and prestige which motivated various satraps (Hitler's subordinate rulers and potentates like Himmler, Bormann, Göring, Goebbels and others) in the Nazi policracy to solve the 'Jewish problem'. The unique process of decision making in the Nazi system led to a 'cumulative radicalization' which reached its peak in the physical extermination of Jews during World War II.

Zimmermann shows that persecution of Gypsies culminated in Genocide even without Hitler's involvement in policy making and without a global ideological commitment on the part of the Nazi system toward this minority. At the same time Zimmermann also emphasizes the utopian racial intention, or rather, vision, of German bureaucrats. Officials in the Institute for Racial Hygiene operating within the Reich's health ministry under the direction of the psychiatrist and Reich 'Gypsy problem specialist' Robert Ritter, and in the criminal police, urged a radical solution to the 'Gypsy problem' already in 1935.

Zimmermann opens his study with a presentation of the marginal role of the 'Gypsy problem' in Hitler's view of the world. In the face of such marginality, Zimmermann presents the fundamental query of his research: How could such a group, which was of so little personal concern to the Führer, become the target of physical extermination? His answer is that the radicalization of the final solution of the 'Gypsy problem' was neither planned nor initiated by Hitler. Rather, the Führer had become an arbiter between rivaling Nazi satraps (Heinrich Himmler, the head of the SS and the chief of the German Police and Martin Bormann, the head of the office of Nazi Party and Hitler's private secretary, roles which made him a most powerful person in the Nazi system) in the decision-making process which led to the murder of the Gypsies. As in the case of Hitler's decisions regarding various drafts of the Nurnberg laws, which have already been discussed by Mommsen, here too Hitler didn't take the extremist position, as represented by Bormann, but the moderate solution propagated by Himmler. Bormann opposed Himmler's wish to grant certain privileges to a minority group within the German Sinti, defined as racially 'pure' Gypsies. This privileged minority should have enjoyed free movement in the German Reich, and serve the Führer and the Reich in special units of the Wehrmacht. Bormann did not specify his own program for the German Gypsies, but it seems that he favoured the incarceration of all Gypsies in camps.

Much like the cumulative 'radicalization' which according to the Func-

tionalist school characterized the emergence of 'Nazi Jewish policy', here too struggles over power and prestige between various authorities of the German state, and not ideology, were the force that ultimately pushed towards the most extremist solution to the Gypsy 'problem'. As early as 1935, officials within the criminal police and the Reich ministry of the interior already had in mind that most of the Gypsies in the German Reich were anti-social elements that could not be integrated into productive society. The solution they envisaged to this 'problem' was the mass sterilization of this population. The practical effect would be to eliminate most German Gypsies within one generation. Robert Ritter, who supported this position, maintained that the causes for anti-social behavior and delinquency were inherited, deriving from racial admixture. He argued that few Gypsies were pure nomads of Indian origin, but that most were of mixed blood. The antisocial properties which he claimed were prevalent among those who led a Gypsy way of life were said to be a consequence of admixture of Gypsy blood with disreputable elements in German society. Ritter asserted that only itinerant Gypsies had preserved their racial purity while those who settled among the German population mixed with German antisocial elements.

Ritter's position regarding solutions to the problem caused by 'antisocials' probably helped his appointment as head of the Institute for Racial Hygiene in the Reich's ministry of health in 1936. That year a coordination centre for combatting the Gypsy 'nuisance' in the Reich was founded in the headquarters of the criminal police in Berlin. Ritter's institute and the criminal police cooperated and shaped policy towards the Gypsies. The most prominent figure in the Nazi system who intervened in the shaping of the Gypsy policy was Heinrich Himmler in his capacity as Reichsführer SS and head of the German police. The outbreak of the Second World War radicalized the persecution of Gypsies in the German Reich and in the occupied German territories mainly in Eastern Europe. Zimmermann emphasizes that not only the above mentioned authorities, but also many municipalities exerted pressure on the criminal police to evacuate Gypsies from within their boundaries. This constant pressure resulted in the police decision to deport many of the German Gypsies to a special concentration camp in Auschwitz-Birkenau. Only few authorities, civil servants and German citizens tried to prevent the deportation and to defend their Gypsy fellow citizens.

Zimmermann's narrative is exceptional among German historiographic narratives on Nazi atrocities. German historians researching the Holocaust and other Nazi atrocities usually choose to concentrate on the German

sources, which described the horror from the perpetrators' (so to speak 'technical') point of view. Zimmermann, by contrast, sensitively and skillfully integrates in his narrative the Gypsy victims' point of view. Letters by victims and testimonies of Gypsy survivors introduce the true dimension of the victims' horror and helplessness into the historical discussion. This approach receives full expression in the picture he chose for the book's sleeve. It is a picture of a Gypsy victim taken by an SS man in occupied Poland. It shows an anonymous small and old woman in the snow, probably only a few minutes before her execution. She had been stripped of her coat, which is seen thrown on the ground, and she clasps her hands, perhaps as a result of both frost and terror, or maybe begging her persecutors for her soul.

By gathering all the available data on the number of Gypsy victims in specific regions of the German and German occupied territories (for examples the reports of the *Einsatzgruppen* including the ethnic identification and the sex of their victims), Zimmermann makes an implicit suggestion regarding an overall figure of Gypsy victims, although he never adds up the figures to a total sum. Summing the collected data, Zimmermann's assessment of the number of the Gypsy victims of Nazi Germany amounts to 50,000 persons, 15,000 of whom were German Gypsies. To this one should add the Gypsy victims of the Fascist regimes in Croatia and Romania which might exceed 35,000. Zimmermann indicates that the total number of victims might exceed these figures. The result—less than 100,000 Gypsy victims—is even lower than Kenrick and Puxton's (1972) assessment of 219,600 victims. Their figures were not based on the reports of the *Einsatzgruppen*. Zimmermann's implied number of Gypsy victims is also much lower than the unsound figures which are circulated by Gypsy activists every now and then. There has always been a hidden comparison of the Nazi persecution of the Gypsies to the Holocaust of European Jewry. The activists, who were desperate to draw attention of an indifferent international public opinion to the miserable situation of Gypsies, claimed that Gypsies had suffered in fact a similar destiny as the Jews had during the Holocaust, and are therefore entitled to similar international recognition as the Jewish people received after the Holocaust (for example the UN resolution of 29 November 1947 supporting the foundation of a Jewish state in Palestine). Gypsies however deserve recognition even if their victims are not counted in Millions. The figures are bad enough, and do not change the genocidal character of the Nazi persecution of Gypsies.

Despite the differences in motives, character and number of victims the

Gypsy Holocaust, much like the Jewish Holocaust, has become a symbol for absolute evil in Western consciousness. The Nazi persecution of the Gypsies reveals horrible expressions of brutality and evil by German officials many of whom were not members of the Nazi party but identified with the regime's vision of purifying the German national community (what the Nazis called the *Volksgemeinschaft*) of 'inferior and backward elements'. A salient phenomenon in the persecution of the German Gypsies which bears similarities to the persecution of the German Jewry is the nearly complete absence of civil disobedience on the part of individuals within the German authorities in various hierarchical positions or within the Christian churches, all of whom understood the implications of the deportation of Gypsies to the East. Only very few Germans defended the German Gypsies. This traumatic experience contributed to the fact that in the consciousness of Gypsy victims and survivors, as is the case among the Jews, Nazi evil has since been perceived as a typically German trait and transferred as such into the collective memory of a younger generation that has been fortunate enough not to experience the persecution themselves.

In a conference in Jerusalem in November 1995, Ulrich Herbert, a prominent German historian of Freiburg University, defined the process which led to the annihilation of the European Jews as 'intentional cumulative radicalization', in which certain officials within the Nazi system pushed for a radicalization of the measures taken against the Jews, not just as part of a struggle for power and prestige but specifically for ideological reasons. It seems to me that Herbert's model is applicable to Michael Zimmermann's insightful presentation of the Nazi persecution of the Gypsies.

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National Socialism and Gypsies in Austria. *Erika Thurner*. Edited and translated by Gilya Gerda Schmidt, with a foreword by Michael Berenbaum. Tuscaloosa and London: The University of Alabama Press, 1998. 218 pp. ISBN 0-8173-0924-1.

Reviewed by Michael Zimmermann

Erika Thurner's book was originally published in German in 1983; one of its chapters appeared as an article in 1991. Now the English translation allows American and British readers access to the author's investigation into the central issues of Gypsy persecution in German occupied Austria.

Historical studies on National Socialist Gypsy policies agree that during the twelve years of the Nazi regime, the war brought an immense increase in the suppression and thus formed a new phase leading to the policy of extermination. The social isolation of the Gypsies was, for instance, maximalized in some places by 'Gypsy community camps' (*Zigeunergemeinschaftslager*). Those in Austria, in Salzburg and in Lackenbach in the Burgenland district, are documented in detail by Erika Thurner. After a reception camp (*Aufnahmelager*) for Gypsies was established in the vicinity of the Salzburg horse racing track in May 1939, the Salzburg criminal police established a new camp in the suburb of Leopoldskron. The Gypsies in the city or district first underwent identity checks and were then brought to the camp, which was fenced, surrounded by watch towers and controlled by armed guards. From the summer of 1940, there were two rows of barracks in an area of about half a square kilometre, each row containing 300 to 400 detainees. The individual families, comprising eight to eleven persons on average, each had one box and a stretcher. Leaving the camp was permitted only to go shopping and—under armed escort—to go to work.

The Lackenbach camp in Burgenland was founded on 23 November 1940.

Michael Zimmermann is historian and researcher at the Ruhrlandmuseum in Essen, Goethestraße 41, 45128 Essen, Germany.

An order from the Reich Interior Ministry of 31 October 1940 had made it clear to the Austrian criminal police that the planned 're-settlement' of 6,000 Gypsies from the Ostmark (as Austria was named then) to Poland could not take place in the next years; in the meantime, it was important to erect 'collection camps'. The establishment for this particular persecution of the Burgenland Roma, which followed the economic and political crises in the area in the period between the two world wars, was prepared by a memorandum written by Dr Tobias Portschy, who in March 1938 was made *Gauleiter* of the NSDAP for Burgenland. In this region, where Roma had already led a sedentary life for more than 150 years, Portschy gave the 'Gypsy Question' priority over the 'Jewish Question'. The principal aspect of his memorandum, which was filled with repressed sexual fantasies and anxiety regarding racial mixing, was that the Gypsies were a huge danger to the preservation of pure German blood in the borderlands.

Admissions to Lackenbach were arranged by the criminal police office in Vienna; the Inspectorate II b there also provided the camp manager, his deputy and the most important officials in the administration. The surroundings of the camp were hermetically sealed off and surrounded by barricades with barbed wire, before supervision was slightly relaxed in 1944. For the camp in Lackenbach, as well as in Salzburg, it has been documented that those inmates regarded as fit for work were forcibly sent out to work. The expenses of the camp were to be met as far as possible from the earnings of the Gypsies, and they were to obtain only some 10 per cent of their income as pocket money. The men, but also some of the women and children were employed mainly in construction or as unskilled workers in agriculture and industry.

Apart from going to work, the detainees in Lackenbach were permitted to leave the camp only by producing a pass, which was specially provided by the camp management on rare occasions. Letters and cards were subject to censorship. Those interned were permitted to receive visitors only under guard in a courtyard in front of the camp. Camp Elders were appointed to maintain internal security, and Kapos for the supervision of the work were chosen from among the Gypsies. In cases of an infringement of the relevant prescriptions, draconian punishments were ordained, up to imprisonment in a concentration camp. The living quarters in Lackenbach have been described as cramped and too small for the families; food was no better than in a concentration camp. Only work outside the camp allowed any improvement in the food rations. Medical care was completely inadequate: The local

doctor for the Lackenbach community was responsible for the camp in addition to his normal duties. When the camp was affected by an epidemic of typhoid fever in 1941–1942, it was totally isolated. The internees were left to care for themselves, medical care was stopped altogether.

In April 1941, 193 Roma from Burgenland were interned in Lackenbach. By 1 November 1941, the number rose to a maximum of 2,335 persons. Entire Gypsy caravan sites and settlements, which existed on the fringes of many towns and villages in Burgenland, were cleared, the Gypsies' dwellings often simply razed. The extraordinarily fervent local and regional witch-hunt against the Burgenland Roma explains why they in particular, were declared a priority Gypsy group for transport to German-occupied Poland. When the option occurred to the State Security Office (*Reichssicherheitshauptamt*—RSHA) in the fall of 1941, 5,000 Burgenland Roma were deported to the Łódź ghetto and crammed together there in a special sector. Before the end of the year, hundreds had fallen victim to spotted fever. The ghetto administration and the mayor of Łódź predicted crowding, food shortages, and epidemics as a result of the deportations. Shortly after the transports arrived, the housing and food situation became ever more unbearable and epidemics spread. German officials who predicted the catastrophe manipulated the conditions in such a way to ensure that it would in fact occur. In the end, those confined in Łódź were so malnourished and sick that they appeared to those responsible for the situation as 'subhumans', who must somehow be eliminated. The survivors of the epidemics, like the Jews, suffocated in gas vans in Kulmhof.

As a result of a typhus epidemic around New Year 1941–2, the number of detainees in Lackenbach itself sank to an all-time low of 550 persons. Between September 1942 and the dissolution of the camp on 29 March 1945, there were 600 to 900 internees, including 200 to 300 children. In 1943 individual Gypsies from Burgenland were deported to Auschwitz–Birkenau. Only a few Roma were set free by the Lackenbach camp administration. Several others undertook escape attempts; when they were recaptured, they were punished by being beaten. Solitary confinement, deprivation of food rations, heavy labour in the camp, cutting off of hair and deportation to a concentration camp were further punishments. 237 people died in the Lackenbach camp during the war. The most frequent causes of death reported were: malnourishment, debility, whooping cough, pneumonia, tuberculosis, in children also measles and chicken pox.

Erika Thurner's volume also focuses on broader aspects of the Gypsies'

fate under the Swastika: the ideological foundations and legal ordinances regarding Gypsies, the discrimination and persecution in Burgenland as a whole and the Gypsies as subjects of medical experiments carried out by Nazi doctors. The English translation has also been expanded by an updated bibliography and numerous photographs, which were not included in the German edition. Since the German publication of *National Socialism and Gypsies in Austria* research on the Nazi policy against the Gypsies has of course made progress; Erika Thurner's book has nevertheless remained the authoritative study of Nazi policy toward Gypsies in Austria.

Der Schutz der Sinti und Roma in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland als ethnische Minderheit gemäss Art. 3 Abs. 3 GG. [The Protection of Sinti and Roma as an Ethnic Minority in the Federal Republic of Germany in accordance with Art. 3, Par. 3 of the Constitution]. *Dörte Marten-Gotthold*. Studien zur Tsiganologie und Fokloristik 25. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Verlag, 1998. 297 pp. DM 98,- (paper). ISBN 3-631-32794-3.

Reviewed by Marcia Rooker

Dörte Marten-Gotthold's starting point is that Sinti and Roma are still discriminated against in Germany fifty years after the end of National Socialism. The aim of her book is to find a legal way to protect Sinti and Roma as an ethnic minority. The path she is exploring is Article 3 Paragraph 3 of the German Constitution. Article 3 guarantees equal treatment, and paragraph 3 reads: 'No one may be disadvantaged or favored because of sex, parentage, race, language, homeland and origin, faith, or religious or political opinions. No one may be disadvantaged because of a handicap.'

The first part of her book, about 95 pages, portrays the social situation of Sinti and Roma in Germany; the second part, another 170 pages, is the more legal part where she tries to explore whether Art. 3.3 of the German Constitution is a means for Sinti and Roma to leave behind their position as a

Marcia Rooker is a researcher at the law faculty of Nijmegen University, the Netherlands. She is working on a thesis on the international legal protection of Roma and Sinti in Europe. Address: Centre for Migration Law, PO Box 9049, 6500 KK Nijmegen, The Netherlands. E-mail: M.Rooker@jur.kun.nl.

'Randgruppe' (fringe group) and to become an ethnic minority (p. 15). The first part seems to be obligatory in books on Roma and Sinti issues: history, including Nazi persecution and the aftermath, origins, language, culture including fairy tales and music. Her conclusion is that Sinti and Roma are a minority from a sociological point of view because of their language, culture and traditions, their origins and history (p. 92). I would have preferred a reference to some sociological study with a definition of 'minority' and an elaboration on the fact that Sinti and Roma define themselves as a minority or perhaps minorities. There is no consensus on a definition of a minority, not among sociologists, nor among lawyers.

The best part here is the analysis of the treatment of Roma and Sinti with respect to the 'Entschädigungspraxis', the way the demands for compensation after the Nazi-era were dealt with. Although the situation has improved since in 1956 High Court decided that Sinti and Roma were only persecuted for racial reasons after 1943, the struggle for recognition as victims of Nazi persecution is still continuing. Another valuable thing is that the author recognizes that the relation between Sinti and Roma on the one hand, and the rest of society, especially the authorities, on the other hand is burdened by centuries of persecution (p. 249), something for the authorities to bear in mind when developing a policy that regards Sinti and Roma.

In the second part of the book, the legal part, the concept of minority is elaborated on, using the definition given by Capotorti in his 1979 United Nations report on the right of persons belonging to ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities (p. 99). International law is certainly not Marten-Gotthold's strength. She totally ignores protection offered to members of minorities by Article 27 of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Germany is a party to this Covenant. The Human Rights Committee, in charge of monitoring the implementation of this Covenant, published a General Comment on Article 27 in 1994. The Committee states that being a member of a minority is a human right and therefore inalienable, and independent of recognition by a government, of citizenship or even permanent residency. This is an interesting point of view with regard to Germany, where members of a long-established Sinti and Roma community live alongside recent Roma immigrants from Eastern Europe. According to the current German interpretation of the concept of minority only the long-established Sinti and Roma community constitutes a minority or 'Volksgruppe'; the recently arrived Roma are to be considered 'migrants' and thus not entitled to minority protection. This is an important difference of opinion between

Germany and the Human Rights Committee, and one that is not mentioned in this book. With respect to the European human rights system the author refers to a draft protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights giving rights to members of minorities, including the possibility to lodge an individual complaint with the European Court of Human Rights. (This initiative is on ice and not likely to be thawed soon).

The better part of the book is a discussion of German national law with regard to minorities. Marten-Gotthold explains that the Constitution does not explicitly protect minorities, but Article 3.3 should be interpreted as such, and it does apply to Sinti and Roma. It is a pity she does not make a clear distinction between non-discrimination, i.e. the absence of discrimination, and affirmative action to achieve an equal position. For example, denying members of a minority access to educational facilities is clearly discrimination and a violation of the Constitution as well as of human rights treaties. Affirmative action is to make sure that members of that minority do not only have access to educational facilities, but have either education in the minority language, or special facilities to enable them to be educated in the majority language. Marten-Gotthold does acknowledge that the State should not only abstain from discriminatory measures, but also take affirmative action. But then she entangles herself in the affirmative action that is limited to the Danish, Frisian and Sorb minorities (p. 168). This, she claims, constitutes unequal treatment of Sinti and Roma. This may of course be true, but I do not consider this to be the main question with regard to equal treatment. Sinti and Roma should not be treated as other minorities, they should be treated equally in general. It is the fact that they are treated unequally compared to the rest of society that constitutes discrimination. That other minorities are treated better is of course unjustifiable, but this in itself is not the reason why Roma and Sinti should be protected.

In the last paragraphs of her book Marten-Gotthold emphasises the affirmative action part of minority protection, stating that the aim of Article 3.3 of the Constitution is to enable the minority to maintain its cultural identity in every domain of life, and to shape its distinctive character. This is to be achieved through preservation and transmission of language and maintenance of religion, culture and traditions. The minority must have the (political) means to achieve this and the State is obliged to make it possible. Naturally, the state has to see that the measures taken do not discriminate against Sinti and Roma, considering the history burdened by discrimination and persecution (p. 248).

The book has an interesting starting point, discussing the German constitutional minority protection framework from the point of view of Sinti and Roma. It is very informative and therefore useful in the struggle for a better position for Sinti and Roma in German society. The parts on national law are the most valuable in this respect, with good analyses of the position of Sinti and Roma as a minority and state obligations with respect to this minority. However, Marten-Gotthold follows the German interpretation of the concept of minority (a distinct group, established for a considerable period in the territory of the state), ignoring the international state of the art. This is unfortunate, from a theoretical point of view and from the point of view of the Roma who arrived during recent decades. Why should only Sinti and Roma whose ancestors have lived in Germany for many generations be entitled to preserve their language and culture, but not those who have arrived more recently?

The Romani element in non-standard speech. Yaron Matras, editor. *Sondersprachenforschung* 3. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998. V + 290 pp. DM 148,- (Paper). ISBN 3-447-04071-8.

Reviewed by Karl Sornig and Ursula Glaeser

Contents: Para-Romani revisited (Yaron Matras); The X-phemistic value of Romani in non-standard speech (Kate Burridge, with Keith Allan); Bystander deixis (Jan Rijkhoff); Para-Romani languages versus secret languages: Differences in origin, structure and use (Peter Bakker); Der Romani-Wortschatz in den Romani-Misch-Dialekten (Pararomani) (Norbert Boretzky); Romani elements in non-standard Scandinavian varieties (Jakob Ladefoged); Romani words in non-standard British English and the development of Angloromani (Anthony P. Grant); The Romani element in German secret languages: Jenisch and Rotwelsch (Yaron Matras); Berwick-upon-Tweed: Romani words in an English dialect (Jutta Pistor); Romani elements in present-day Caló (Kate Leigh); Index of names; Index of subjects.

The main subject matter of this collection of studies can be summarized as follows: One focus of the contributions is on the impact of Romani on non-

Karl Sornig and Ursula Glaeser work at the Department of Linguistics, University of Graz. Correspondence address: Institut für Sprachwissenschaften, Merangasse 70, 8010 Graz, Austria. E-mail: ursi@gewi.kfunigraz.ac.at.

Romani Studies 5, Vol. 10, No. 1 (2000), 95–100. ISSN 1528–0748

Romani language varieties. Their function is described by the editor as ‘enriching, sustaining, or indeed even helping to create specialised varieties of *other* languages’ (p. 9). Another main focus is Para-Romani, its emergence, linguistic genealogy, and structural as well as functional differences between Romani proper on the one hand, and secret languages or jargons on the other hand. These topics are discussed quite extensively: The editor’s leading article gives a very compact, comprehensive introduction to the underlying problems.

Burridge and Rijkhoff stress the pragmatic aspects of non-standard speech in proposing X-phemistic value and bystander deixis respectively as a possible functional characterization of non-standard varieties. This can be regarded as the rather general, not Romani-specific end of a continuum; its other end is covered by Jutta Pistor’s and Kate Leigh’s rather variety-specific empirical studies on ‘Romani words in an English dialect’, and ‘Romani elements in present day Caló’. Inbetween these two aspects, the more global—though still specific—contributions of Grant and Ladefoged deal with ‘Romani words in non-standard British English and the development of Angloromani’, and ‘Romani elements in non-standard Scandinavian varieties’. Bakker, Boretzky, and Matras discuss the whole range of problems concerning Para-Romani versus Romani proper, and Para-Romani versus secret languages or jargons in all their structural and functional aspects. In addition, each deals with individual Para-Romani or jargon varieties.

Romani proper, or, as Boretzky calls it, conservative dialects, may be characterised by their ‘internal linguistic coherence’ (p. 1), which means that the specific Romani grammatical system and inherited lexicon is preserved. Though there is dialectal variation, Romani remains the same language everywhere.

Para-Romani languages use a Romani lexicon alongside a non-Romani grammatical system. This is a fact on which all contributors agree. There remain points of discussion: Should the various Para-Romani varieties like Angloromani, Caló and Scandoromani be regarded as distinct languages? Are they sub-varieties of Romani, or of the host language? Boretzky and Bakker, for example, call Para-Romani ‘mixed’, or ‘intertwined’ languages, i.e. they are neither exclusively the one nor the other. Second, the authors do not agree whether Para-Romani varieties function as mother tongues. It is not clear what is actually being discussed: The first language acquired, or the mother tongue, or the ingroup everyday-language. Whereas Bakker calls Para-Romani the ‘first or main’ language of a child (p. 92), Ladefoged

stresses the fact that ‘no Para-Romani language is known to have native speakers: the language which supplies the grammatical system is the mother tongue of the speakers of the Para-Romani language’ (p. 134), and Grant notes that Para-Romani ‘is not acquired as a first language’ (p. 165). Among the various functions of Para-Romani, one feature seems most important: Unlike secret languages, Para-Romani varieties are ethnic languages, spoken by people who define themselves as Gypsies.

Concerning the genesis of Para-Romani varieties, rather different theories are proposed. In short, the discussion touches on a series of subjects of general linguistic interest. Generally speaking, the structural and functional status of Para-Romani is part of a process of language attrition. In this connection it is quite irrelevant whether we regard the ongoing process as a stage in the process of language loss, or just a state of intertwining languages. As a matter of fact, it is actually both. In addition, one should keep in mind that the adoption of a foreign morphological system depends on the type of the host language (p. 187; e.g., Finnish vs. English).

Despite the fact that the question of the genesis of Para-Romani varieties is not resolved—ultimately because of the lack of reliable sources—we can imagine a scenario close to the one Bakker and Boretzky are proposing (see below). What we cannot share is the idea of a consciously created Para-Romani, as suggested by Ladefoged. According to him, Para-Romani ‘came into being as a conscious creation. We do not know whether Norwegian and Swedish Para-Romani in the beginning functioned as ethnolects . . .’ (p. 160). Whereas secret languages or professional Cant may, to some extent, be ‘invented’, it seems difficult to imagine, especially in connection with itinerant people, that some wise old men or women should have come together to create a Para-Romani language by taking the words from one language, and the grammar from another. Para-Romani must have evolved in a natural way, and we like the idea that at a certain time both Romani proper and Para-Romani may have existed, and perhaps even still exist, alongside each other. The evolution of Para-Romani could be visualized as a process of relexification of the host language, as proposed by Boretzky (p. 98ff.), or even as an autonomous mechanism of language intertwining, as proposed by Bakker (p. 71ff.). We agree with both authors that Para-Romani not only evolved naturally, but also could be used as a common means of communication—and as a secret language.

Clearly, in the discussion of the relationship between so-called Para-Romani varieties and non-Romani subtypes, like Jenisch or Rotwelsch, or

just 'ordinary' slang, functional aspects of use and structural features would need to be analysed separately. Concerning the latter, Romani derivation may still be productive (in some cases the opposite takes place: *tšorer* 'thief', instead of *čor*, i.e. derivation according to the German system (p. 216), while nominal inflection is not being used any longer or replaced by foreign elements. Likewise, predication is in most cases non-Romani. Lexical and phonological distortion (p. 42), so prominent and frequently exploited in secret languages, is absent from Para-Romani dialects (p. 73).

Interestingly, the distribution of the Romani elements, i.e. the clandestine vocabulary, among different semantic areas (pragmatic domains) coincides with that in slang varieties. The majority of camouflage-words deal with the following concepts: parts of the human body and their functions (especially sexuality), food and drink, the police (and similar authorities) and their clientele, ethnic distinctions (*biboldo* 'Jew', p. 211), terms of contempt and assault.

One central, if not essential strategy of (linguistic) secrecy is the use of euphemisms (p. 45), and dysphemisms for that matter (we find it hard to agree with Burridge's apprehension of the term 'dysphemism' as a means of excluding outsiders from communicative contact; p. 44), i.e. the avoidance of taboo expressions. This includes politeness strategies, such as bystander deixis (as discussed in Rijkhoff, p. 51 ff.), which might be regarded as a universal cultureme. Naturally, it functions almost exclusively in oral communication.

Secret languages serve various purposes. This is why we think it necessary and appropriate to argue that Para-Romani should not be understood exclusively in connection with the facilities, activities, and crafts of beggars and thieves. Many of the early glossaries give the impression of dealing with underworld dialects and nothing else (p. 208). Admittedly, the majority of these collections of strange words were not motivated by any objective linguistic interest, but rather by considerations of maintaining law and order (p. 198). Whatever purists might venture to propound, so-called marginal language varieties play a considerable role in the creation and development (albeit defying standardization) of in-group languages, as well as of everyday (oral) usage.

The transition of in-group languages into general substandard speech may be accompanied by semantic shifts, such as *gadžo* 'non-Gypsy man' to 'gigolo' (p. 90 ff.), *gaschi* 'non-Gypsy woman' to 'beautiful girl' (in Rotwelsch, p. 244), cp. Yiddish *schickse* 'non-Jewish girl' as a derogatory term

for any girl (in German slang); *derni* 'beautiful' instead of 'young' (p. 222). Slang dictionaries as well as treatises of similar sub-standard varieties abound in dubious etymological hypotheses. One outcome of these may be folk-etymologically created semantic novelties (*gav* 'village' > German *Kaff*, p. 203; *rat* 'night' > German *Ratte*, p. 209): 'Etymology is sometimes to a certain extent a matter of opinion' (p. 237).

Apart from the fact—testifiable from research experience—that the judgements and opinions of informants cannot in any way be relied upon (informants negotiate and even modify and alter meanings by explanations, cf. p. 244), research on oral language use is naturally hampered by the lack of written material. One has to rely on the reports of a few collectors and compilers (Matras provides an extensive critical survey of the sources available on secret languages and jargons; p. 210 et passim), whose findings are most probably biased (see above). Moreover, glossaries are evidently often based on each other, i.e. the authors plagiarized earlier sources despite claiming first-hand investigation (p. 210). It should also be noted that the sources often neglect the difference between absolute and relative frequencies (p. 212). Of much greater interest are lexical items reported only by one author and unattested in all or most of the other collections.

One handicap of field research by means of questionnaires is that they usually only contain isolated lexical elements. The only exception seems to be the study of Giessen-Jenisch (p. 222). There are almost no examples of actual speech events that would consist of syntactically structured, or even connected utterances in a dialogue. Isolated words do not constitute and cannot represent a (spoken) language in use, although they may very well—as in the case of Para-Romani varieties—function as signals of identity and solidarity (p. 221, n. 27).

One exceptional fact (referred to by Boretzky, p. 98) should not remain unmentioned, i.e. that language attrition usually means loss of grammatical structures first, whereas the lexicon would stay at least partly unimpaired. Borrowing can be motivated by the social success of the donor-language and its users, notwithstanding the fact that these are Gypsies: The Jenisch regard these as 'successful conspirators against social order' (p. 212). Usually—and this is evident from the history of minority languages—when a language falls out of use, the first thing that is lost is the lexicon, not the grammar, primitive and rudimentary as its remnants may have become.

We must keep in mind that when talking about languages, we are always and mainly talking about people who use a language, which sometimes and

to some extent differs from one individual to another. Not only do the speakers of one variety show different degrees of competence, but also one and the same speaker may use different varieties of Romani. In Oberwart/Austria, for example, speakers with quite different degrees of competence can be found. While the older people still use e.g. fully inflected forms of the nouns, younger people with quite a good command tend to drop synthetic cases in favour of analytic cases by using prepositions instead of case endings. Children with very little competence use Romani words in German sentences, mainly for the sake of having a secretive variety which they can use in the presence of other kids, teachers or other grown-up *gadsche*. Romani proper as well as Para-Romani and secret languages are oral languages and therefore even more exposed to variation and various kinds of modification.

Gypsy–English, English–Gypsy Dictionary. *Atanas Slavov*. New York: Hippocrene Press, 1999. 229 pp. USD 12.95 (Paper). ISBN 0-7818-0775-1.

Reviewed by Anthony P. Grant

This small book, never before published, with a bright pink cover and a front cover reproduction of a Romantic Era painting which is nowhere identified, purports to cover the vocabulary of two forms of Romani spoken in Bulgaria, namely the dialect of the Christian Roma of Sliven, which is closely allied to Drindari, and Sofia Erli. However, this attention to dialectal detail is not carried out very extensively in the body of the work, which consists of a Romani-English section (17–133) with about 3,000 entries, and an English-Romani one (135–229) with about 2,500 entries. The majority of words remain unclassified according to dialect, though Slavov does include a few words which he marks as coming from ‘Serbian’ and other dialects; these consist largely of names for Romani groups, or of stray words, such as ⟨panchayat⟩, which is given on p. 93 as being from Serbian Romani and meaning ‘council of five’ (it is of course Hindi).

Slavov’s sources, principally fieldwork which he carried out among Roma in Sliven in 1998 with support from the Bulgarian International Center for

Anthony P. Grant is postdoctoral Research Assistant at the Department of Linguistics, University of Manchester, Manchester M13 9PL, United Kingdom. E-mail: Anthony.Grant@man.ac.uk.

Romani Studies 5, Vol. 10, No. 1 (2000), 100–102. ISSN 1528–0748

Minority Studies and for International Relations, and a glossary of Sofia street jargons and student slang which he collected in the 1940s, are outlined in the introductory material (1–5). This is followed by a description of the alphabet used. Special features of this are ⟨lr⟩ for the retroflex rhotic, ⟨csh⟩ for the aspirated voiceless affricate, and ⟨oo⟩ for /u/ (the central vowel is represented as ⟨u⟩). Slavov indicates aspiration but not consistently, while stress, also marked inconsistently, is indicated by use of the grave accent. /h/ and /x/ are both ⟨h⟩ in his orthography. After the description of the orthography comes a list of abbreviations (11–12) and what the contents page calls ‘numeralers’ (13–15, these include the names of some of the faces of pairs of dice in backgammon).

Much of the vocabulary in the dictionary derives from Turkish or Bulgarian, and while many of these words are assimilated to Romani morphology by the use of such affixes as what Slavov writes as ⟨-oos⟩, many are not, for instance ⟨vint⟩ ‘bolt’ (p. 128), from Bulgarian, where it is a loan from Russian *vint*, itself borrowed from German *Gewinde*. One would have expected Slavov to give ⟨vintoos⟩ or a similar form. Many words listed in the Romani–English section cannot be found in the English–Romani one, and vice versa. The English of the English–Romani section is decidedly odd; it contains numerous spelling mistakes, misassignment of form classes (for example translating verbs as adjectives or nouns), and some locutions which sound very un-English: thus the Romani vocative is translated with ‘you’: ⟨dæe!⟩ ‘mother!’ is translated as ‘you mom!’.

There has never been a particularly extensive amount of lexicographical work done on Bulgarian forms of Romani, and this mess has not advanced the field. It cannot even be reliably used as a source of attestation for rare vocabulary items, because of the patchy dialectal labeling and the mixing of dialects. In many ways it is typical of many (though not all) of the volumes which issue from Hippocrene Press in its slipshod presentation and general chaos. Although constrained by earlier formats in the works which they have reprinted, Hippocrene have published dictionaries before now which had incorrect title-pages, sections which had been sent by the publishers for publication before the compilers had been able to finish proofreading them, or with entire signatures or even whole letters of the alphabet missing, and although there is nothing as gross in the production of this volume, the general air of hastiness hangs over it.

Why then pay it any attention? Simply because it is probably the most readily available work on Romani in a practical and commercial sense. If

American and British bookstores are likely to carry one book on Romani, it is more than likely to be this, because it comes from a publisher which specialises in materials on languages which are less commonly noticed or catered for by publishers in the Northern anglophone world, and whose wares are widely distributed to the bigger bookstores. To this day it is still very difficult for non-experts to get hold of any extensive or reliable account of the facts of Romani structure and lexicon apart from those found in books which sell mostly to specialists in the know or to academic libraries. That something as shoddy as this should be the only volume available on the topic when there are much better works available which are out of sight from, and financially beyond the reach of, many members of the reading public, is a cause for regret.

Das Brennglas [The burning-glass]. Aufgezeichnet von Ulrich Enzensberger. *Otto Rosenberg.* With a foreword by Klaus Schütz. Berlin: Eichborn, 1998. 144 pp. DM 36.-. ISBN 3-8218-0649-4.

Reviewed by Frank Sparing

The autobiography of the German Sinto Otto Rosenberg, *Das Brennglas*, is the product of a series of autobiographical interviews conducted in 1995 by Ulrich Enzensberger, now published with little revision.

Otto Rosenberg was born in Eastern Prussia in 1927. He gives an account of his childhood, which was mainly spent in Berlin, where the family lived in caravan sites and barracks. From his narrative it becomes evident how discrimination against Gypsies and the economic crisis of the late 1920s made the traditional livelihoods of itinerant traders impossible even before the Nazi rise to power, causing drastic impoverishment among the German Gypsies.

The Nazi takeover was clearly felt by the Berlin Gypsies in the spring of 1936 at the very latest: Rosenberg relates how police and SA surrounded the caravan site where he was living one morning without prior notice to move the inhabitants to the newly erected Gypsy camp in Berlin-Marzahn. Al-

Frank Sparing studied History and French in Düsseldorf and is currently engaged in research work at the Commemoration Site (Mahn- und Gedenkstätte) in Düsseldorf, Germany. Author's address: Kronprinzenstraße 130, 40217 Düsseldorf, Germany. E-mail: Frank.Sparing@hsp.de.

ready at this early stage the Gypsies were confined to the camp and kept under enclosure and surveillance.

Rosenberg gives an account of the catastrophic effects—both social and hygienic—which this internment had on those concerned, how their daily life was subjected to reglementation, as well as of the brutality and despotism of the police officers guarding the camp. In sum he says about the situation in the camp of Berlin-Marzahn: ‘Only the elderly stayed on the site, the children went to school. The routine was almost but not quite organized in every detail. Everyone knew where everyone else was. Everyone was registered. Those able to work, worked.’ (p. 32, my translation) He gives a detailed account of the situation of himself and the other children who were obliged to attend the ‘school’ held at the campsite.

He also has very clear memories of other significant events during the Nazi persecution of Gypsies, among them how the ‘racial scientists’ from Robert Ritter’s team came to the Marzahn camp to conduct their ‘research’ on the inmates and even gave him some menial work in their institute in the Public Health Office for some time. He also narrates how, in the summer of 1938, in the course of a police raid on ‘work shy’ people some young men from the camp were arrested and sent to concentration camps.

When Rosenberg was thirteen years old, he was recruited to carry out forced labor in an armament plant manufacturing cartouches for submarines. Although he had designed a method to increase productivity, the chief of production had him arrested after three years for ‘sabotage’. He spent four months under arrest and was subsequently sent to Auschwitz concentration camp.

The account of Rosenberg’s experiences in Auschwitz gives an impression of the terror of the camp, which otherwise is beyond imagination. Rosenberg graphically narrates what he experienced and observed in Auschwitz as well as in the nearby Gypsy camp in Birkenau. He describes the brutality of the SS-guards as well as that of the inmates who were deputized by the administration; he talks about fatigue and experiments on humans. Most of all, however, it becomes clear how people behaved in the face of this terror, and especially how they were changed by the merciless reality of the camp:

Those who were really down and had no one to help them at least a little bit, died inexorably. Those who had been beaten were already marked. Those who were emaciated, those who had the look of Death on their face, triggered such an aggression from those they served that they were beaten even more, until one day they

just dropped dead. They simply didn't stand a chance. You only stood a chance if you didn't fall ill, if you were able to work. [p. 63, my translation]

Rosenberg himself was pronounced fit to work, which saved his life during the 'dissolution' of the Gypsy camp Birkenau in the summer of 1944. Thousands of Gypsies who had been held there with him were gassed. Rosenberg and a few hundred other survivors were first brought to Buchenwald concentration camp. From there he was moved on to Dora-Mittelbau concentration camp and finally he was liberated at Bergen-Belsen in mid-April 1945.

Rosenberg finally went home to Berlin, but found that discrimination had in no way ceased together with the Nazi regime. He encountered the perpetrators of Nazi crimes still occupying the same administrative positions they had held before 1945; and he finally gave up the fight to obtain restitution.

This autobiography grips the reader especially through the pace of the narrative and the extent of the narrator's memory, which can only be called impressive. There are only very few, on the whole unimportant inaccuracies; and these are explained in Enzensberger's editorial footnotes. Enzensberger's comments are further meant to locate Rosenberg's experiences in the wider historical context. On the whole this goal is achieved, though only part of the literature in the field is taken into account. A more detailed consideration of the research would surely have served to eliminate the few and minor inaccuracies which unfortunately are present in this part as well.

In sum, however, it must be said that Otto Rosenberg's autobiography achieves exactly what much of the existing work has failed to do. The author's subjective perspective provides an insight into Nazi persecution of Gypsies which is normally not obtainable through an analysis of official sources (although these are no less subjective in character). Here, the persecution does not disappear behind columns of figures but is exemplified in a way that is representative for the lives of thousands of other Gypsies. All the more so, since Rosenberg's autobiography is outstanding in its literary merit—not just among the literature on Nazi persecution of Gypsies.