

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: University of Westminster		
Unit of Assessment: 28 History		
Title of case study: Race and Remembrance in France and Germany		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2015-2019		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Ludivine Broch Itay Lotem	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Lecturer in History Lecturer in French Studies	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 09/2014 ongoing, 09/2016 ongoing
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 01/2017 – 12/2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N		
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Dr Ludivine Broch and Dr Itay Lotem work in the area of remembrance and race within French history. Their engagement with external partners and ability to translate their complex research findings for broader audiences have resulted in the following impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefited the curators revamping the Holocaust Gallery at the Imperial War Museum by assisting with their production of a new audio-visual resource that meets their aim of correcting a lack of public knowledge concerning collaboration during World War II. • Aided media production (television, radio, and print) by providing a fresh perspective on the period of the Second World War and an understanding of how the history of racism in Europe affects racism in the present. • Enhanced the reconciliation efforts of a German government programme intended to build bridges between North American Jewish communities and Germany by broadening its participants' knowledge of the latter country's history. 		
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Dr Ludivine Broch and Dr Itay Lotem have shared research and teaching interests for many years and have worked collaboratively on several projects through the Institute of Historical Research (IHR) Modern French History seminar and the French History Network, of which Broch is a co-founder. They are co-organisers of the 2021 edition of the Society for the Study of French History's annual conference, whose theme – Protest, Power and Resistance – speaks to their common research interests on minorities and memory in modern European history. Their work focuses on the cultural history of France and its politics of race and remembrance across the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and they have both taught and researched on topics of antisemitism, racism and memory at Westminster.</p> <p>Dr Broch's research focuses on French society and culture around the time of the Second World War. It provides insight into peoples' lives during this period: their thoughts, feelings and the objects which surrounded them, as well as how this translates (or not) into memory and commemoration throughout the post-war decades. She is an associate fellow of the Pears Institute for the study of Antisemitism – the only centre in the UK, and one of just two in Europe, whose mission it is to promote understanding of antisemitism.</p> <p>Broch's first book, <i>Ordinary Workers, Vichy and the Holocaust</i>, was published by Cambridge University Press in 2016 [1]. This monograph studied the daily lives of French railway workers who accommodated the Vichy regime, cohabitated with the Germans, and stole from their employer, during the war [2]. Crucially, this approach challenged the myth of French railwaymen as heroic resisters and saboteurs, as established by films such as <i>La Bataille du Rail</i> (1945), as well as the subsequent demonisation of railwaymen in France for their role in the Holocaust, as was common in the 2000s. Broch's work showed that the majority of railwaymen were neither, as previous and current myths maintained, heroic resisters or collaborators in genocide. Stepping away from this Manichean view, she shows that railwaymen were most often ordinary workers focussing on their professional but also personal and political concerns.</p> <p>Broch's interest in the history of the French resistance also led her to reflect on the noticeable silence regarding those who joined resistance networks and groups in Occupied France despite having themselves been colonised by the French. These hundreds of men and women have been almost completely written out of history – and yet their stories are hugely important and deeply revealing. In a recent article, she has thus examined the roles that many colonial subjects took on</p>		

in the French internal resistance, but also the hesitancy of other such persons in Vichy France to fight for a Republic which, ultimately, never really acknowledged them [3].

Broch's work on the French railways during World War II also fed into her most recent research, funded by the British Academy/Leverhulme Trust, which focuses on The Gratitude Train. This project explores the history of 52,000 personal objects gifted from French people to Americans in 1949 in thanks for their aid during and after the War. Conceived by a French railwayman, the gifts were delivered via 48 boxcars, each of which was detached and presented individually to every one of the then 48 US states. The study of these objects takes us away from the usual post-war images of smoke-filled rooms and male politicians and brings us to an immediate post-war everyday reality centred around women's crafts, children's toys, artisanship, and aesthetics.

In complementary fashion, Dr Lotem's research situates contemporary anti-racism movements in France within the context of the country's colonial past and history of antisemitism, exploring these issues through the use of oral history interviews.

For instance, output [4] explored how, in the mid-2010s, the expression 'memory wars' – coined in debates about the role of various commemorations of France's colonial history – became increasingly identified with an atmosphere of conflict between France's Jewish population and other minority communities. Simultaneously, conflicts over remembrance of the Holocaust and France's colonial past characterised a new dynamic of memorial anti-racism. The article examined the trajectory of the Indigènes de la République, an organisation that was particularly identified with this kind of memorial anti-racism. Through oral history interviews as well as the organisation's publications and media appearances, Lotem outlined the role of memory in the growing atmosphere of conflict between Jews and other postcolonial minorities in France and ultimately questions the role of so-called memory wars in the growing conversation about race in the Fifth Republic [4].

Between 1998 and 2006, the memory of slavery in France developed from a marginalised issue into a priority of the state. Output [5] examined the process in which community activists and state actors interacted with and against one another to integrate remembrance and the commemoration of slavery and its abolitions into a Republican national narrative; focussing on a series of actions stretching from the protests against the 150th anniversary of the abolition of slavery in 1998 to the creation of the 10 May National Memorial Day to Slavery and Its Abolitions in 2006. Basing its analysis on oral history interviews and various publications, this article argues that 'memory activists' – and particularly new anti-racist groups – mobilised the memory of slavery to address issues of community identity and resistance within the context of twenty-first-century republicanism. In so doing, they articulated a new kind of black identity in France.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- [1] Broch, L. 2016. *Ordinary Workers, Vichy and the Holocaust* (Oxford University Press); also translated into French as *Les cheminots, Vichy et la Shoah: Des travailleurs ordinaires* (Tallandier 2016). *Described in The English Historical Review* ([113:564](#)) as 'a rich, focused and much-needed reconsideration of France's railway workers', and in *The Journal of Contemporary History* ([53:4](#)) as 'a brilliant argument against both hagiography and recrimination'.
- [2] Broch, L. [2015](#). French Railway Workers and the Question of Rescue During the Holocaust. *Diasporas*. 25, pp. 147-167. *Peer-reviewed article*.
- [3] Broch, L. [2019](#). Colonial Subjects and Citizens in the French Internal Resistance, 1940-1944. *French Politics, Culture and Society*. 37 (1), pp. 6-31. *Peer-reviewed article*.
- [4] Lotem, I. [2018](#). Beyond memory wars: The indigènes de la république's grass-roots anti-racism between the memory of colonialism and antisemitism. *French History*. 32 (4), pp. 573-593. *Peer-reviewed article*.
- [5] Lotem, I. [2018](#). Between Resistance and the State: Caribbean Activism and the Invention of a National Memory of Slavery in France. *French Politics, Culture and Society*. 36 (2), pp. 126-148. *Peer-reviewed article*.

Funding

Broch, L. British Academy / Leverhulme Trust Small Research Grant Awards 2017/18: The gratitude train, 1949: French citizens, transatlantic objects and the early Cold War (SRG / 170712) £9835

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Informing Educational Resources at Imperial War Museum

The Imperial War Museum (IWM) is currently undertaking its *Transforming IWM London* project. In Phase 1, it redesigned its First World War Galleries for the centenary. Phase 2 involves the redesigning of its Second World War and Holocaust Galleries. Dr Broch has contributed to the updating of the latter, which was established in 2000 and is one of the IWM's most visited galleries, 'attract[ing] around 1 million visitors a year, including 21,000 students who take part in learning sessions at the museum' [a-i, p.1]. Student attendance is expected to increase to 50,000 following this £30.5million revamp of the galleries [a-ii].

The IWM report that: 'Audience research has revealed gaps in knowledge about the Holocaust, particularly its connection to the Second World War' [a-iii, p.11]. In order to resolve this knowledge gap, the Curator of the Holocaust Galleries at IWM sought to 'show the levels of active participation that the Holocaust required from thousands of individuals and organisations' under the cover of the War [a-ii]. In this connection, Broch was engaged because of her 'work on the French national railway, the SNCF', which constitutes such local level collaborators without which the genocide could not have happened [a-ii].

The Curator states that Broch was approached 'as a leading academic in this field to **improve our own understanding and knowledge and for direction and advice on the information to include in the text for the galleries**' [a-ii]. Broch advised the IWM Holocaust Gallery team 'on the intricacies and nuances relating to the SNCF's involvement in the "final solution" of French Jews', which 'helped us to write an accurate and nuanced history of the SNCF's role for our AV [audio-visual] piece on collaboration. We acted upon [Broch's] advice, suggestions (and corrections!) of our AV text' [a-ii]. Further, along with advising on the narrative text, Broch 'was hugely helpful for both us [IWM] and our AV contractors **to develop a visual and engaged AV piece**', by sourcing and supplying them with key archival images and texts drawn 'from [her] own research' [a-ii]. This includes one of Broch's key findings – a letter dated March 1943 from an SNCF Director acknowledging the deportation of 1000 Jews, which is of much value given the rarity of any mention of Jewish convoys in SNCF archives. This segment of the audio-visual piece, which constitutes a permanent educational piece in the exhibition that 'will have a life-span of 20 years', is entirely based on Broch's research [a-ii]. The amount of useful research materials supplied by Broch is such that the Curator notes also that the 'further information may be included in the new Learning Programme that is currently being developed' [a-ii].

Broch's translation of her research findings for the IWM team is particularly significant as it has **helped the IWM team to redress a key problem they had identified regarding visitor understanding of the holocaust**: 'The commonest source of visitors' knowledge was film and television, which led to stereotypical understandings of the Second World War' [a-iv, p.6]. As described in Section 2, Broch's research corrects such cinematic depictions of the French railway workers, thus helping the IWM to directly respond to this issue. As the Curator states: 'The team feels confident that [Broch's] assistance to our presentation of active participants and collaboration will impact visitor understanding of this complicated part of the Holocaust', and, in particular, 'we anticipate that visitors will understand the decisions made by SNCF employees during the war, in terms of both resistance and collaboration' [a-ii].

Aiding Media Production

Though World War II history has been well-covered in the media for decades, Dr Broch's research has uncovered new aspects of this period. For this reason, her research – and her ability to communicate it in an accessible way – has been of great benefit to programme makers on both television and radio.

For instance, Broch contributed to the making of the popular Discovery Channel series *World War II: Witness To War*. Originally broadcast in 2017, the 12-episode series has had an expanded reach through its ongoing availability on Amazon Prime via the Discovery Channel UK in the UK, US, and France [b-i]. The director of *Witness to War*, Adam Donneky, was seeking to create a series about WWII that would 'appeal to broader demographic than other documentaries on television (35+ rather than 65+)' and 'include facts and information that offered new insights into areas of the story that had been previously overlooked by television documentaries' [a-ii]. In this connection, Broch was engaged by the director as she could provide '**modern research that**

could offer a fresh perspective on the period. Ludivine's expertise and research brought many fascinating facts and stories to light that I could incorporate into my storytelling on screen' and **'helped me find new angles that were key in making the series a success'** [b-ii]. Donnelly further highlights Broch's ability to translate her research in a way that he as a filmmaker, rather than historian, was able **'to distil complex historical research into easily digestible television content that would appeal to a broad audience'** [b-ii]. The need to translate complex research for broader audiences was further met by Broch through her own appearance in the series – Episode 11: *Fall of Berlin* – in which the researcher explains the rise of antisemitism, the effect of propaganda, and the role of local actors in the genocide. For instance, one Michigan, USA, based viewer wrote unsolicited to thank Broch for doing a 'Great job on Witness to War program!' in Nov 2019, with another from Indiana, USA, contacting her in June 2020 to say: 'I just watched your comments in the "WWII: Witness to War" documentary and wanted to send my compliments. They comprised one of the best explanations of the history of the era that I have heard' [b-iii]. As indicated by the dates, the show continues to be viewed on the online platform and via its syndication in various regions 'around the world' [b-ii].

Another example of Broch's research-based aiding of media production is her engagement with the BBC in 2020. The producer of the following radio programmes states that: **'Broch's research on the Gratitude Train gave me the idea for both an episode of Words and Music** themed on gratitude (BBC Radio 3's curated playlist of extracts from prose and poetry set to music) **and an edition of the 44' discussion programme Free Thinking** which is broadcast on BBC Radio 3' [b-iv]. The producer was seeking **to create 'original programming which looked at this period of history in a fresh way'**, in this case to mark the anniversary of VE day, and the 'research undertaken on the gratitude train was a totally new story to me' [b-iv]. The *Words and Music* programme featured an extract on the topic from a popular book (Hadley Freeman's *House of Glass: The Story and Secrets of a Twentieth-Century Jewish Family* [2020]) that Broch had consulted on and directed the producer towards for use in the show, while Broch herself was invited to discuss her research on the *Free Thinking* programme, through which '[...]leading artists, writers, thinkers discuss the ideas shaping our lives & links between past & present' at the evening primetime slot of 10pm [b-v]. This programme receives 11-15,000 listeners at broadcast and then reaches audiences 'long afterwards' via its ongoing availability to download worldwide, through both BBC and Apple platforms, as the *BBC Arts & Ideas* podcast [b-iv]. **Broch's participation in the show is highlighted by the producer as key to its successful undertaking.** Interviewed by Matthew Sweet, the producer states that Broch shared her research findings on this 'fascinating story with wider ramifications than the particular historical moment and what a nation decided to do', using it to reflect on 'the nature of gratitude, the kinds of objects people value and choose, the parts played by individual ordinary people and the state and the research process itself [which] was also beautifully illustrated by Ludivine's descriptions of finding these objects in often unlooked at archives in America' [b-iv]. Confirming the value of this contribution, Broch received unsolicited messages from listeners about her contribution – for instance: 'Just a quick note to say how much I enjoyed your interview on Radio 3. I've just listened to the podcast. The whole subject sounds fascinating!' – as well as enquiries from a producer of documentary films for international broadcasters, including the BBC and Arte, who has initiated the development of a documentary on the Gratitude Train research [b-vi].

Drawing on his research on memory politics and anti-racism, Dr Lotem has similarly been engaged by journalists of several news media outlets in the last three years to speak on issues relating to the role of far-right activism in European politics; especially in France, but also the Netherlands and Sweden. These outlets include the BBC's News Channel, the *Huffington Post*, and the *New Statesman*, with Lotem writing several analysis pieces for the latter two [b-vii]. The usefulness of Lotem's translation of the complexity of these issues to general audiences is encapsulated in his contribution to a November 2019 article for *France24* about the latest debates on the hijab in France [b-viii]. *France 24* drew on Lotem's expertise in order to provide insights into the historical continuities of racism and secularism within the country and was quoted at length as the main contributor to a section on the 'culture wars'. As such, Lotem **provided a critical contextualisation of the issue that the journalists would not have been able to provide themselves.**

Aiding Reconciliation Efforts

On the basis of his 'extensive research in European history', and his focus on anti-racism within that context, Dr Lotem was invited to give lectures to guests of the German government via the programme *Germany Close Up – American Jews Meet Modern Germany* [c-i].

Established in October 2007 and currently administered by Action Reconciliation Service for Peace (Aktion Sühnezeichen Friedensdienste e.V.), *Germany Close Up* is one of Germany's leading transatlantic programmes for young adults from North America [c-ii]. Funded by a grant from the German Government's Transatlantic Program, which draws on funds from the European Recovery Program (ERP) of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy, the programme offers short study trips of approximately ten days for Jewish-North American students and young professionals to visit and discover Germany first hand.

The aim is to **build bridges between North American Jewish communities and Germany** by inviting groups of Jewish North American students to tour Germany and debate its history and present. This includes meeting government officials and young German peers and visiting Berlin-based anti-racist initiatives as well as German Jewish communities.

Lotem was invited to deliver introductory lectures – 'a key component in our programmes' – to four groups in August 2017 (20 participants), February 2018 (23 participants), May 2018 (27 participants), and August 2018 (16 participants) [c-i]. On each occasion, he provided an overview of modern German history from 1870 to the present day, with a specific focus on post-war German history.

As the Programme Coordinator for *Germany Close-up* states, 'these contextualising talks were invaluable for these four groups [...] the majority of whom know very little about Germany beyond the twelve years of Nazi rule' [c-i]. Feedback from the participants have confirmed that these lectures were 'a transformative experience, as they **broadened participants' knowledge about Germany and helped them overcome preconceptions**' [c-i]. For instance, the Coordinator cites feedback from an August 2017 participant who stated the lectures helped them 'understand that German history did not begin in 1933' and that 'learning about German efforts to come to terms with the past made me rethink some of the priorities we have back home in the US', and a February 2018 participant who stated: 'our group had a lively debate about German history, which opened my eyes to how difficult it is to really assess its history' [c-i].

The Programme Coordinator also reports that the guides for the groups confirmed the extent of this change of understanding among participants, given that during their later visits to a concentration camp 'participants were able to use information and ideas that they had learnt in these history talks to make sense of the emotional experiences of the following days' [c-i]. The guides had also found that 'Dr Lotem's talks were helpful in **instilling an atmosphere of openness**, which later contributed to further debates these groups had' [c-i].

This change in understanding is both impactful on the participants and *Germany Close Up* itself, as it helps the programme to achieve its aim of reconciliation.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- [a] (i) IWM London Press Release on New Holocaust Exhibition [\[link\]](#) (ii) Testimony from Curator of the Holocaust Galleries at IWM (iii) IWM. 'IWM Annual Report and Accounts 2018-19' [\[link\]](#) (iv) IWM. 'Transforming IWM London Phase 2' [\[link\]](#)
- [b] (i) 'World War II: Witness to War' (WTW) programme page [\[link\]](#) (ii) Testimony from Adam Donneky, Director (iii) Anonymised viewer responses to WTW (iv) Testimony from BBC Producer (v) 'BBC Free Thinking' Twitter [\[link\]](#), 'Words and Music: Gratitude' programme page [\[link\]](#), 'BBC Arts & Ideas' podcast page [\[link\]](#) (vi) Anonymised listener responses to 'Free Thinking' (vii) Lotem media articles list [\[link\]](#) (viii) France24. 'French move to extend ban on religious symbols sparks fears of 'radical' secularism', 30/11/19 [\[link\]](#)
- [c] (i) Testimony from Programme Co-ordinator, *Germany Close Up* (ii) *Germany Close Up* website [\[link\]](#)