



making it hard to judge their merits and potential shortcomings. Even with these limitations, this is an engaging and original book which will surely become essential reading for anyone interested in how technology affects labor, democracy and our societies.

Notes

- 1 Eric J. Hobsbawm, 'The machine breakers', *Past & Present* **1** (1952), 57–70.
- 2 Bruno Caprettini and Hans-Joachim Voth, 'Rage against the machines: labor-saving technology and unrest in industrializing England', *American Economic Review: Insights* **2**, 3 (2020), 305–20.
- 3 Nathan Rosenberg, 'The direction of technological change: inducement mechanisms and focusing devices', *Economic Development and Cultural Change* **18**, 1, Part 1 (1969), 1–24.

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A. Joskowicz, *Rain of Ash: Roma, Jews and the Holocaust* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2023). Pages xiii + 351 + figures 11. £28.00 hardback.

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The title of Ari Joskowicz's timely and eloquent study, *Rain of Ash*, is taken from a poem that serves as the epigraph to the book. In 'Encamped Gypsies', between 1945 and 1947, the Yiddish poet Avrom Sutzkever reflected on the shared suffering of Jews and Roma, for both of whom 'the earth ripped apart in ritual mourning, / A rain of ash purified the bones'. Like many an outside observer of Romani life before him, Sutzkever anticipated a landscape entirely empty of 'Gypsies', wondering whose poetic voices might henceforth tell their story. Joskowicz offers us Sutzkever as a guide in his exploration of the Jewish perspective on shared experiences of persecution and mass murder, because 'Encamped Gypsies' manifests two important dimensions of the story: The first is the fact that Jews were among those who witnessed the persecution of Europe's Roma at close quarters as it happened, and who bore witness to it during and immediately after World War II. The second is that that witnessing always occurred at a distance, the uncertainty about what was happening to the Roma inflected by the more intimate understanding of what the Jews themselves were suffering or had suffered, and also by long-standing and ambivalent stereotypes.

Appropriately, Joskowicz also introduces a Romani guide figure, in the person of the Kalderash novelist Matéo Maximoff. Writing in English in 1946, Maximoff appealed for justice and also for answers – for an international court like the Nuremberg tribunal, which in the pursuit of justice might 'institute an enquiry

into the source of these monstrous Nazi orders to assassinate the entire Gypsy race' (p. 103). This text, too, is paradigmatic in its early date (evidence that Roma themselves were already testifying to their own suffering at the end of the war), in acknowledging the confusion and uncertainty about the motives and processes of the Romani genocide, and in its foreshadowing of the process by which the forensic struggle for justice would become the medium through which knowledge about what the Roma had suffered was both constructed and constrained in the six decades that followed.

Joskowicz traces that process as a story of the interactions between Jews and Roma, beginning with a sensitive exploration of the historical episodes in which Jews and Roma encountered one another as victims of Nazi persecution, in camps, ghettos and deportation sites. His analysis of their testimony includes consideration of the sensory dimensions of situations in which they could only hear without seeing each others' suffering, or saw without comprehending. Joskowicz argues that it was not central policy but local implementation that determined the respective situations of victims. And the resulting variety of experience was such that each group might have or be remembered as having power or advantage over the other in any given moment.

Beyond the gates of the *univers concentrationnaire*, though, Roma were and remained at a disadvantage, lacking the global networks, institutional and philanthropic support and media access that Jewish survivors enjoyed. Unequal discursive power and access to resources are central to the account of post-war developments which occupies the succeeding chapters. These deal respectively with Roma and Jews in the immediate aftermath of war, as refugees and DPs; with early efforts at documentation; with key moments in the judicial prosecution of Nazi crimes, from the Nuremberg Trials to the success of American class actions in extracting restitution from German corporations; and with the role of Jewish intellectuals, lawyers and institutions in the research that began to establish the character and extent of the Romani Holocaust in the 1960s. If these were 'still interactions that do not deserve to be called dialogues' (p. 165), in which Jewish actors used their privilege to speak *for* the Roma, the book's final chapter sees the decades after 1978 in terms of a path towards shared remembrance. New initiatives in documentation (including oral history), though still led largely by Jewish initiatives, increasingly promoted and supported new research on the Romani experience. The standoff that developed in the 1980s, when Romani groups demanded to be involved in the planning and management of the new United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, echoed twenty years later in the debate around the Berlin Holocaust memorials, signal both the challenges that this move encountered and the growing urgency of acknowledging Romani actors as subjects rather than objects of research and commemoration. In conclusion, Joskowicz has some interesting observations about how Romani and Jewish memory activists have recently steered around the Israel-Palestine debate (in spite of the obvious affinity of Romani and post-colonial politics), and he writes with optimism of the new generation of young Jews and Roma actively seeking grounds for solidarity in remembrance rather than competition.

Rain of Ash is not a comparative study. The representation of the events that led to the murder of hundreds of thousands of Roma in Nazi Germany and the countries occupied by or allied with it has long been beset by the urge to compare with

Shoah, not least because from the beginning (as Sutkever and Maximoff tell us), the Roma experience was framed by the more familiar, effectively articulated and ethically hegemonic Jewish one. In his introduction, Joskowitz deftly outlines and critiques scholarly debates about comparability (including definitional questions like the uses of the term 'genocide'). But this is essentially an actor-centred study of the production of knowledge about what happened to Europe's Roma, so his substantive contribution to the historiographical question comes in his final chapter, which traces the material and institutional *circumstances* in which comparability emerged as a focus of political and scholarly exchange in the 1990s. As he formulates most clearly in his conclusion, though, 'Comparisons were part of Nazi victims' existential desire to understand their own position, not an artifact of historical analysis.' (p. 204)

By the same token, Joskowitz does not claim to offer a new history or even a revisioning of Holocaust as a singular event. He writes of two Holocausts, a Romani Holocaust and a Jewish Holocaust, similar but separate, entangled as their subjects were forced into proximate spaces from which there developed direct and indirect relations of mutual regard. Joskowitz's terminology implies though it does not insist on a plurality of Holocausts, as distinct from shared participation in a single event. This approach may feel like an evasive manoeuvre in such a contentious field, but it reflects the focus on Romani and Jewish historical actors which in turn makes for a relational account which is entirely convincing, both in illuminating the evolving relationship between those actors and in exposing the discursive practices that made 'Holocaust' *after* the events.

Each chapter of *Rain of Ash* offers new and sometimes surprising data and insights, to which a short review cannot do justice. It draws on adventurous research in archives all over the world and on digitised sources which have become available in recent decades. Joskowitz has exploited these imaginatively to identify the personalities and reconstruct the interactions that drove institutional and political engagement with the facts and significance of the Romani Holocaust between 1945 and the 2010s. He displays an admirable sensitivity to the challenges as well as the opportunities offered by this expanding source base, and he writes with an analytical clarity that is simultaneously humane and even-handed. This is a book I wish I had written.

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