3

TELLING THE PAST

The multitemporal challenge

> What is memory? Do we hunt it with a questionnaire or are we supposed to use a butterfly net?
>
> James Fentress and Chris Wickham[1]

This chapter looks further at the relationship between history and anthropology in the study of Europe, with a focus on questions of methodology. How should anthropologists investigate a field replete not only with people capable of giving oral testimony but one also filled with documentation and other kinds of evidence of the past – that is with a multiplicity of forms of telling the past? What are the challenges of working with different accounts of the past – and of different modes of historicising?

One development within social and cultural anthropology, introduced in the previous chapter, is an increasingly 'multidirectional' approach to considering the relationships between past and present. This can be seen as a methodological correlate of 'past presencing'. If past presencing is the empirical phenomenon of how people variously experience, understand and produce the past in the present, the challenge for anthropologists is how to approach it. This can be seen as a multitemporal challenge. In this chapter we will look at approaches – some experimental – that seek to explore the potentially multidirectional relationships between pasts and presents; and that investigate the intersection or gaps between individual and various forms of collective memory. This investigation involves more specific methodological challenges too, such as those concerning the status and veracity of different historical tellings; finding ways of hearing 'quiet voices', that is, accounts that do not readily become part of the wider public sphere; and representing multitemporality.

Anthropology and history: towards an entanglement

As noted in the previous chapter, Europe's various anthropological and ethnological traditions have taken a range of approaches to history. In the anthropologies of much of continental Europe, a historical approach has been and often still is taken for granted, with ethnology sometimes regarded as a sub-branch of history, dealing with 'present-day' peasant histories on the brink of disappearing. Across Europe, however, there have been increasingly sophisticated and multi-directional approaches to the past over more recent decades. In Anglophone anthropology, the expansion of ethnographic work in Europe in the 1970s and 1980s came together with, and in part propelled, a growing and sometimes overstated critique of various existing, especially structural-functionalist, conventions. These included synchronism: the tendency to focus on a particular moment in time as though it were an enduring reality. Enshrined also in the ethnographic present (the use of the present tense in ethnographic accounts), synchronism entailed an assumption of stability that was clearly at odds with the emphasis on social change that characterised most social scientific work on Europe.[2] Political economy perspectives also highlighted the need to take macro, as well as micro, structures and transformations into account, and this demanded use of documentary sources beyond those concerning localities themselves. The emergence of questions of identity, belonging and change as key problematics within the anthropology of Europe added to the demand that anthropologists pay attention to history, particularly in the context of 'ethnic resurgence' – a version of what was later to be called 'identity politics' – in which identities and rights were often articulated through claims about the past.

Developments within the discipline of history also encouraged some anthropologists to take a more historical perspective. In addition to the invention of tradition work, discussed in the previous chapter, the fact that historians such as Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie (e.g. 1979/1975) and Keith Thomas (e.g. 1973/1971) were using and praising the perspectives offered by anthropology, perhaps helped bolster anthropologists' confidence to use historical materials and fostered the development of historical ethnography in particular.[3] Historical ethnography employs anthropological concepts and perspectives to study a period of time in the past, generally focused on a small locality, the archive thus forming the field site (Des Chene 1997: 76). While historians, such as Le Roy Ladurie, have used this approach to construct detailed and essentially synchronic accounts of past times, anthropologists have more often taken larger time periods and undertaken historical ethnography also in order to highlight transformation, change and degrees of continuity (Silverman and Gulliver 1992: 17). On the whole, these anthropological studies have been unidirectional in the sense that they take a stretch of time and show forward-plotted change. In some of its most sophisticated hands, however, such as those of Kirsten Hastrup in her work on Iceland (1985, 1990, 1992a), the ways in which conceptions of history and time themselves play into historical change are part of the account.

As anthropologists of Europe also came to tackle topics such as national and regional identities, as well as more local ones, they faced a wide range of available materials – including numerous written histories that might be brought to bear on localities and topic. There were also typically ample historical records available at local levels in archives, local history societies, libraries and museums, many local areas of Europe having their own strong historiographic traditions (Silverman and Gulliver 1992: 3). Increasingly this also involves kinship-based histories that are part of searches for family ancestors – 'roots tourism' (Basu 2007), 'ancestral tourism' (Darieva 2011), 'popular genealogy' (Cannell 2011), or 'family-treeing' as those in a Northern English town studied by Jeanette Edwards call it (Edwards 2010, 2012). Sometimes this is strongly linked with identification of particular places as 'homelands' of certain surnames; and these can become the centre for 'roots tourism' as Paul Basu (2007) has discussed in his work on diaspora visiting of the Scottish Highlands, or as occurs in 'ancestral tourism' as Tsympylma Darieva (2011) writes of US Armenians returning to Armenia. All of this has provided not simply large amounts of potential historical evidence but has raised questions about the status of different sources and how to bring these together with each other and with other kinds of ethnographic data.

Multitemporal approaches

While a focus on present uses of the past was an important corrective to the previous temporal directionality which had tended to regard the past teleologically as leading inexorably to, and shaping, the present ('culminatory history' as Davis has called it, 1992: 16), there was a risk that this would simply replace one form of unidirectionality with another – in the opposite direction. This was 'presentism' (e.g. Peel 1989). By working uni-directionally from the present, a 'presentist' perspective was only concerned with the past that was being consciously used in the present day. 'The past', therefore, tended to be depicted as something largely 'made up' in the present, with the emphasis especially on the manipulation of history. What it ignored was both the intrinsic interest of the past – and the possible contribution of anthropology to understanding this – and less overt or self-conscious relationships between past and present. Some ethnographic work, as discussed in the previous chapter, tried to move beyond this by looking both at appropriations and recastings of history. In my work on the Scottish Hebrides I borrowed the notion of the past 'sourcing' the present from the philosopher Charles Taylor (1989) to capture this idea, and to explain how the past might shape the present in ways of which present-day actors were relatively unaware (Macdonald 1997). By trying to look simultaneously at the ways in which the past was multiply encoded, recorded and transmitted at different points in time, as well as at the various ways in which the past could inform the present, and the present use the past, anthropological work offered multidirectional possibilities which went further than 'history' as generally

performed by historians, or than 'historical ethnography' or the 'anthropology of history' as normally conceived.[4]

A multitemporal approach, then, is not only about how the past is referred to in the present. The following are all dimensions that can be taken into account:

(a) Ways in which events, persons or whatever, were perceived and experienced at the time.
(b) Ways in which events or experiences were encoded at the time; i.e. how they were materialised or documented. Both a and b may also involve attention to historiography – that is, to the ways historians may have perceived and recorded events; and to notions of time and change (including perceptions of past, present and future).
(c) Ways in which past traces survive over time, including attention to why these and not others may endure and to the structuring of historical evidence (as text, trace, material, verbal account and so forth) at different moments in time.
(d) Ways in which past events and experiences are perceived, experienced, used and recast today, including the notions of time, change, identity etc that are implicated.[5]

This schema, based upon that developed by Edwin Ardener (1989), is, perhaps inevitably, a little crude but it is intended as a useful point of reference in order to develop a multitemporal practice, and to move beyond a purely documentary approach to find ways of dealing with and theorising various kinds of 'past presences'.

The term 'multitemporal' alludes to George Marcus's advocacy of what he calls 'multisited fieldwork' – conducting fieldwork framed not by place but by 'following' particular actors, ideas or processes into multiple locations; an approach that has been highly influential in anthropology since it was propounded in the mid-1990s.[6] Multisited fieldwork offers the potential to unsettle not only assumptions of bounded units of study but also easy moral and political affiliations; and it can highlight links and movement that are typically obscured by a single site focus. More generally, multisited fieldwork provides ethnographers with a more mobile and plural set of viewpoints from which to try to depict a world of partial connections, flows, and boundary crossings.

Multitemporal 'fieldwork' is anthropological research that considers a range of time frames in its attempts to follow particular ideas, actors and processes. It can be considered a particular type of multisited fieldwork, similarly unsettling assumptions of boundedness – temporal in this case – by highlighting movement over time. Like multisited fieldwork, it can unsettle the certitude of any one site or period by showing it in relation to partially connected others, which is also a useful relativising strategy, and, as such, perhaps especially valuable to anthropologists working in familiar contexts. If, as Bernard Cohn has argued, a temporal perspective helps avoid objectifying culture by showing

it in transformation (1990: 43), a multitemporal perspective does so even more effectively. Like the multilocale imaginary, the multitemporal also helps us to better access and depict a world in which multidirectional movement seems to be increasingly complex. Thus, narratives of the traditional simply being replaced by the modern don't work when we need to take into account not only possible tradition invention but also self-aware nostalgia, retro-fashioning, alternative traditionalities, memory work, and multiple ways of being modern, some of which involve being traditional in new, or even old, ways.[7]

Field and archive

To use the term 'fieldwork' in relation to historical materials is to deploy the term loosely and perhaps is not fully justified. It is nevertheless worth reflecting on some of the similarities with ethnographic research with contemporary subjects. These include the delving into another life-world, an archaeological sensibility of 'digging into' the past and piecing together fragments of experience, and 'following clues' as the eminent Frankfurt anthropologist Ina Maria Greverus puts it (2002), echoing Carlo Ginzburg's (1980) description of pursuing clues in historical research. Importantly, it also involves dealing with materials that can 'speak back', upsetting our presuppositions. There are also experiential parallels. In *Dust,* historian Carolyn Steedman has written evocatively of the experience of working with archives in ways that are surely familiar to ethnographic fieldworkers – the anxiety of knowing 'I shall never *get it done'* (2001: 18), there always being that other file to check, the periods of boredom, the sometimes uncomfortably voyeuristic sense of glimpsing into other lives, and the exhilaration over discovered details that would seem of such little consequence to others. She writes too of accompanying physical dimensions of archive work that resonate with those of the field: the lying awake in 'the bed of the cheap hotel ... [amidst] the dust of others, and of other times' (2001: 17), the exhaustion of bus journeys, routes that become routine, the smells of the papers and places. Her observations show that historians, like ethnographers, also fetishise 'being there' (as Geertz famously put it, 1989; Steedman 2001: 70), even if they do not, perhaps, do so quite so much or in quite the same ways.

Working with historical materials – which may or may not form 'an archive' – is not, however, entirely like working with living subjects, though the experience of both, of course, can be extremely varied. While historical material – in the form of documentary records or material culture – undoubtedly has the capacity to surprise, to redirect the ethnographer's gaze or to be blankly obstinate, the nature of interaction is in general less mutually interactive. The historian is not usually the subject of their materials' gaze in the same way as is the case for the fieldworker. Reflecting on this, Mary Des Chene suggests that using historical materials is more like 'overhearing' than it is like 'conversation' and explains:

> it is from conversations among engaged and positioned subjects that one conjures answers to one's queries. The materials of the archives are a lacunary deposit from records of the past. Of what is missing, one only sometimes knows that it is missing at all. One may 'ask new questions' of documents, or discover a document that answers one's query. But one cannot ask that the archives fill silences or that they comment on the fact of silence itself.
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> (1997: 77)

Learning how to effectively 'overhear' documents, how to place them in relation to one another so that some help shed light on the silences – and possible motives for the silences – of others, is a skill that the historical ethnographer must acquire. Context must be generated from text, a process that Bernard Cohn suggests occurs simultaneously, and perhaps without its practitioners being fully aware of it, in ethnographic fieldwork (1990: 48).

Using multiple kinds of documents – such as official reports, newspapers, diaries, letters, novels – requires sensitivity to medium and genre; and so too does the use of other kinds of traces of the past – material objects and buildings, photographs and film, music and art.[8] Moreover, as Des Chene points out, the use of historical materials raises the same questions about locale, and how far to spread the net or follow connections, as does an ethnography of the present (1997: 73). If anthropology has traditionally focused upon small-scale locales, historians have more often taken the nation-state as their frame; though it is worth noting that international history provides a basis for work that does not constrain itself to single locales, even if it usually operates with a model of nation-states as relatively autonomous players. Increasingly, historians too use alternative frames, including the small-scale, such the village or estate. One 'locale' that has 'attracted the attention of entire battalions of historians in the past twenty-five years', according to Jay Winter, is the 'site of memory', which he defines as 'physical sites where commemorative acts take place' (2009: 252), such as battlefields. Such sites attract for their moral significance as 'topoi with a life-history' but also because they allow for attention to commemorative practices, as well as archival work, that draw in 'the local, national, and transnational' (2009: 252).

All historical materials inevitably incorporate an interplay of pasts and presents: there is the present of their original production in the past, the past-presents in which they survived over time, the pasts to which they refer and which they may reconstruct, and the present in which they now live. Anthropologists will usually work at least partly with some present-day accounts of the past – oral histories of some form. As we saw in the previous chapter, these might be presented in relatively storied form, perhaps already looking like historical narrative or heroic quest, or they might be more fragmentary, overheard in snippets and sotto voce remarks. Both despite, and also to some extent because of, the fact that oral history opens up the possibility of direct questioning by the researcher it poses

particular methodological problems, including those of relationships between the researcher and interviewee, and over issues of veracity and representation.[9] Writing of historians' use of oral history, Tony Kushner claims that it was initially used to provide what was perceived to be unproblematic reporting, with 'no need for an "anthropological gap" – the self-doubt and awareness of what could not be grasped by the participant-observer that has characterised the discipline of anthropology since 1945' (2006: 282). Growing awareness of the fact that oral histories were shaped through narrative conventions and that matters such as presumed preferences of the listener could shape them, led some historians to dismiss them as inherently unreliable (ibid.). Oral history was, in this view, 'mere memory' and, as such, not the realm of 'proper history'. But, as he notes, what has since developed is a more sophisticated understanding of oral history that recognises and seeks to also explore the ways in which these are structured in order to understand the shaping motivations and representational genres, as well as to gain a fuller understanding of the subject both in the past and the present.

Shaping memories

Questions about oral histories have been especially fraught in relation to World War II and the Holocaust.[10] The following three cases illustrate well some of the issues raised and collectively illuminate the complexities of conducting research in this field. Each example is from a different discipline in turn – history, anthropology and social psychology respectively; and all are exemplary in their sensitivity. While the three cases demonstrate some differences of approach, collectively they also show common concerns and the potential for multidisciplinary approaches.

The past in hiding

Historian Mark Roseman's *The Past in Hiding* (2000) insightfully reveals dilemmas involved in Holocaust testimony. The book recounts his research, beginning in 1989, with Marianne Ellenbogen, a Jewish woman who had escaped the Gestapo in 1943. The research was initially based on face-to-face interviews; then, after Ellenbogen's death in 1996, Roseman continued to work through her substantial collection of papers (of which he was largely unaware at the time of the interviews), to contact some of those who knew her and to generally follow through the threads that the interviews and other sources raised. What this made evident was that her account was not simply a reflection on her own experience but that she 'had subtly changed some incidents, forgotten others or "appropriated" memories that in fact belonged to other people' (2000: 13). He does not conclude, however, that this renders her testimony unreliable but instead tries to understand how and why she shaped it as she did. He found, for example, that 'The most striking and consistent pattern was the reworking

or obscuring of episodes of separation and loss' (2000: 477). The changes were often subtle – such as altering the route by which she escaped the Gestapo. These could sometimes slightly alter the degree of agency or possibilities available – for example, making it possible that her brother might also have managed to escape. But for the most part, what was involved, he surmises, was a 'defusion' of

> traumatic and guilt-ridden partings by amending them ...The important thing was to impose some mastery on the moments that caused such pain ... The stories had gently been changed into metaphors. As 'parables' of her and her family's fate they were slightly more bearable.
>
> (2000: 477–8)

It is as though the act of turning them into some kind of story itself helped her to narrate them; and at the same time, perhaps, it also helped her to keep at bay the memories that she did not want to address – the 'past in hiding' (like the vast cache of documents in the garage) of Roseman's title. This insight into a probably unconscious motivation for the storying of traumatic memory may also help shed light on a phenomenon recorded by other scholars, namely, the structuring of Holocaust memoirs through powerful existing narrative genres.[11]

Creative recollection of Tuscan trauma

Francesca Cappelletto's ethnographic research on memories of World War II massacres in Tuscan villages provides insight into the collective shaping of narratives and 'adoption' as memory of events experienced by others (2003, 2005). In the villages where she worked, brutal killings – carried out by German Nazis and Italian Fascist partisans in 1944 – were still being described by villagers more than half a century after they occurred.[12] The tellings were both by those who had witnessed the events as children and also people who had not been born at the time. The memories were maintained partly through dedicated commemorative events, especially on annual anniversaries of the murders (2005: 108). The repeated telling of the stories – with different individuals contributing to the accounts – gives them what she calls a 'choral quality' (2005: 121).

What sustains them too is the 'emotional density' of the trauma described (2005: 117). This in turn is linked to the strong and detailed visual imagery of the massacres themselves – of houses being burned, of horrible bodily suffering. In the communal tellings – as well as in more private ones – the massacres are graphically described, with the narrator visibly emotionally affected. One consequence of this is that listeners enter the experience of the teller:

> The repeated evocation of visual pictures prepares the listener, including those who were not eyewitnesses, to relive a narrated event as if he had actually experienced it. It is as if the story 'stays with' the listener and makes him suffer, as one woman ... said, because the strong visual imagery

> has such a strong visceral content ... In descriptions of episodes, the past perceptual experience of some individual, a sort of sensory memory, is communicated and reified in a 'text'.
>
> (2005: 118)

When people recall events that they did not live through as though they had been there, this is not, Cappelletto argues, some kind of questionable appropriation. Rather, it is because the memories have become part of communal identity and a 'felt' history that villagers share: 'Other people's stories are internalized and re-lived ... This is a "creative", but not fictive, aspect of one's memory' (2005: 124). Indeed, she also suggests that the collective nature of the process of sharing memories has helped to ensure their veracity: 'the description of events, put together like stone chips in a mosaic, seems to have been minutely sifted and subject to careful examination by the group' (2005: 107).

Contributing to the sense of a shared experienced past is also the fact that villagers feel that theirs is a history that the outside world has insufficiently acknowledged and that is at risk of misrepresentation by outsiders. They thus have a sense of collective ownership of it, which also legitimates their telling of stories that they regard as their own even if they did not see them with their own eyes. Both the sense of continuity with the past experience and of ownership are also mediated by place. Villagers live with visible reminders of the past – the church where people were killed, houses that were burnt out, woods to which people fled. These are, in effect, mnemonics – inscribed by past events – in the landscape.

Grandpa wasn't a Nazi

The work by Roseman and Cappelletto both concern what can be called survivor or victim memories. To some extent these have come to be a genre, with their own narrative conventions, conveyed through media and throughout Europe, even if they may vary locally.[13] Perpetrator narratives are less commonly recounted and in many ways are more problematic. This is evident in research conducted in Germany by social psychologist Harald Welzer and colleagues.[14] This research also provides a striking example of how narratives may change over generations. Interested in the way in which accounts of activity during the Third Reich were transmitted within families, Welzer's team conducted interviews across three generations: (1) grandparents who were adults during the early 1940s; (2) their children – the parent generation; and (3) grandchildren. What they found was a transformation over the generations such that grandchildren's accounts of their grandparents played down or eliminated any pro-Nazi activities and sympathies. Instead, they recounted instances of resistance – sometimes constructing these from scant or even contrary evidence in a process that Welzer and colleagues call 'cumulative heroization'. For example, their interviews include a recollection by a grandmother who gleefully describes how

she prevented Jews and Russians (who were displaced persons wandering the countryside in the immediate period after the war) from staying on her farm. At one point, she says, she found a Jew hiding in a barrel and turfed him out. In her grandchild's narrative, the incident is related as the grandmother hiding a Jew during the war in order to protect him from the Nazis. In another case given by Welzer *et al.*, a dead grandfather, who was almost certainly unsettled by his experiences of having shot a child during the war, is transformed by the grandchild generation into a hero who shot the officer who had shot children. Welzer and his team also showed how, when asked to repeat a narrative that the researchers had prepared, respondents tended to omit parts of the narrative that did not fit their expectations or revise them to fit stereotypes about how particular people (e.g. Russians) would behave. Furthermore, the researchers' accompanying large-scale survey, asking about the activities of grandparents and parents during the war, showed considerably lower responses acknowledging grandparents or parents as having been sympathetic to or involved in Nazism, and considerably higher levels of reported resistance, than accords with other historical sources. Their book reporting on this cross-generational restructuring of memory sums up the main tendency in its title, *Opa war kein Nazi* (*Grandpa wasn't a Nazi*).

All of these three examples highlight themes that are likely to be found in other contexts too – if in less marked form. The tendency to turn grandparents into heroes, for example, may be widespread, as is imbuing landscapes with mnemonic significance, recounting events in ways that fit preconceptions and stereotypes, and indeed the very 'storying' of pasts and lives. All of the authors draw on a range of sources in addition to individual oral histories. These include the use of documents by all three, collective interviews and participant-observation by Cappelletto, and the survey by Welzer. In all of the different disciplinary examples here, the mixing of sources is not conducted in a positivist triangulation spirit of corroborating the true and eliminating the false – though the latter is important in relation to the Holocaust especially, in a world containing Holocaust denial. The researchers' primary interest, however, is to show what particular accounts – individual and collective – reveal about people's understandings of themselves and the ways in which they invoke the past. Through different sources they are able to identify effects of genre, positioning and framing. While for many historians, though not those such as Roseman, the interest in genre, positioning and framing is mostly directed at better figuring out 'what happened', anthropologists, and social psychologists like Welzer, are more often interested in these frames and so forth in themselves, as instances of possible modes of experiencing and telling.

Quiet voices

One of the most important questions raised by the concerns above, and one of the most important concerns more generally for anthropologists, is what we

might call the 'audibility' of accounts. Neither all voices, nor all accounts, are encoded in forms which are equally likely to be heard by others. The 'reach' of some genres and media – and thus of some people's utterances – is greater than others. One motive for carrying out ethnographic fieldwork – for spending a considerable period of time looking, listening and learning *in situ* – is to try to come to be able to hear and understand those who do not easily, for one reason or another, get their voices heard.

Mutedness

A classical anthropological articulation of the relativities of audibility is Edwin and Shirley Ardener's discussion of 'mutedness' (E. Ardener 1975, 1975a; S. Ardener 1975). Originally discussed in relation to gender relations among the Bakweri of Cameroon, the Ardeners sought to alert anthropologists to the danger of accepting men's descriptions of the nature of Bakweri social relations as *the* Bakweri account. This was likely to occur, they pointed out, because men's forms of expression were more likely to conform to the ways in which Westerners expected to find matters expressed than did women's. Bakweri women, unlike the men, did not typically provide narrative verbal accounts. Nevertheless, the Ardeners argued that women did express themselves but through symbolic action; and, moreover, that when they did so they expressed a different version of social reality from that articulated by men. In particular, women's rituals showed, according to the Ardeners' analysis, women to be critical of the male authority that Bakweri men seemed to assume women to completely accept. In women's ritual, however, men were symbolically associated with rats and the phallic edible plantain banana was jettisoned in favour of the feminised 'inedible, seed-filled, wild banana' (E. Ardener 1975: 12). Because of the non-verbal, and inherently more ambiguous, form of symbolic expression, men could ignore this alternative account – and so, unwittingly, might researchers.

In the Ardeners' formulation, Bakweri women are relatively 'muted'. This does not mean that they do not speak, neither that they do not express themselves. Rather, the form in which they do so is less likely to be heard on a wider stage, and, also significantly, is also less likely to be heard by those carrying out research. While the Ardeners' initial example concerned gendered differences, they point out that many groups are likely to be 'muted' to varying degrees, and that men are neither necessarily 'audible' nor women 'muted'. All kinds of other factors may also be involved – class, ethnicity, occupation – and to varying degrees in different contexts.

Although the Ardeners' example here concerned West Africa, the difficulty of hearing 'quiet voices' that they identify is a more general one, and one faced equally by anthropologists in Europe. Within Europe, those whose voices are likely to be less audible include many minorities and even majorities: in some situations perhaps almost all of those who sit in the classrooms where history textbooks are being used will not be hearing accounts that they feel are their

own. Numerous examples in this book highlight quieter accounts that are not typically recognised in the public domain but that are part of the quieter diversity of Europe.

Questions raised by a concern with quiet voices in relation to history include whether certain 'key events' will be regarded differently or even registered as relevant at all. Which pasts and histories matter – and which do not – and how, if at all, are they related to one another? Is history conceived of as culminatory, unique, repetitive, progressive or regressive? Are collective memories of different groups conceived of as battling for mutually exclusive presence in the public domain? How do understandings of the past relate to the present and to the future? And how is the past used, performed and embedded in everyday life?

Methodological approaches

Addressing these questions requires further attention to method. Any researcher inevitably begins with assumptions that frame the questions that they ask. Difficulties arise, however, when there is little space in the research methodology for recognising and addressing this. Questionnaires and closed-format interviews can undoubtedly be useful in research – not least as a legitimated format for asking questions – but in themselves are relatively inflexible and may trigger certain kinds of response. In my research in the Scottish Hebrides I carried out a semi-structured questionnaire as part of my research. This began with questions about place of birth, and places of birth and habitation of parents and grandparents. For a number of respondents, and especially those whom I interviewed in Gaelic, this triggered a remark to the effect: 'Ah, so you want my life story then?' Such respondents were well able to recount their lives in this form that has come to be a dominant way in which inhabitants of late modernity conceptualise our selves;[15] and more specifically in a form which was very commonly used on Gaelic radio to which most of my Gaelic-speaking interviewees listened. That this genre was so resonant, especially for Gaelic-speakers, was itself of interest, of course. This conventionalised genre was also, however, liable to be associated with certain conventionalised constructions of content, and these could differ from what I learnt in other contexts. For example, one woman told me when I recorded her 'life story' on tape that she spoke Gaelic at home with her daughters. Because I knew her well, and she had told me at other times that she rarely spoke Gaelic at home and because this was what I had witnessed myself, I expressed surprise. This clearly disconcerted her and she was unsure how to reply, for she had been giving me the kind of account that I should surely want – a story, as might be heard on the Gaelic radio, that expressed her deep affinity to the Gaelic language. That affinity was not to be doubted but my clumsy questioning was expressed in the wrong register and made her unclear about the kind of performance or event in which she was engaged. Were I to have relied only on such interviews, my overall understanding would have undoubtedly been more partial than it was. But contextualised within a broader frame of research it also made me aware

of the genre-effect of certain kinds of interviews, which included potential for performing an emotional attachment to language. The 'life story' was also an opportunity to express one's love of the Gaelic language and way of life. What was needed, then, was to find an approach in which the relatively audible form of the taped interview did not wholly obscure the quieter versions of reality expressed in everyday practice and conversation.

In trying to access quiet modes, researchers need to understand the relationship between utterances and context. Again, in my work in the Scottish Hebrides, accounts familiar from the popular media tended to be recounted if individuals were asked specifically about 'history'. In the course of more everyday interaction, however, other kinds of accounts of the past would emerge. In popular accounts, for example, the idea of 'the people' and 'community' would be emphasised, depicting Hebridean 'crofters' as a single group united against landlords. This kind of account could also be employed to articulate opposition more generally to interference from outside organisations – past and present. In other contexts, however, stories of past fission within 'the community' would be told, highlighting the fact that sentiments and goals were not necessarily shared. Such stories were nearly always mobilised in relation to disagreements in the present, and especially in order to indicate particular groups (e.g. certain churches or families) as not sharing a common project and therefore not able to speak 'on behalf of the community'.

An implication of studies such as this is that to hear quiet voices, research needs to take place within everyday practice rather than only through more actively interventionist, and inevitably more predetermined, techniques such as interviews. Such work also indicates the interweaving of past and present, highlighting the fact that 'history' is not necessarily restricted to discussion of 'the past'. Indeed, sometimes what matters most to people about 'the past' is encoded in talking about other things. Anthropologist Wendy James has written of how when she was trying to understand the history of the Uduk people (of the Sudan-Ethiopia borderlands) she was initially frustrated that they would keep interrupting the historical narrative that she was trying to piece together and would tell anecdotes about what seemed to be irrelevant matters (1979: 60; see also Hoskins 1998, discussed in Chapter 6). Later, however, as she worked longer with the Uduk, she came to understand the relevance of these anecdotes to their understanding of history, and importantly to their sense of the continuing relevance of this past. Likewise, history may intrude where it was not initially expected, as we saw with research on illness by medical anthropologist Vieda Skultans in the previous chapter. It may be expressed in ways or in modes that do not 'sound' like history, and perhaps not narrated verbally at all.

Non-narrated memory

The past might, for example, be performed through practices of restitution of property (see Chapter 4); restoration (or not) of buildings (e.g. Herzfeld 1991, 2009;

Hodges 2009); through rituals – such as 'mumming' in Bulgaria (Creed 2011), dawn bell-ringing in Andalucia (Driessen 1992), visits to family graves in Istria (Frykman 2004) or the forms taken of weddings of Italian migrants in Britain (Fortier 2000). It might be expressed through comments about the body's aches and pains and the problems of not having a pension, as Tomasz Rakowski describes in an industrial Polish town (2002) or views on whether or not 'finching, a sport played almost exclusively in Flanders, [in which] male finches are made to compete for the highest number of bird calls in an hour' should be banned (Ceuppens 2011: 165). History may also be commented on indirectly – being told, perhaps, through other historical periods or events, as we also saw in the previous chapter. There might be an emphasis on some kinds of past to the exclusion of others – as Jaro Stacul (2005) argues for the Italian Alpine valley in which he worked, where World War II was never mentioned, his informants saying that it did not occur in their locality, and instead mainly recounting 'repetitive' pasts associated with nature. This serves, he argues, to 'give historical foundations to the widely shared view that [the valley] is different' (2005: 825) and to depict the past – in contrast to the present – as stable (2005: 828).

Certain histories may only be revealed to very close acquaintances, in 'trusted, private encounters' (2010: 102), as Stephanie Schwander-Sievers writes of certain positive memories of the Tito-regime by Albanians; or as Elsa Peralta discusses of recollections of social difference and hardship involved in cod-fishing during Portugal's Salazar regime (2009). Or perhaps they might only be revealed at key-life moments, after long acquaintance, as in the death-bed testimony, revealing a 'Slavic' rather than 'Pure Greek' identity, as told to Anastasia Karakisidou, in research described in the previous chapter.

It may also be the case that some memories are too traumatic to express in words but that the silence that surrounds them itself expresses the depth of emotional response. This was the case, for example, for some of Anselma Gallinat's respondents (2006, 2009). Former political prisoners of the East German Stasi regime, many of her respondents felt marginalised in everyday life in a context marked by a reluctance to dwell on that past or a tendency to do so in nostalgic terms. Being interviewed by her was for many of her respondents a novel and sometimes uncomfortable – and sometimes liberating – occasion for talking in ways that they did not normally do. There was, however, much that they found difficult to articulate and about which they said little. As she writes, however: 'it appeared to me that those passages which used the fewest words were actually very telling in their silence' (2006: 354). Of a former prisoner called Herr Jone, for example, she recounts the following about his response to her question to tell her about his time in a notorious jail in Halle:

> 'The time in prison? Well, you can imagine that' and [he] paused. This small insertion conveyed more than an elaborate monologue could have expressed. From his silence and the expression on his face, I fathomed

> that Herr Jone lacked the words and the emotional power to describe in a structured and directed text what this time had been like for him.
>
> (2006: 354–5)

Gallinat believes, however, that she is able to 'feel' and 'fill' the unsaid – the 'heavy silence' – not only by interpreting his facial expression but also because of her knowledge of the 'dehumanising conditions and degrading treatment' (2006: 355) that she has learnt from others, including those who worked in the prisons, and from literature.

No memory or commemoration? Roma

These 'quiet' modes of expression could not have been readily accessed through relatively noisy, or quick, methodologies such as questionnaires. Researchers bring considerable resources of wider knowledge as well as sensitive and self-reflexive interpersonal relationships to their investigations. But are there people who do not narrate – or possibly do not even remember – their pasts at all? As Michael Stewart (2004) discusses, this is a claim that has been made by some who have studied Roma. In his own long-term ethnographic fieldwork among Hungarian Roma, he too found that the past was neither commemorated in any ceremonies nor recounted through narratives; and he sums up as follows:

> it is clear that Romany peoples lack many of the mnemonic devices which ground shared memories of European societies. The built environment in which they live … is so temporary that it hardly bears a trace of the past ...This is a world without nostalgia, inhabited by people who seem to 'celebrate impermanence' (Kaprow 1982). The institutional practices, calendrical rituals, for instance, by which others reproduce the past in the present, are almost totally absent.
>
> (2004: 566)

For some scholars, such as Isobel Fonseca (1995), he writes, the lack of explicit mention of this past, especially of Roma Holocaust, is part of a problematic forgetting that should be rectified by a 'recovery of memory' that 'will be an act of cultural empowerment, and hence the route to cultural self-discovery' (Stewart 2004: 573). His own argument, however, is that despite the lack of conventional commemorative forms, Roma do not wholly forget their past; but that their particular relationship to it – including a resistance to chronological narrative and the materialisation of memory – are part of the way that they form their own sense of identity. In his fieldwork he found that although Roma did not talk about explicitly about the past, they did nevertheless make references to it in singular moments – short references to a particular event. This was usually triggered by an analogy with the present, as when, referring to the rise of neo-Nazi threat in late 1980s Hungary, they use phrases used for

the Roma Holocaust (2004: 565). More often, though, he argues, the past is recalled *implicitly* through Roma dealings with others, especially those they refer to as *gazé* (non-Gypsies), particularly through experiences that bear continuities with the past, such as continued experience of repression and humiliation (2004: 576). Rather than fashion these events into a chronological narrative, they become part of a 'continuous present' (2004: 573) in which their identity is maintained through continual opposition to *gazé*. What is involved here, he suggests, is 'memory' not as an identity-defining possession but as distributed through social relations – including through those who they self-define against (2004: 574). Perhaps part of the problem here is the term 'memory', which usually refers to some kind of explicit recollection. In the terms of this book, Roma past presencing is dissimilar to that of the European memory complex but not because they 'have no memory', in Stewart's terms, but, rather, because of the alternative way that they conceptualise the relationship between past, present and identity.

Repertoires of past presencing

'Quieter' accounts are a useful caution to generalisations we otherwise might make, sometimes highlighting how different from 'dominant' historical representations, historical consciousness 'on the ground' may be. They can help us to understand not only the kinds of historical themes and events which engage local populations but also the variety of everyday structures of historical narration (or non-narration) and awareness.

At the same time, there are patterns that we find repeatedly, though rarely universally within Europe, as part of a repertoire of possibilities sourced by partially shared histories. The development of nation-states in Europe, the models of identity implicated and the consequences of this are undoubtedly crucially important to understanding certain aspects or formations of historical consciousness within Europe. So too are partially shared literary forms, religious motifs and kinship formations. It is notable, for example, that many ethnographic studies of communities within Europe describe a *local* concern with 'the nation'. However, rather than this just being a matter of national issues being talked about locally, what this work shows is how even topics like *national* identity are recast and expressed in *local* idioms. In other words, this is how the nation is *done* in Europe. The nation, then, may be conceptualised within local (or regional) notions of kinship, personhood or home. Shared nationhood may, for example, be expressed through terms such as brotherhood, the Fatherland or Motherland, something that typically naturalises it, though whether the nation is conceptualised as a father or mother may be reflective of a partially different set of duties and expectations, and precisely what is entailed may vary. In a discussion of notions of kinship and personhood in conceptualisations of the nation and politics in Greece, Michael Herzfeld tells us that '[n]ot only are national and international conflicts often perceived in terms of agonistic

interpersonal relations (e.g., 'the *eghoismos* of the prime ministers') but the very notion of the nation is often expressed as *yenos* (patriline)' (1992: 67). By contrast, Czech notions of nationalism involve metaphors of kinship that do *not* explicitly involve ancestry or agonistic ideas – something that is very important to their sense of having a non-aggressive way of being nationalist. As Ladislav Holy writes:

> The concept of home enables the Czechs not only to imagine the nation as a family writ large but to imagine it as such without talking about it as sharing blood and soil or as a community of people linked together through common ancestry.
>
> (1998: 129)

At one level, then, anthropological work on Europe has shown that there is more variety within Europe, and even within nation-states, than is commonly assumed. At the same time, however, because of shared historical experiences there are certain areas of contestation that are found in study after study. These historical experiences include modernisation, industrialisation and nation-state building and the associated development of 'centres' and 'peripheries', of state agencies and bureaucracies, and of common transformations in the social structure (especially increased social mobility and numbers of 'incomers') of many localities. What we also see is that in the business of trying to comprehend and deal with these transformations, 'the past', or various pasts, are often invoked. Thinking historically seems from most of the accounts to be something that 'Europeans' do; and there are similarities as well as differences among them in the *ways* that they do this. For example, we find in many accounts a dualistic pitting of 'past' against 'present', together with an exaggerated 'golden age', 'pastoral idyll' or 'dark abyss' vision of that past; we find examples of past solidarity often being used as an exemplar for the present, perhaps with more complicating details 'forgotten'; and we find 'life stories' to be an increasingly common form of historical narration. At the same time, however, there are differences in the historical 'depth' of past-present contrasts – as between the 'long memories' of the Greeks and the episodic ones of the Roma, for example; differences in the kinds of collectives for which examples of solidarity are mobilised; and different kinds of emphases in the way in which lives are narrated.

Many of these modes of historicising are not, of course, restricted to Europe; and increasingly we see models for how to represent the past travelling internationally. Literary scholar Michael Rothberg's recent characterisation of 'multidirectional memory' draws attention to this, with particular reference to current attempts to commemorate slave history being enacted in part through models that were established for Holocaust remembrance (2009). As he argues, we need to consider 'memory as *multidirectional*: as subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive not privative' (2009: 3). By the

latter, he is addressing what he regards as a particular problem in contemporary public memory – its 'competitive' nature. That is, the ways in which different groups battle for representation in the public sphere, fearing that their histories will be blocked out by those of others. In a normative argument, he hopes to persuade that rather than these existing in a 'zero-sum game' they are stronger in concert, precisely because they can borrow from each other. From an anthropological perspective, what his discussion also highlights is the strength of proprietorial models of memory, and understandings of distinctive identities being bound up with discrete histories, that shore up the memory competition that he identifies.

No cheese, no heritage

Identities are not, however, necessarily articulated through the idea of a distinct 'heritage' of this kind. The work of Paola Filippucci in the rural Argonne region of France shows this well. In this region, which has repeatedly seen major devastation, especially during World War I, it is common for local people to make comments such as '"Here we have no old stones", and "We are not rooted"' (2004: 72). So strong is their sense that they are different from parts of France that *do* 'have heritage' that they state their deficit with reference to a key marker of French distinctiveness: '"In the Argonne, there is not even a cheese"' (2004: 72). Her argument, however, is that although local people do not have a *patrimoine* (a cultural heritage) in the standard form promoted by cultural policy agencies, they do nevertheless express senses of attachment to place – in which, moreover, the past figures. Rather than evoking a linear 'inward-looking' history that supports a coherent bounded community, as Filippucci argues is expected by cultural heritage agencies, Argonne people instead emphasise the disruptions in their past, the lack of continuities and roots that this causes and the fact that people move in and out of the area. This can be said to form part of their sense of a distinctive identity. It is, moreover, held together by place – as a kind of node – even if actual spatial presence is transitory (see also Filippucci 2004a and 2010).

An initiative by a government department to restore a village cemetery and turn it into a statue park in order to give the villagers '"a bit of identity" (*un peu d'identité)*' (2004: 75), shows well some of the different ideas held by officials and locals. Against the official stipulation that the grave-stones themselves should not be restored but instead left with their patina of age – as part of a generalised positive valuation of what looked old – villagers cleaned and mended stones enthusiastically, effectively making them part of the contemporary landscape rather than of a discrete past. Involved here, as manifest also in how they talked about names on headstones as they worked, was making the past and the place part of 'ongoing history'. This history was conceptualised, however, not as necessarily integrated and continuous but also as containing 'moments of fragmentation and loss, absence as well as presence, returns and departures and … the pull of other places as well as the attachment to this one' (2004: 82).

FIGURE 3.1 Villagers at work cleaning a grave in the pre-World War I cemetery of Neuvilly, Argonne (France), in 2001. The graves were damaged by artillery when the village was in the immediate vicinity of the frontline in 1914–18 (marks of gunfire are just visible on the gravestone in the left foreground). In the background, housing dating from the almost total reconstruction of the village in the 1920s. Photograph and caption courtesy of Paola Filippucci

Filippucci describes this as a 'relational' conception of space and time; and points out that while official heritage policy claims to be 'valoriz[ing] local forms' it is in effect denying them by not recognising the different, relational, form that local temporalising (and spatialising) takes (2004: 82).

Filippucci also makes a strong case for the value of ethnographic approaches to 'heritage' – not least for highlighting the potentially problematic nature of this as an analytical category (2009). Although people in the Argonne are viewed by the authorities as lacking in 'heritage', and although local people largely concur with this in their spoken statements, Filippucci's in-depth fieldwork shows that local people *do* care about much that might be associated with 'heritage' – e.g. matters of identity, place and past – but that it nevertheless differs in important ways from the more usual, and increasingly widespread, heritage-identity complex.

Multitemporal experiments

In the final part of this chapter, I continue and further develop the methodological discussion by turning to some examples of research that take up the multitemporal challenge – that of trying to understand and represent some of the complexities of past presencing – in relatively experimental ways. As

we will see, ethnographic research remains important here but it takes various forms and is sometimes supplemented with novel techniques or approaches. All of the examples that I have selected for this section are by researchers in the Department of Social Anthropology at Manchester University, though they were not produced as part of a common research project or methodological school. Rather, they are specific innovative responses – in very different contexts and with diverse overall aims – to trying to deal with what we variously encountered as struggles with aspects of the past in our contemporary fieldwork.

Clashing memories of Bosnian conflict

In an article about recollections of the conflict in Bosnia, Stef Jansen takes what he himself describes as an 'experimental' and 'unconventional' approach. This is to present his arguments through a detailed discussion between himself and three other men. The reason for this choice, as he explains it, is

> to deploy the critical impact of a vivid description of one specific event against the sterile simplification that often comes with the more sweeping journalistic and scholarly accounts of contemporary Bosnian life. I believe that many such accounts tend to underestimate the complexities of everyday life, while overestimating the importance of national identities at the expense of other (non-national) factors.
>
> (2007: 193)

To this end, he invites the reader to accompany him as, one evening in October 2000, he joins three other men in the house where he is staying, in the town of Tuzla in Bosnia, to take a drink and participate in the ensuing conversation. The reader is introduced to the three men, former colleagues in an engineering company, two of whom – Samir and Hasan – are Bosnian Muslims and the third, Robi, is Serbian. Samir was originally from a neighbouring village but resettled to Tuzla after having worked in Germany for several years. Hasan and Robi are from Tuzla, Hasan having remained in the village through the years of shelling, Robi having recently returned. Hasan, fired by the shared alcohol, insists that Robi knew when Serb attacks were due to begin in 1992 and that this was why he left. Jansen takes us in detail through Hasan's accusations and Robi's rebuttals, showing how other dimensions of discontent get drawn into the argument, such as Hasan's anger with Samir for having left to get a higher standard of living, and criticisms of 'the occupying forces', which are voiced pointedly towards Jansen himself.

While it is clear that ethnic identifications are mobilised in the argument, Jansen's research and mode of representing it shows that how this occurs is not straightforward and from a fixed position. At first, the three men are behaving as colleagues, neighbours and drinking companions. What we see in microcosm, however, is a process of fissures being prised open. But even here, the lines of

division are not unambiguously or exclusively 'ethnic'. Hasan's rage begins with Robi but is also, and increasingly, directed at Samir – a fellow Bosnian Muslim who was (like so many others) – out of the country during the war for reasons that, it seems, had nothing to do with it.

Jansen's experiment, then, is directed especially at providing insight into how the past might be experienced and mobilised by individuals in an everyday – if specific – context. He conveys how the past has shaped particular villages – in ways that may be dissimilar from others in matters such as their particular ethnic mix and the degrees of war and ethnic cleansing that they experienced – as well as how that past can be brought into the present and fought over. Different particular events – such as the particular date on which Robi left the village – hold different significance for Robi and Hasan; what for one was chance or coincidence, is to the other evidence of knowledge, complicity and untrustworthiness.

What Jansen's experiment also achieves is a recovery of some of the individual agency of what Cornelia Sorabji, in a discussion of Sarajevo Bosnian post-war memories, calls 'memory management' (2006). She points out troubling implications of some of the models of memory transmission that are often invoked in the Balkan post-war scenario. These typically remove individual agency, either regarding ethnic hatred as transmitted automatically from one generation to the next through recollection of war – and therefore as deep-rooted and only possible to shift by active therapeutic intervention; or seeing memory as politically produced and therefore as fairly readily manipulable through education programmes. Like Jansen, she also looks at individual case-studies to show how individuals themselves may steer their own way through the various accounts of the past that they encounter – thus 'managing' their memories.

Layering histories in Nuremberg

My second example is from my own research on the Nazi past in the city of Nuremberg, Germany. The research was based on historical sources and on interviewing and participant-observation (Macdonald 2009a). It focused especially on the former Nazi party rally grounds – a vast complex of buildings and marching grounds built in the 1930s as a stage for Nazi rallies, left largely intact post-war and variously neglected, reconstructed, preserved and put to multiple uses ever since. Its uses have included commemoration of victims of fascism and war dead, pilgrimage by neo-Nazis, tourism, exhibition, artwork, education, and numerous forms of leisure, such as motor racing and sun-bathing. Methodologically, my focus on such a contested site aimed to provide a lens into diverse ways in which the Nazi past had been approached since 1945. I wanted to avoid concentrating on one particular group of people and to deploy instead James E. Young's idea of 'collected' rather than 'collective' memory (1993). That is, I aimed to investigate how different people and memories and practices were gathered and sometimes collided at this site.

In conducting archival and historical research, I sought to understand better how the site had come to be shaped into its present form over time – why, for example, certain parts of buildings had been destroyed – as well as to examine how they were discussed and represented in the sources available at particular times. One dimension of the latter was to try to grasp what was involved in what appeared to be major changes of approach over the years. Some of these, I found, turned out to be less marked than they were usually represented as being in recent historicising. Original sources showed, for example, more attempts to address the Nazi past through public education in the post-war years than later commentators usually credited. What I also found, however, was that there were other changes that seemed to make more fundamental shifts – such as a psychologisation of approaches to buildings in the 1980s that reconfigured *not* publicly acknowledging the site into an act of 'repression'. My research across different time periods, then, provided me with materials to relativise both the present and other periods – that is, to throw the specific constellations of each into relief. It also highlighted multidirectional relationships between past and present, as the physical past – in the form of the buildings themselves – shaped actions and interpretations in the present (sometimes setting up new challenges or puzzles), and was itself altered; and as earlier interpretations of the past were revised by later ones; and later ones by earlier historical accounts.

In my plans to represent this multitemporality I was influenced by the work of the artist Anselm Kiefer – including his Nuremberg paintings (Macdonald 2002, 2009a). As in some of his other work, these paintings are heavily layered with materials – in this case, straw, ash and paint. Beneath the layers, earlier images can be detected – images of Nuremberg's skyline, and words alluding to Wagner's *Meistersinger von Nürnberg* and perhaps to the rally grounds (*'Festspielwiese'* 'festival ground'*)*. In German, the word for layers is *Schichte,* which is part of the root of the word for history, *Geschichte,* a word that also means 'story'. This compelling semantics prompted me to experiment with juxtaposing historical moments and commentaries upon them. In doing so, however, I faced a difficulty not shared with Kiefer, of wishing to provide explanation, discussion and analysis rather than cryptic allusion. In the monograph that I finally produced, therefore, I chose to retain a broadly chronological framework in order to trace through how later periods had – sometimes literally – built upon earlier. But I also interspersed this with discussion and reflection concerning other times and with what I called 'interventions' – comments or descriptions that were not part of the chronological narrative intended to 'supplement, and sometimes disrupt or complicate, the main account, and sometimes to lay clues and traces for later arguments' (2009a: 22).

AIDS, personal memories and staged fieldwork in London

In research carried out in Africa and New York, as well as in London, with volunteer 'buddies' of people who had died of HIV/AIDS related illnesses, Andrew Irving has experimented with methodologies to help him access individual – and often deeply painful – memories. In an article on his London research, he describes what he calls 'staged "fieldwork" encounters to create a type of ethnographic-mnemonic context through which the past – in this case London from the mid-1980s to mid-1990s – can be relived and interpreted' (2006: 9). This was conducted as follows:

> I asked persons, who I had previously worked with, to return to significant streets and buildings in their personal biography and history, and then asked them to narrate past events and experiences into a tape-recorder while another person took photographs, interjected with comments and responded with their own ideas and memories ... The two informant roles were then reversed so that the narrator became the photographer and vice-versa in the attempt to further uncover the layers of memory and emotion that have been sedimented into London's pavements, streets, parks, paths and buildings.
>
> (2006: 9)

The approach produces highly individual memories of the city – for example, a bus stop is important to one volunteer as it is where she last saw a friend who later died. This shows vividly the way in which even mundane landscapes can be imbued with deeply emotional significance. What is also evoked by the photographic selections and the commentaries are wider senses of fear and loss surrounding AIDS/HIV in the city during those years. This is a past that might otherwise be easily forgotten.

Irving's approach is also representationally experimental in that he presents much of his account through photographs accompanied by descriptions of, and stories about, those with whom he worked. This creates a purposefully fragmentary impression, itself conjuring up the disconnected nature of many of the memories and the processes of remembering.

Chorographies and sensory remembering in Bucharest

Alyssa Grossman, who completed a PhD in Social Anthropology with Visual Media in Manchester in 2010, also conducted a form of 'walking' research, which she describes through the term 'chorography' (originally deployed by Ptolemy and developed also by cultural geographers), and recorded through the medium of film as well as written account. Like Irving's, her work is also city-based – in this case, in Bucharest. Unlike his, her walking research was most often conducted alone and centres upon her observations of the city. Her

FIGURE 3.2 The last goodbye. Bus stop outside Marks and Spencer's, Kensington High Street. Photograph and text courtesy of Andrew Irving

> This bus stop is the place where the volunteer saw Isabel Collins alive for the very last time. Often words and gestures possess little significance in their own time and place and they are only retrospectively inscribed with meaning. Throughout history small words and tiny gestures are made resonant and meaningful by a later event, and a forgotten smile, casual wave or trivial comment subsequently becomes infused with intense emotions say in knowledge that this was the last time a friend or family member was seen alive. This reminds us that meaning is never completely wrapped within its present context but remains unfinished and open to later re-signification. But what is distinctive with regard to HIV/AIDS and other terminal conditions, is that events are already and routinely ascribed with their potential future signification. Saying 'see you later' is not the same casual act of ordinary everyday speech but an unresolved statement or question that can be seen in people's eyes, heard in their voices and felt in handshakes which are all too often interpreted as an invitation to collude with a particular vision of the future where life goes on. Both Isabel and the volunteer knew this was likely to be the last time they were going to see each other as the volunteer was leaving for a job abroad. Fifteen years later whenever the volunteer walks past the bus stop arresting memories of things that were unsaid at the time emerge alongside the hurt of saying goodbye in a public place and the shared unspoken and moribund knowledge of finitude. This was it, a goodbye that recalled Schopenhauer's suggestion that 'every parting gives a foretaste of death'.
>
> (Irving 2006: 16–17)

FIGURE 3.3 Cabinet in Dorel's living room, Bucharest. Photograph courtesy of Alyssa Grossman

overall aim was to try to access 'everyday sites and practices of memory' in what she describes as 'post-Socialist, EU accession-era Bucharest'. She seeks to do so through chance encounters and in unexpected settings rather than through more conventional techniques. Chapters of her thesis are thus focused, for example, on the eclectic contents of a chest of drawers of an elderly couple and display cabinets in people's homes; objects in the basement of the Romanian Peasant Museum; and everyday uses of, and discourses about, money. Through these, she is able to highlight ways that the socialist past is approached that are not usually considered within more conventional accounts of post-Socialist transition. For example, in relation to money, she identifies various continuities with the socialist past rather than only the differences that are the usual subject of academic commentary.

Like Irving, Grossman also deploys forms of staged fieldwork. In an inspired staging, she set up what she calls a 'memory meal' to which she invited acquaintances to bring foods that reminded them of the socialist era. This created an ephemeral encounter in which recollections of the past, and the taste of the past, were exchanged and evaluated. She uses this as a basis from which to describe and discuss the embodied and sensory qualities of memory, the power of certain substances to evoke remembrance, and the often ambivalent and partially individualised and partially shared character of the memories of socialism produced.

FIGURE 3.4 Food brought to the memory meal. Photograph courtesy of Alyssa Grossman

Grossman's accompanying film provides a further medium for experimental representation. In it, she takes the viewer on her own chorographic route round the central park in Bucharest, allowing us to see the mixed life of the city that collects here, lingering over particular scenes or individuals and eaves-dropping on snippets of conversations underway. The film is also self-consciously constructed to evoke different time periods through some of the characters of various ages and generations, and also by its use of music from different time periods. In this way, it seeks to evoke the past in the present of the city and to provide the audience with a 'feel' for remembrance as well as to provide them with a supplement to the more discursive understandings offered in the text.

* * *

This chapter has explored dimensions of and approaches to the multitemporal challenge. Both the more conventional methods of doing fieldwork and representing it, as well as the more experimental ones described here, are only some of the possibilities for trying to address questions of past presencing. In subsequent chapters we will encounter others, designed to tackle particular aspects of remembrance and historicising in Europe. All, however, share a commitment to trying to understand specific practices and forms of past presencing in particular contexts. And all show alertness to how different

forms of mediation and representation may shape accounts of the past and of its significance in the present. The aim in much of the work by anthropologists is to try to understand 'the stories of ordinary people' (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992: 17). As Comaroff and Comaroff note, in relation to similar approaches in Africa, these 'stand in danger of remaining just that: stories. To become something more, these partial, "hidden histories" have to be situated in the wider worlds of power and meaning that gave them life' (1992: 17). What we have seen in the examples here is the attempt to do just that. Providing that situating – which is likely to be local, national and European in various measure – is a further part of the challenge that we will encounter in the chapters that follow.