

WANDERING MEMORIES
MARGINALIZING AND REMEMBERING THE PORRAJMOS

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More than four years have passed since I found out that one of the most harrowing images of the Holocaust was not the face of a Jewish girl, but of a 9-year-old Dutch Sinti girl, who was caught on tape when she was staring out of the cattle wagon that would deport her from Westerbork to Auschwitz. Up until that point, I had never fully realized that so-called Gypsies, or *Zigeuner*, were persecuted by the Nazis with the same vicious intent as Europe's Jewish population. Certainly I was aware that the Nazi regime targeted all those individuals who were considered threats to the purity of the "Aryan race," yet, after finding out that the girl was not Jewish and that her name was Settela Steinbach, I wondered how it could be that the Nazi persecution of the Roma had been given so little attention. And why had it taken so long for her identity to be recovered? The unearthing of Settela's identity marked the vantage point of my research, and her image, in conjunction with continuous antiziganism in and beyond the Netherlands, constantly reaffirmed that the topic of my thesis mattered.

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A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

While other scholars have used the terms “Gypsy” and “Romani” randomly and interchangeably, I follow Alaina Lemon’s usage of both terms “to convey subtle shadings in discourse, for the shifts are not arbitrary” (5). I use the term Gypsy (without quotation marks) to indicate stereotypy and antiziganism, while usage of the plural Roma and adjective Romani refers to actual individuals or the Romani collective. Furthermore, it must be noted that all terms derived from the masculine singular Rom (which means “man” in Romani) refer to a transnational, heterogeneous collective, which is comprised of other subgroups that sometimes may not define themselves as Romani – most notably so the Sinti in Germany. Nevertheless, I have chosen for the usage of the term Roma, not only since it is widely used in academia and more convenient than continuously referring to the “Sinti and Roma,” but more importantly since even this particular group defines itself as Romani within the wider field of European politics.

A NOTE ON TRANSLATIONS

All translations from texts written in languages other than English are my own unless otherwise indicated.

INTRODUCTION

When it became clear that the Parti Socialiste (PS) had lost much support of the French voters during the municipal elections in March 2014, president François Hollande decided to pull the plug on the government lead by Jean-Marc Ayrault. On 31 March 2014 Hollande gave a speech “to the French” standing in front of both a French and a European flag, in which he claimed that it was “time for change” and that this change was to be led by the new Prime Minister Manuel Valls (Fressoz). With this strategic move Hollande attempted to increase the popularity of himself and his party, by electing the immensely popular Valls. While the popularity of Hollande’s party continued to plummet, the newly elected PM initially received much support. Earlier in 2014 Valls made headlines for his contribution to banning comedian Dieudonné M’Bala M’Bala’s shows from theatres all over France, for he claimed that some of M’Bala M’Bala’s jokes were “antisemitic and defamatory” and “virulent and shocking attacks on the memory of Holocaust victims” (Willisher). In these statements Valls makes a clear, and perhaps obvious, link between the Holocaust and antisemitism: the latter must be condemned so that the former will never happen again. Combatting antisemitism, especially in light of recent attacks on the Synagogue in Copenhagen and the kosher supermarket in Paris, remains an important task of governmental institutions.

Perhaps Valls’ initial popularity partly relied on his condemnation of M’Bala M’Bala’s “Holocaust humor,” which certainly conveys the impression that the newly elected PM was morally just and tolerant towards other cultures. Yet the same Manuel Valls was in the news just one year before his election with his statements about the Gypsy population in France, claiming that Roma could never fully integrate in France and should thus be sent “back to the borders” (“French Minister Valls”). In these statements Valls defended France’s widely critiqued expulsion of Romani people that started in 2009 when the French government expelled 10.000 people (back) to Romania and Bulgaria (“France Roma Expulsions”). Valls’ comments were immediately subject to attack, to which he responded that he had nothing to correct and that his arguments were only shocking to those who “don’t know the subject” (“French Minister Valls”). It is questionable, however, whether Valls himself knows “the subject,” not only because he appears to refer to France’s immigrant Romani population as a political issue rather than as people, more so because he fails to recognize that his statements are antiziganist. While Valls vigorously condemned M’Bala M’Bala’s shows because the

comedian's antisemitic monographs could hurt Holocaust survivors and foster antisemitism, he seems to forget or be unaware of the hundreds of thousands Romani people who were murdered by the Nazis during WWII and that his statements could hurt the Roma who survived concentration camps and persecution. Apparently, Valls failed to make the link between antiziganism and the Holocaust, a disconnect that resonates in current French politics – not only because a minister who made antiziganist comments was elected as the new PM, but also because the French government continues its strict policies towards Roma.

The French PM's attitudes towards Gypsies stand out compared to statements made by the political leaders of other Western European countries that also deal with the increasing influx of Romani immigrants since Bulgaria and Romania entered the EU in 2007. Valls' statements in particular and France's policies of expelling Roma in general appear to be extreme and were subject of much debate and criticism by France's neighboring countries, but, in the meantime, countries such as the Netherlands, Germany and Italy imposed similar yet less radical measures to solve the so-called "Roma Problem." While some politicians have voiced sympathy for the Roma who fled poverty, it is generally believed that the illegal settlements in which these immigrants live have to be demolished for they are unsafe and pose hygienic risks (Bendavid). Since most Romani immigrants lack work that could eventually sustain their lives and approve their residence in the specific Western European country, they either stay illegally in the country to which they migrated or return to Bulgaria and Romania. A quick analysis of the various media reports that deal with the "Roma Problem" illustrate that Valls' statements are not extreme but rather part of an antiziganist discourse that prevails throughout Europe. Valls' belief that Gypsies simply cannot integrate into Western European societies and thus should return to from whence they came is widespread, a sentiment that resonates with common xenophobic tendencies towards immigrants in general. It is important to note that this discourse appears to be less prevalent in Germany, perhaps since German media and officials are aware of the link between antiziganism and the Gypsy victims of the Holocaust – a link that Valls failed to make in his depiction of France's Roma population as scroungers that fail to integrate. Some non-Roma bloggers have remarked, however, that this link is fallacious to begin with, for we are dealing with two separate groups: the "original" Romani population of Western European countries and newly immigrated Romani people (Pilgrim). And so, one of the

bloggers claims, the “Roma Problem” is “not a ‘race’ question [but] about EU rules” (Pilgrim).

Certainly, we should distinguish between the two groups, and moreover we should recognize that the current situation of Romani people who recently immigrated to Western European countries is about EU rules as well. Nevertheless, both groups are continuously depicted as antisocial collectivities that consist of thieves, vagabonds, and lazy scroungers. Detaching these stereotypical images from the “Roma Problem” and, in doing so, claiming that this issue has nothing to do with racism is rather absurd precisely because of the many parallels between the current “problem” and what a Nazi official called the “Gypsy Question.” Tobias Portschy, the Austrian official who addressed the Reich Minister with his solution to the “Gypsy Question,” claimed that the Gypsies could never fully assimilate “into the entire German nation” nor could they “be settled in a solid group somewhere in the country” (1-2). Portschy asserted that a different solution had to be found quickly, since the “Gypsies are ... a people of habitual criminals and parasites [who cause] untold damage to our national organism” (3). Not only are the Gypsies lawless by nature, writes Portschy, they also lack personal hygiene and “are known to be suffering from hereditary diseases” (3). And so the only solution, according to Portschy, is to sterilize the Gypsies and intern them in labour camps. He adds to this that “voluntary emigration abroad should, however, be left open to them” (3). While Portschy’s solutions were offered to the Reich Minister in January of 1938, some of the proposed measures had already been implemented in 1935 when some town officials forced their Romani inhabitants to move into municipal internment camps. Many Nazi officials debated over the “Gypsy Question” (some opted to save a handful “pure-blooded” Roma while others favored complete extermination), but all these debates, together with Portschy’s plans of sterilization and internment, were brought to an end when Heinrich Himmler signed the order to begin mass-deportation of Romani people to Auschwitz and other concentration camps in 1942.

How many Roma were murdered by the Nazis in the years leading up to 1942 until the liberation of the concentration camps in 1945 is uncertain. Donald Kenrick asserts that “we do not know the answer and probably never will” (28). Nevertheless, most scholars claim that the Nazis killed between 200.000 and 500.000 Roma. Some have argued that they weren’t subject to persecution at all (Chagoll; Fonseca), and even others insist that many more Roma were murdered in those years (Grobbe). The

difficulty of answering the question “how many Roma were killed?” is partly crystallized in the fact that many Romani victims were not documented as *Zigeuner* (Gypsy) but as “asocial” or “criminal,” and that the Romani victims were often buried in unmarked graves (Chagoll; Kenrick). Another part of this difficulty is ingrained in the lack of scholarly knowledge of the fate of the Roma during WWII. We simply do not know enough and more research is needed. Finally, Romani scholar Ian Hancock has claimed that one of the reasons behind the inability to answer the question of how many Roma died during WWII is embedded in persistent downplaying of the Roma genocide – it seems that the question is not regarded as important enough to answer. Since the early 1990s, Hancock has been lobbying for remembrance of the “Final Solution of the Gypsy Question” as in conjunction with yet partly separate from its Jewish counterpart, for he believes that the Roma experience during WWII is hidden in the shadows of “another people’s history” (“Interpretation” 19). The first step, according to Hancock, is to rename what he and others formerly called the “Romani Holocaust” – a term that is problematic partly because scholars insofar have not reached a consensus whether the term “Holocaust” includes solely Jewish victims, or all victims of Nazi mass murders. Whether scholars choose to include the Roma victims as victims of the Holocaust or not, Hancock’s call for a new term is especially justifiable when we recognize that the Holocaust most often brings the Jewish genocide to mind. And so Hancock introduced the term “Porrajmos”, which in Romani means “devouring” or “destruction” (Hancock, “Interpretation” 20).

Antiziganism and the Porrajmos

On October 24 2014, the Memorial to the Sinti and Roma victims of National Socialism was finally, after years of planning, revealed in Berlin. German chancellor Angela Merkel stated at the opening that the importance of the monument “cannot be overestimated,” for it commemorates a genocide to which “far too little attention has been paid for far too long” (Kuhla). Other political leaders and entire organizations throughout the European Union have made similar statements: in 2011 the Polish parliament declared 2 August as the official annual Roma and Sinti Genocide Remembrance Day (“OSCE”), and the Romanian President Traian Băsescu offered a public apology to all the Romani victims and survivors for his government’s role in the atrocities committed in 2007. The

case of Romania perfectly illustrates the paradox of continuous antiziganism and the memory of the Porrajmos. On the one hand, officials deem it important to recognize and commemorate the Porrajmos, while, on the other hand, clearly antiziganist policies are implemented. In his speech, Bănescu stated that the horrors should be taught in schools, to which he added that “[w]e must tell our children that six decades ago children like them were sent by the Romanian state to die of hunger and cold” (“Romania’s President”). Yet, just four years after the apology, one right-wing politician argued for forced sterilization among Romania’s Romani citizens. The links between Portschy’s “thesis on the Gypsy problem” specifically and Nazism in general with current (proposed) policies in Romania are even more plentiful: the government has started building large walls around Romani settlements, which are now called “ghettos,” and Roma are continuously encouraged to leave Romania and elsewhere in Europe. How come that such an apology and promise to inscribe the fate of Romani people during WWII into Romanian consciousness is paralleled by policies that uncannily resemble the solutions offered by Portschy?

Klaus-Michael Bogdal, a German literary scholar, is particularly concerned about current flows of antiziganist thought and how this discourse is apparently disconnected from the Porrajmos. In his acclaimed book *Europa Erfindet die Zigeuner (Europe Invents the Gypsies)* Bogdal stresses that antiziganist stereotypes are figments of Europe’s imagination and, more importantly, that these figments have been immensely dangerous for centuries. Bogdal claims that while the Porrajmos was the culmination of violence perpetrated against Romani people, they have served as scapegoats in the process of modernization since they first arrived in Europe in the Middle Ages. While most scholars have a tendency to treat the Roma as having entered European history during WWII, Bogdal focuses on the “unique six-hundred-years history” of the European Roma, “a group marginalized like none other”, for he believes that this would “reveal a less auspicious aspect of Europe’s grand narrative of modernity” (Bogdal, “Europe”). Indeed Europe has been described and re-described as the cradle of modernity, as the continent “burdened” with the task to civilize those who need civilizing. The Roma, who arrived in Europe via various routes at the turn of the 14th century, were the perfect victims of modernity because their origins were shrouded in secrecy. Bogdal writes that “while groups such as the Germans, Gauls, Angels and Saxons had developed national myth of foundation and origin in order to corroborate their arrival in and occupation of a

particular territory, the first legends of the Roma told of their mysterious and distant origins and failure to settle" (Bogdal, "Europe"). Bogdal links this uncertain origin to the Roma lack of *Heimat*, a German concept that perfectly illustrates the importance of property and homeland in nationalist thought. European Roma had no clear territory of origin, nor a territory to call home, for they were considered an essentially nomadic people. Bogdal claims that Gypsies and their dwellings, seen as threats to European civilization, became the antithesis of the European invention of home. When so-called civilizing measures failed to succeed because of the Romani resistance, Roma were degraded "rogues" and "vagabonds" "that existed outside and beneath the social hierarchy and who attempted to survive through casual labor, begging and crime" (Bogdal, "Europe"). Thus the Gypsy we know today was invented – a stereotype that denies the Roma their culture and society and instead depicts them as a parasitic band of robbers.

Similar to a myriad of other "Others," the stereotype of the Gypsies as criminal vagabonds is paired with the image of the "beautiful Gypsy." Bogdal focuses on this dual stigma, which is typical for Orientalist discourses, for both images prevail throughout Europe: besides representations of Roma as filthy scroungers, the "Zemfiras, Esmeraldas and Carmens [...] have become indelibly imprinted on the cultural memory" (Bogdal, "Europe"). The earliest image of the "beautiful Gypsy," however, was not created by Alexander Puskin, Victor Hugo, or Prosper Mérimée, but by Miguel de Cervantes. In his 1613 novella *La Gitanilla*, Cervantes writes of a *gitana* (Gypsy woman) who is the embodiment of "wild", untamed femininity, and ultimately marries into civilization. Bogdal stresses that the "narrative arc of [the lives of these "beautiful Gypsies"] generally ends prematurely: either they die at the hands of their jealous lover or they wither and fade in the civilization that they experience as captivity" (Bogdal, "Europe"). The power of *Europa Erfindet die Zigeuner* is crystallized in Bogdal's extensive analyses of the dual stigmatization of Gypsies, and how these two stereotypical images have enforced Europe's "Grand Narrative" as the birthplace of modernity and civilization. Moreover, Bogdal's work illustrates that stereotypical images of Gypsies have become engrained in European cultural memory, and, following this rhetoric, how it can be that antiziganism is rather commonplace.

The Porrajmos, on the other hand, occupies no such place in cultural memory across European nation-states. This is perhaps most clearly illustrated by the

disjunction between antiziganism and the Nazi persecution of the Roma, while, on the other hand, antisemitism is often linked to the Shoah – as made clear by Manuel Valls’ statements at the beginning of this introduction. It would be rather utopian to expect that remembering atrocities of the past dissolves racist ideologies in the present, but nevertheless the large gap within European cultural memory of the Porrajmos appears to have tight links with current antiziganist thought. In January 2011, Zoni Weisz, a survivor of the Porrajmos, gave a speech at the German Bundestag in which he connected “the forgotten Holocaust” to current discrimination and exclusion of Romani people. The obliteration of the Porrajmos, or perhaps a failure to remember the Nazi persecution of the Roma in the first place, becomes apparent when searching for literature, films, and even scholarly work on the Porrajmos: little work can be found, especially compared to its Jewish counterparts. The cultural representations and scholarly work that can be found are very rarely produced by Roma and often categorized as “Jewish.” Furthermore, in textbooks and articles about the Holocaust the persecution of the Gypsies is often only touched upon, which stands, again, in sharp contrast to the abundance of representations and scholarly work on the Jewish experience in the Holocaust.

Weisz, Hancock, and other Romani activists, such as the chairman of the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma Romani Rose, have foregrounded this remarkable absence in European cultural memory and, subsequently, they have opened the doorway to commemoration of the Porrajmos. At least to a certain extent their efforts have spurred an inclusion of the Romani victims in the mnemonic discourse on the Holocaust. Rather than excluding the Romani victims altogether from the Holocaust in for example journal articles, these victims are now at least (shortly) mentioned in those texts. The number of separate acts of commemoration, such as the opening of the Berlin memorial by Merkel and the declaration of an annual Roma and Sinti Genocide Remembrance Day in Poland, has increased over the last decade, and furthermore, the Roma and Sinti are often included in official annual commemoration events.¹ And so, seventy years after the end of WWII, the Porrajmos finally appears to permeate the wider cultural memory of the Holocaust. Conjoined with this recent discovery of the Porrajmos is the increase of scholarly work on the subject – work that acknowledges the lack of gypsy experience and representations of the Holocaust within European cultural memory. Part of this

¹ Such as the Dutch annual commemoration of war victims on the 4th of May.

growth of scholarly work on the Porrajmos is due to the wider interest in “forgotten victims,” which, for example, was the title and subject of the 2015 Holocaust Memorial Day in Utrecht. Setting up this day with special attention for three of the groups of forgotten victims (homosexuals, patients of psychiatric clinics/people with mental illnesses and disabilities, and Roma) is symptomatic of the development of interest in the fate of the non-Jewish victims of the Holocaust. More scholars across various disciplines are now involved in research on the Porrajmos, and even though this still sharply contrasts its Jewish counterpart, the Porrajmos is slowly but certainly seeping into academic discourses on the Holocaust.

Wandering Memories

This thesis explores the obliteration of the Porrajmos on the one hand, and its recent discovery on the other. My general objective is to shed light on the political and cultural structures that underpin processes of forgetting and remembering, and so my research question is as follows: what are the mechanisms behind the marginalization and recent discovery of the Porrajmos within the European discourse on the Holocaust? As mentioned earlier, some scholars across different disciplines have researched the memory and history of the Porrajmos, most clearly illustrated by the third volume of the journal *The Holocaust in History and Memory* entitled “The Porrajmos: The “Gypsy Holocaust” and the Continuing Discrimination of Roma and Sinti after 1945.” The editor of this series, Rainer Schulze, is particularly interested in antiziganism before, during and after WWII, and in the foreword he writes that one of the aims of the volume is “broadening the discussion of the Holocaust to include areas often left out” (5). The bulk of the articles included in the journal address the marginalization, or what Hancock has called downplaying, of the Porrajmos, and all of the texts contribute to a wider understanding of this genocide and its aftermath. Just as Bogdal and Hancock have argued, most scholars who contributed to this volume suggest that antiziganism not only led to the Porrajmos, but also that this racist discourse caused the forgetting of the Porrajmos within European cultural memory. Thus, Schulze and other scholars have argued that when it comes to the obliteration of the Porrajmos within European cultural memory, antiziganism is the main contributor. While this is certainly the case, the whole situation becomes even more complex when we consider that the memory culture of the

Roma is generally vastly different from its European counterparts.

Michael Stewart, an anthropologist who has done extensive fieldwork among European Roma, has researched the Romani way of remembering, for, as he claims, scholars have not only neglected the Porrajmos and its remembrance, but also the ways in which Roma relate to their pasts. Those who have researched both aspects have sometimes believed that Roma have no relation with the past whatsoever. According to Isabel Fonseca, the author of the widely acclaimed popular account of Gypsy life entitled *Bury Me Standing* (1995), the Gypsy community is able to deal with collective traumas such as the Porrajmos through forgetting. Fonseca in fact states that the Roma have turned this into “an art” that “does not imply complacency: its tenor is one of – sometimes buoyant – defiance” (275-76). The idea here is that this “forgetting” of traumatic events is not something negative, but rather a coping mechanism used by Roma to deal with their past. The anthropological historian Inga Clendinnen, in *Reading the Holocaust*, has explored the notion of the Roma as “a forgetful people” as well. Interestingly so, she titles the short (and only) paragraph about Roma in her book the title “The Gypsies: Forgetting,” followed by a section titled “The Jews: Remembering” (6-8). In this short paragraph on the Gypsies Clendinnen states that European Roma have chosen “not to bother with history at all” for they “seek no meaning beyond those relevant to immediate survival” (8).

In the words of Stewart, the idea that the Roma are somehow able to completely live in the present and have “healed themselves of a painful past by insulating themselves from traumatic memory is a striking and even heartening proposition” (568). Harkening back to Bogdal’s extensive account of antiziganism, this concept of the Roma as a forgetful people seems inherently linked to the stereotypical image of Gypsies as nomadic, wandering people who lack a home. Within the European mnemonic discourse the concept of *Heimat*, again, seems to play an important role. Thus, even though both Clendinnen’s and Fonseca’s books are intelligent and sharp, their claims that Roma “simply forget” are problematic. While I by no means think that these two writers implied that the Romani victims are so to say “forgettable,” they fail to recognize the troubling implications of implying that Roma simply do not remember: by making such a statement, the Roma are in fact partly denied an identity and a culture, since, as Stewart points out, memory is seen as the DNA of a collectivity. I am certain that neither Fonseca nor Clendinnen intended to make such problematic claims. What their

arguments illustrate, however, is that antiziganist beliefs are deeply engrained in both popular and scholarly discourses, for Fonseca and Clendinnen made antiziganist claims without being aware of it.

Stewart, on the other hand, takes on a different perspective and claims that Roma have a different mnemonic culture, which is not focused on collective commemoration, but rather consist of “fleeting, fragmentary images” (565). Romani cultural memory is not so much crystallized in physical *lieux de mémoire*, to move in the direction of Pierre Nora, but rather in sites that are both difficult to grasp for the outside and not shared with the outside at all. Instead, this cultural memory is shaped through stories and songs that are neither written down nor translated. As such, Romani mnemonic culture focuses more on oral histories rather than on physical, “graspable” sites of memory such as memorials, pieces of literature, film, etc. Alaina Lemon is another anthropologist who provides useful insights into Romani memory culture. Even though her fieldwork was situated in Russia, she effectively argues that while there certainly is a difference between Romani and non-Romani constructions of cultural memory, this difference might not be as stark as we would imagine. Instead, Lemon points out that Roma are modern people who read books and watch movies as well - and thus she implicitly cautions us against antiziganist thought that essentializes Gypsies as pre-modern people. Two other scholars that shed new light on Romani remembering are Slawomir Kapralski and Huub van Baar, who illustrate the transnational and “wandering” character of Romani cultural memory. Cultural memories of massive events such as WWII are inherently transnational, yet when considering the cultural memory of the Porrajmos, another dimension of transnationality is added since the Roma are Europe’s biggest diasporic community. Furthermore, unlike its Jewish counterpart, Romani people lack a nation-state altogether, which renders their cultural memory inherently transnational.

Researching the transnational flows of Romani memory is, however, challenging and certainly impossible to conduct over the timespan of five months. Thus, looking at national frameworks for uncovering the mechanisms behind the forgetting and subsequent discovery of the Porrajmos is a methodological decision, not only for a lack of time, but also since such a starting point is more comprehensive. For this thesis I have decided to focus mainly on France and Germany because these two countries not only represent two different ways of dealing with the Porrajmos, but also because they

illustrate that most Romani lobbying to include the Porrajmos into cultural memory still functions along national lines. Furthermore, as mentioned in the beginning of this introduction, France and Germany appear to contrast each other regarding (official) antiziganism: French officials bluntly defended their deportation of Romani people while German politicians warned against a repetition of the crimes committed during WWII. While both countries' inhabitants appear to be similarly antiziganist, their responses to the "Roma Problem" differ in that France's response was far more radical than Germany's. Moreover, I have chosen to specifically focus on France and Germany, (with every now and then a reference to the Netherlands) because several activists have lobbied for an inclusion of the Porrajmos within European and national cultural memory in these two countries.

Interestingly, these Romani activists are lobbying for commemoration of the Porrajmos through media that have played a pivotal role in the (re)construction of cultural memory of the Holocaust, media from which Romani voices remain(ed) peculiarly absent. It has been widely noted that memorials, literature, and film have effectively channeled cultural memory of the Holocaust,² and, as pointed out by Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney, that these media are more than mere carriers of cultural memory: they build bridges between the past and the present, and, in doing so, determine what will be remembered in the future. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that some Romani activists have been lobbying for the construction of memorials that honor the Romani victims of Nazism, while others are actively seeking to inscribe the Porrajmos within the wider discourse on the Holocaust through literature and film. While cultural memories within Romani cultures are often articulated through oral histories and songs, most of which are neither noted down nor shared with non-Romani society, Romani activists seek to channel cultural memory of the Porrajmos through media that reach a broad (non-Romani) audience. Thus, the Romani activists discussed in this thesis actively chose the specific medium in order to achieve their goal. In doing so, their "memory work" not only builds a bridge between Romani and non-Romani remembrance of the Holocaust, but moreover has the potential to "live on" more effectively simply because their representations make the memory of the Porrajmos tangible through these very

² For more information on how the Holocaust is represented through these media, see the chapters in *The Oxford Handbook of Holocaust Studies* on literature (Horowitz); film (Baron); and memorials and museums (Young).

media. It is through the performance of representing the Porrajmos – through literature, film, or political activism and memorial sites – that this memory finally begins to permeate the wider discourse on the Holocaust.

The first strand of “memory work” I focus on in this thesis, is the German Romani civil rights movement that has been lobbying for remembrance of the Porrajmos ever since WWII ended. Compared to its French counterparts, German official institutions appear to be more actively involved in including the persecution of the Roma within national narratives of the Holocaust, especially when the recent inauguration of the Sinti and Roma Memorial is taken into consideration. However, when the long road towards recognition of the Porrajmos in this particular framework is taken into account, the difference between France and Germany turns out to be less stark: in both countries Romani survivors and their descendants have been struggling for recognition for decades. Specifically the Sinti and Roma memorial in Berlin is of interest for this thesis, for years of dispute preceded its opening in 2012. The eventual establishment of the memorial was mainly spurred by the civil rights movement lead by Romani Rose, who had fought long and hard for the eventual opening of the memorial. This long road is of particular interest for this thesis, since it illustrates how the battle for recognition of the Porrajmos is interwoven with the struggle against contemporary antiziganism. Furthermore, the memorial itself is illustrative of the role of the Porrajmos within wider remembrance of the Holocaust. While the Romani victims of Nazism are finally acknowledged in Berlin’s city center, the memorial is rather hidden between the trees of Tiergarten Park.

Regarding the French context I offer a comparative analysis of the work produced by the Romani artists Matéo Maximoff and Tony Gatlif. Specifically I will analyze Maximoff’s 1990 semi-autobiographical novel *Dites-le avec des Pleurs* and Gatlif’s 2009 film *Korkoro*, for both artists have expressed that their main goal with these works was to inscribe the memory of the Porrajmos into the wider cultural memory of the Holocaust. *Dites-le avec des Pleurs* is interesting for this thesis since Maximoff provides the readers with a complex representation of the Porrajmos, but also because this author’s works remain largely unknown among the wider public. While *Dites-le avec des Pleurs* and Maximoff’s other writings have been praised by scholars such as Ian Hancock, and are occasionally mentioned in the few scholarly texts on the Porrajmos, they have not reached a wide readership. Furthermore, most of his writings remain untranslated

and are thus only available in French – with as exception that some of the texts have been translated into German and are available in Germany through websites such as Amazon. *Korkoro*, also known as *Liberté* and *Freedom*, is an interesting case for Gatlif started researching the narrative for the film in cooperation with Maximoff more than four decades ago. At that time Gatlif intended to make a documentary, but, illustrative of the wider situation of the Porrajmos within European cultural memory, he was unable to collect sufficient documents and survivor testimonies. Thus, the documentary was turned into a feature film, and with the help of funding by the government-aided *Fonds Images de la Diversité*, the film premiered four decades after Maximoff's and Gatlif's initial partnership and ten years after Maximoff passed away.

Before analyzing how Gatlif, Maximoff, Romani Rose and other Romani activists attempt to inscribe the Porrajmos into the wider discourse on the Holocaust, I focus on answering the question why the memory of the Porrajmos is marginalized in the first place. The first chapter begins with an overview of the concepts on cultural memory that are important for the rest of this thesis. This chapter, however, not only offers a conceptual framework for understanding the mechanisms that underpin the forgetting and remembering of the Porrajmos, it moreover unveils the apparent gaps within the current field of memory studies. These gaps have contributed to the marginalization of the Porrajmos within and outside the scholarly discourse on the Holocaust. In this part I moreover address the common misconception that Roma have rendered forgetting into an art, which is tightly connected to the second part of this chapter, which addresses the “walls of secrecy” constructed by Romani societies. In the last part of this chapter, I connect these different strands, and focus on the mechanisms that underpin the marginalization of the Porrajmos within the European public discourse on the Holocaust.

The second and third chapters of this thesis focus on how Romani activists and artists are seeking to inscribe the Porrajmos into the cultural memory of the Holocaust. Following the historian Peter Carrier's suggestion that memorials can be considered sites of memory prior to their material existence, the first part of my second chapter follows the long road towards the final inauguration of the Sinti and Roma Memorial in Berlin, a road marked by long debates between German politicians and Romani civil rights movements. The second part of this chapter of this chapter focuses on the actual memorial itself, and offers an analysis of the memory site and its location in Berlin's city

center. As will become clear throughout this chapter, the Sinti and Roma Memorial draws upon the already existing commemoration of the (Jewish victims of the) Holocaust in order to inscribe the cultural memory of the Porrajmos into the wider framework of cultural memory in Germany and beyond. The third chapter of this thesis focuses on the ways in which Maximoff and Gatlif are seeking to ascribe the Porrajmos into the wider discourse on the Holocaust. In this chapter, I offer close analyses of *Dites-le avec des Pleurs* and *Korkoro*, while I simultaneously suggest approaching these two works as forms of “autoethnography,” defined by the literary scholar Paola Toninato as “a strategy used by the Roma to represent themselves ‘through the eyes of the other’ without losing their cultural specificity” (“Translating” 233). As will become clear throughout this chapter, both Maximoff and Gatlif mediate between non-Roma and Roma cultures, and use dominant strategies and language in order to reach a wide audience. Even though neither of the two representations of the Porrajmos appears to play a significant role in the current landscape of Holocaust remembrance, I nevertheless end my chapter with the claim that both works have the potential to successfully inscribe the Porrajmos into the wider discourse on the Holocaust, precisely because both authors mediate their way in between worlds.

In the conclusion of this thesis, I once again place an emphasis on ongoing antiziganist thought and policies, for this discourse fosters the marginalization of the memory of the Porrajmos, while it simultaneously hinders its discovery. This chapter also includes a positive note, for it is my (perhaps utopian) belief that the recent inauguration of the Sinti and Roma memorial in Berlin, combined with the efforts of Maximoff and Gatlif, illustrate that the Porrajmos is slowly but certainly seeping into the discourse on the Holocaust. In channeling the memory of the Porrajmos through privileged media, Romani activists not only combat the marginalization of the Porrajmos within cultural memory of the Holocaust, they moreover challenge non-Romani perspectives of Roma. The attempts of these activists not only illuminate the glaring gap within the discourse on the Holocaust, they moreover juxtapose the past and the present, and, in doing so, highlight that Europe’s largest diasporic community continues to be regarded as a “problem” rather than as a society suffering from extreme poverty and exclusion. It is my hope that inscribing the memory of the Porrajmos into the wider discourse on the Holocaust, encourages non-Romani Europeans to view Roma as people rather than as “problems.”

Chapter 1

MARGINALIZED MEMORIES

Forgetting the Porrajmos

Memory's anachronistic quality – its bringing together of now and then, here and there – is ... the source of its powerful creativity, its ability to build new worlds out of the materials of older ones.

– Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*

On 19 May 1944 Rudolf Breslauer, a Jewish inmate of the Dutch *Durchangslager Westerbork*, captured an image that would be used in numerous Holocaust documentaries. During a seven-second fragment in Breslauer's film on camp life, made on orders of the German commander, we see a girl staring out of a cattle car until she moves out of sight – an uncanny disappearance since we now know that this is the last time the “girl with the headdress” was caught on camera, for the destination of the train was Auschwitz-Birkenau. Nearly fifty years after Breslauer filmed the deportation, the Dutch journalist Aad Wagenaar wondered “[w]here had she come from, this girl with the headcloth, how old had she been when someone in Westerbork pointed a camera at her; to what dreadful fate was she being taken? Had she been gassed or killed, or did she die, weakened and exhausted in a distant camp, like Anne Frank – because the face of such a child would always make you think of Anne Frank” (8). Following the general assumption that the girl was Jewish, Wagenaar embarked on the journey to uncover the girl's identity and initially called her “Esther,” for he considered “that to be a beautiful name for a Jewish girl” (12). During his research, Wagenaar discovered that the girl had been part of the so-called *Zigeunertransport* and that her name was Settela Steinbach, a nine-year old Sinti girl whose entire family was murdered by the Nazis.³ At the beginning of his research, however, Wagenaar did not consider the possibility that the

³ Settela's *gaže* (non-Romani) name was Anna Maria. Several days after Breslauer filmed her, she was gassed together with her mother and five of her nine siblings. The remaining Steinbach children were murdered in other camps. Settela's father lived to see the end of World War II, but he died of grief in 1946 (Wagenaar).

girl might have been persecuted and eventually murdered not for being Jewish but for being Gypsy, an assumption symptomatic of the wider interpretation of the Holocaust as referring (almost) exclusively to the Nazi genocide of the Jews.⁴

Wagenaar's research sparked interest in the often forgotten history of the Porrajmos and simultaneously exemplified the marginalized position of the persecution of the Roma within European cultural memory. Whereas the Dutch version of his study, published in 1994 and titled *Settela: het meisje heeft haar naam terug* (*Settela: the girl has got her name back*) unintentionally foregrounded the obliteration of the Romani persecution within the European Holocaust discourse – by which I mean that Wagenaar's aim was to uncover the identity of a (presumably) Jewish girl, and not to focus on the Nazi persecution of the Roma – the English translation that appeared more than a decade later was specifically geared toward making the story of Settela accessible for a wider audience. While this translation appears successful since Settela's image now circulates outside of the Dutch discourse on the Holocaust more often – indeed, it has become an emblem of the Porrajmos (the photo, for instance, resurfaces multiple times on the website of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, and separate websites have been dedicated to Settela) – her identity would still be unknown if Wagenaar had not asked himself who this girl was and whether she suffered a similar fate as Anne Frank.

As will become clear throughout this chapter, the discovery of Settela's identity and her subsequent reconfiguration as an icon of the Porrajmos rather than of the Jewish victims of the Holocaust serves to clarify the mechanisms that underpin the marginalization and discovery of the Porrajmos. Michael Rothberg's definition of memory as "the past made present" (*Multidirectional* 3), which he borrowed from Richard Terdiman, serves as an important notion throughout this thesis and is illustrated rather well by Wagenaar's search and later discovery of Settela as an icon within and outside of Dutch memory culture. The first implication of Rothberg's rather minimalist definition, which is applicable to memory's individual and collective variants, is the accentuation of memory's concern with the past in the present. Seen as such, collective memories are

⁴ The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the Holocaust as "the mass murder of the Jews by the Nazis in the war of 1939 -1945," to which is added that the term is "[a]lso used *transf.*, of the similar fate of other groups; and *attrib.*" – implying that the term is only transferred and attributed to other genocides perpetrated by the Nazis, and moreover that these genocides are considered separately from "the Holocaust" and thus referred to as the "gay Holocaust," "Polish Holocaust," "Gypsy Holocaust," etc.

determined by the present social, political and cultural needs of a group, while individual memories are shaped by these particular frameworks and influenced by personal interests and opinions. Wagenaar's search was sparked by the numerous times Settela's image was used in (mainly Dutch) documentaries and exhibitions while her identity remained unknown. Moreover, the Dutch discourse on the Holocaust in the 1990s, the time in which he conducted his research, still largely ignored other victims of Nazism, which may explain why Wagenaar excluded the possibility that the girl with the headcloth was anything other than Jewish.⁵ The second implication of Rothberg's definition deals with the performativity of memory, and implies that "memory is a form of work, working through, labor, or action" (*Multidirectional* 3). Both Wagenaar's account and Janna Eliot's English translation expose this latter characteristic of memory. While Wagenaar initially did not 'lobby' for inclusion of the Roma within Holocaust remembrance, his work demonstrates that the past has to be *made* present. Especially the (re)inscription of marginalized pasts into cultural memory requires actual acts of making present: such as Wagenaar's journalistic enquiry or even more clearly so Eliot's active lobbying for an inclusion of the Porrajmos within the wider discourse on the Holocaust through her translation of Wagenaar's work and her later published fictional account of Settela's life, entitled *Settela's Last Road*.

Despite these efforts, Settela remains largely unknown – especially when compared to that other young girl murdered by the Nazis, the girl mentioned by both Wagenaar and Eliot: Anne Frank. The comparison between Settela and Anne makes us wonder why the first is far less remembered than the latter, and, moreover, not only why it took nearly fifty years to uncover Settela's identity but also why the Porrajmos remained absent within European Holocaust remembrance for so long. One of the explanations offered by scholars for this marginalization is the smaller number of Romani victims compared to the staggering number of Jewish victims. Several historians such as Yehuda Bauer and Guenter Lewy have maintained that the Roma "did not fall victim to the same genocidal onslaught as the Jews" (Finkelstein 75), even though the latter simultaneously argues that the proportional losses of European Roma were approximately similar to the Jewish genocide. Norman Finkelstein is highly critical of the uniqueness-paradigm promoted by scholars such as Bauer and Lewy and sheds light on

⁵ See also the (English translation of) reviews of the Dutch edition of *Settela*, included in the English edition.

how the “preemption of the Gypsy genocide” was justified by the US Holocaust Memorial Council (75), a justification that, according to Finkelstein, “posed the main challenge to the Holocaust Museum” (75). “Multiple motives lurked behind the museum’s marginalization of the Gypsy genocide,” writes Finkelstein, the first one being the assumption that “one simply couldn’t compare the loss of Gypsy and Jewish life” (76). Such a quantitative approach is highly problematic not only because it implies a hierarchy of victims, but also because it suggests that the victimhood and suffering of a certain group is ultimately contained in the absolute number of victims.

This first motive behind the initial marginalization of the Romani experience in the Holocaust Museum is closely aligned with the two other motives Finkelstein mentions, namely that “acknowledging the Gypsy genocide [would mean] the loss of an exclusive Jewish franchise over the Holocaust” and moreover that if a consensus was reached that “the Nazis persecuted Gypsies and Jews alike, the dogma that the Holocaust marked the climax of a millennial Gentile hatred of Jews was clearly untenable” (77).⁶ While I would refrain from referring to the Holocaust discourse and acts of commemoration as a “franchise,” Finkelstein aptly points towards the assumption, shared by some historians and other scholars, that the Holocaust is a unique and quintessentially Jewish genocide – a (now often contested) principle that in part blocks the inclusion of other victim groups. Finkelstein’s three motives shed light on at least some of the mechanisms behind the marginalization of the Porrajmos within cultural memory, yet the three short paragraphs Finkelstein dedicates to the subject hardly do justice to the complexity of the issue, and, moreover, are emblematic for the neglect of the Nazi persecution of the Roma within academia in general. Certainly, the public discourse largely affects the academic counterpart, and so the Porrajmos has been partly neglected within scholarly contexts because it remained absent from European and global cultural memories of the Holocaust for so long.

The vantage point for uncovering the mechanisms behind the marginalization of the Porrajmos within the wider discourse of the Holocaust necessarily requires a conceptual framework of cultural memory, for without such a framework an analysis of the contemporary memory cultures in France, Germany and Europe in general would lack substance. While researching the foundational concepts of the contemporary field

⁶ Since Finkelstein’s writing in 2000 the US Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) has updated its website which now includes information on the Romani victims of the Nazi genocide (“Sinti and Roma”).

of memory studies, however, it became clear to me that the scholarly work on cultural memory has contributed to the marginalization of the Porrajmos in its own right and as such is not a mere representation of reality. Instead of claiming that public and scholarly discourses on the Holocaust are separated, the two continuously reinforce each other, which is illustrated by the decisive role ascribed to scholars when it comes to channeling public cultural remembrance (such as the contribution of Yehuda Bauer and other historians to the USHMM) and scholarly work sparked by events in the public sphere (such as the discovery of Settela's identity). In light of this mutual reinforcement, it must be noted that the juxtaposition of the conceptual framework of cultural memory (the scholarly discourse) with the cultural memory of the Holocaust and marginalization of the Porrajmos (the public discourse) that structures this chapter merely serves as a heuristic tool. In the first part of this chapter I offer a "conceptual toolbox" of the contemporary field of memory studies, which not only sketches some of the notions that guide this thesis, but also accounts for the marginalization of certain memories within the scholarly discourse. Moreover, I address the common misconception that Roma have rendered forgetting into an art. This misconception is not only false, but also problematic for it places Roma outside modernity and denies them their victimhood.

The second part of this chapter is closely related to this latter problematic tendency, since it focuses on the walls of secrecy erected by Romani societies. These walls, put in place to secure Romani social solidarity, impede dialogue between non-Romani and Romani societies and thus further isolate the cultural memory of the Porrajmos within Romani culture. While I acknowledge that non-Romani scholars and other *gaže* are often denied access into Romani cultures, a denial which contributes to the marginalization of the Porrajmos, I refrain from following the common misconception that this marginalization is the Roma their "own fault." Rather, I suggest it is more useful to pay attention to the continuous exclusion of Roma from European societies, for such a perspective illuminates why these walls of secrecy are constructed in the first place. This perspective serves as a bridge for the last part of this chapter, in which I further elaborate on the mechanisms that underpin the marginalization of the Porrajmos within the European discourse on the Holocaust. In doing so, I focus on the commemoration of the Holocaust as a uniquely Jewish event, while I simultaneously pay close attention to ongoing structures of antiziganism.

Cultural Memory Studies: Concepts and Gaps

Roughly five decades after the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs first conceptualized collective memory in the 1920s, Jan and Aleida Assmann published their foundational work on cultural memory. While the two scholars take different approaches (Jan Assmann is mostly concerned with cultural memory in a distant past and Aleida Assmann focuses more on present reconfigurations of cultural memory and media theory), they are both concerned with the transition from individual memory to cultural memory, and how these two mnemonic variants interact. Similar to Halbwachs' metaphorical transfer of the inherently individual concept of remembering onto a collective body, Jan Assmann writes that cultural memory is one of the "exterior dimensions of the human memory" (*Cultural* 5), in which meaning and significance is handed down. The other most important exterior dimension besides cultural memory, according to the Assmanns, is "communicative" or "everyday memory," which is based "exclusively on everyday communication ... characterized by a high degree of non-specialization, reciprocity of roles, thematic instability, and disorganization" ("Collective" 126).⁷ Their claim is that this particular exterior dimension has a "limited temporal horizon ... [which] does not extend more than eighty to (at the very most) one hundred years into the past ... and [as such] offers no fixed point which would bind it to the ever expanding past in the passing of time" (127). Cultural memory, on the other hand, is marked by transcendence and an anchored horizon. The latter is what the Assmanns call a "fixed point," "whose memory is maintained through cultural formation (texts, rites, monuments) and institutional communication (recitation, practice, observance)" (127). These are referred to as "figures of memory," which only in cultural memory can "expand into memory spaces of "retrospective contemplativeness" (127).

A parallel can be drawn from the Assmanns' "figures of memory" to Pierre Nora's concept *lieux de mémoire* (sites of memory).⁸ A "*lieu de mémoire*," argues Nora, "is any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human

⁷ The other two dimensions are "mimetic memory" (concerned with action, such as cooking and construction), and "the memory of things" (concerned with personal belongings as reflections of the self).

⁸ Pim den Boer notes that the translation of *lieux de mémoire* as "sites of memory" is problematic since it implies a certain locality and as such risks exclusion of particular *lieux*. This risk is perhaps even clearer in the problematic Dutch translation, namely *plaatsen van herinnering*, for it implies that *lieux* are only concerned with places. While other terms have been coined, such as "touchstone" and "anchor," I nevertheless chose the translation "sites of memory," since it is now widely used.

will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community" (*Realms* xvii). Simply put, a site of memory is "where memory crystallizes and secretes itself" ("Between" 7). Nora's much quoted remark that "[w]e speak so much of memory because there is so little of it left" (7), is closely aligned with his theorization of sites of memory, for he argues that, in our current age, "there are no longer *milieux de mémoire*, real environments of memory" (7). According to Nora, this loss of "living" ties with the past is the result of the acceleration of history, which "essentially means that the most continuous or permanent feature of the modern world is no longer continuity or permanence but change" ("Reasons" 438). In other words: without the existence of real environments of memory, artificially constructed sites serve as placeholders in order to imagine the community. Part of Nora's immense project on these placeholders (besides conceptualization) is an extensive account of a wide variety of French sites of memory, ultimately resulting in three volumes. Benedict Anderson's conceptualization of nation-states as imagined communities resonates strongly with Nora's immense task, since Nora mainly focused on sites of memory that shored up the legitimacy of the French nation.

Nora situates sites of memory (ranging from monuments and museums to novels, cities, ideologies, etc.) between history and memory – a polemic loaded with emotionally charged binary oppositions: artificial vs. living, magical vs. intellectual, a problematic reconstruction vs. a perpetually actual phenomenon (Erll). For the sake of brevity I follow Erll's suggestion that history is a "*different mode* of remembering in culture" (7, emphasis in original). Seen as such, Nora's definition of history is a distinct type of cultural memory, whereas his theorization of memory seems more in line with the Assmann's concept of communicative memory and Halbwachs' understanding of collective memory. This insight situates sites of memory in the liminal space between cultural and communicative memory, illustrating that these sites gain cultural mnemonic significance through communication between individuals. Moreover, Erll's suggestion also foregrounds that cultural memory is dead but also living, it is at times magical yet also intellectual, and it is simultaneously a problematic reconstruction and a perpetually actual phenomenon.

The Assmanns and Nora have contributed immensely to the foundations of what is now called "new memory studies", most clearly illustrated by the prevalence of the terms cultural memory and sites of memory in current scholarly work. However, if these

foundational works are synthesized incautiously into a definition of cultural memory as a reconstruction of the past that has a “fixed horizon” constructed through “pure” sites of memory, an essentialist approach to memory might arise. Certainly neither the Assmanns nor Nora aimed to foster such an approach, yet, since the former two scholars focus mostly on (Western and ancient) civilizations and the latter focuses mostly on France’s sites of memory, their work might contribute to a rather homogeneous image of cultural memory. Especially Nora’s conceptualization of sites of memory along the lines of the nation has been criticized. Moreover, despite his emphasis on the local and heterogeneous nature of sites of memory and his implication that these reconstructions of the past are always (to a certain degree) problematic, Nora excluded some French *lieux* in his multi-volume lexicon – gaps, writes Rothberg, which “appear particularly glaring” (“Between” 5) – sites that are generally believed to be rather essential aspects of France’s national history (such as Napoleon Bonaparte) and France’s inherently transnational history of colonialism (such as the Algerian Revolution).

Criticism towards Nora’s conceptualization of sites of memory and his glossary of France’s significant *lieux* arose at a time when scholarly work on memory moved from a thematic focus to the recognition of and research on the ways in which cultural memories are (re)constructed (Erll and Rigney, “Literature”). While memory research in the 1980s and 1990s focused more on the theorization of cultural memory, current scholarly work on cultural memory is more concerned with the dynamics of remembrance. Michael Rothberg’s concept of multidirectional memory has proved fertile ground for this novel approach, since it has opened up new perspectives on the fluidity of cultural memory. In *Multidirectional Memory*, Rothberg shows that cultural memory and sites of memory are not closed off entities but rather the result of constant negotiation between various memory discourses. The general assumption, writes Rothberg, is that memory is competitive: “many people assume that the public sphere in which memories are articulated is a scarce resource and that the interaction of different memories within that sphere takes the form of a zero-sum struggle for preeminence” (*Multidirectional* 2-3). According to Rothberg, defining memory as competitive, as a form of “property,” is infelicitous since memory does not work as “real estate development” but is rather constructed through a continuous transaction between various collectivities on different levels and via different media. Rothberg suggests to consider memory as multidirectional rather than as competitive, as the “subject to ongoing

negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing: as productive and not privative” (*Multidirectional* 3).

Considering cultural memory as multidirectional points our attention to the constant interaction between various sites of memory, sites which, inspired by Nora, were earlier regarded as “relatively stable points of reference for individuals and communities recalling a shared past” (Erll and Rigney, “Introduction” 1-2). Cultural memory is thus more than a simple sum of its parts, as Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney write, it is “an ongoing process of remembrance and forgetting in which individuals and groups continue to reconfigure their relationship to the past and hence reposition themselves in relation to established and emergent memory sites” (“Introduction” 2). Similar to Rothberg’s earlier definition of memory as the past made present, Erll and Rigney argue that cultural memory involves some sort of action: it is better seen as “performative rather than as reproductive” (“Introduction” 2). This perspective offers the understanding that sites of memory are dependent on continuous reinvestment and enactment, for without such performances these sites would carry no significance for cultural memory and be(come) “dead material” (Erll 5). Considering memory as performative illuminates the mechanisms that contribute to the prevalence or marginalization of certain narratives as key “anchors” within cultural memory: certain stories lose their importance within cultural memory if they are no longer performed, while other stories gain prominence and become part of a cultural memory through performance.

Combining Rothberg’s concept of multidirectional memory and Erll and Rigney’s emphasis on cultural memory as performative, I consider cultural memory to be a constant process in which certain aspects of the past are discarded while other aspects are highlighted and reiterated in order to bind the members of a group together. In this process the media play a vital role. As pointed out by Erll and Rigney, media are more than mere carriers of cultural memory: “[t]hey play an active role in shaping our understanding of the past, in “mediating” between us (as readers, viewers, listeners) and past experiences, and, hence, in setting the agenda for future acts of remembrance within society” (“Introduction” 3). Thus, media concretize the past in the present; they make certain ties to the past tangible in order to imagine a shared present and future. If a particular site of memory is represented by the media again and again it “lives on” more vividly in a collectivity’s imagination – consider for instance Anne Frank’s diary,

which has gained preeminence within cultural memory through numerous remediations. All the films, monuments, websites, museums and so on carrying the name “Anne Frank” strengthen the position of her original diary as a site of memory within cultural memory, and moreover contribute to Holocaust remembrance in general. In contrast to the cultural memory of Anne Frank, Settela Steinbach remains widely unknown even though her face has become an icon of Holocaust remembrance in certain contexts. This is in part a result of the general marginalization of remembrance of the Porrajmos, yet in part also because Settela’s image has been remediated far less often than Anne’s diary. Moreover, even photos of Anne Frank and her family have now become so widespread that everyone recognizes her, while the face of Settela remains widely unknown.

The comparison between Anne’s diary and Settela’s image not only illuminates that sites of memory gain preeminence in cultural memory through remediation, it also highlights what Susanne Knittel has called “internal multidirectionality.” While Rothberg specifically focuses on the cross-pollination between two or more separate memory discourses in specific sites of memory, Knittel’s focus on the memory of Nazi euthanasia reveals the internal multidirectionality of Holocaust memory, for it is “at once contained in and separate from the memory of the Holocaust” (288). The cultural memory of the Porrajmos occupies a similar position within Holocaust remembrance, since it is both considered a part of Holocaust remembrance, while it is simultaneously separated from it. Moreover, those sites of memory that are regarded as essentially Jewish have influenced memory work of the Porrajmos. The little known novel *Settela’s Last Road* by Janna Elliot is for instance labeled as “a kind of Gipsy Anne Frank” (“Settela’s”). The search for Settela’s identity similarly illustrates the dynamics of internal multidirectionality, not only since the face of the girl with the headcloth reminded Wagenaar of Anne Frank, but more so since his discovery reconfigured the iconic image of Jewish suffering into an emblem for the persecution of the Roma and simultaneously altered general understandings of the Holocaust.⁹ The historian Georgi Verbeek

⁹ Since Wagenaar’s discovery, Settela’s image has been featured in numerous (permanent and temporary) museum exhibitions, popular and scholarly books dealing with the history of the Porrajmos and Holocaust in general, informational flyers, websites of international institutions, teaching guidelines of the Holocaust, and monuments. While Settela still appears to be best known in the Netherlands, her image is now increasingly displayed outside the Dutch context (for instance in the leaflet accompanying the Memorial to the Sinti and Roma in Berlin).

illustrates this latter point when he writes that “Wagenaar has succeeded in correcting one of the many major and minor misunderstandings that sneak into the valid picture of the Holocaust. His book is not only meant as a historical correction, but is also an attempt to draw attention to the lesser known group of victims” (qtd. in Wagenaar 136).

Settela’s image is still quite literally contained in those earlier documentaries on the persecution and deportation of (Jewish) Holocaust victims, yet it is simultaneously separated from this discourse and used specifically in the mnemonic frameworks of the *Porrajmos*. Even though Settela remains unknown compared to Anne, her image is nevertheless powerful precisely because it was already partly inscribed into (Dutch) commemoration of the Holocaust: her image became iconic because she was believed to be Jewish, and now it is employed to commemorate the Roma victims of the Holocaust. The circulation and reconfiguration of Settela’s image illustrates that references to the Holocaust are often used, either passively or actively, to enforce cultural memories that are apparently separated from the Jewish experience of the Holocaust and memories of victims that have been previously marginalized. Indeed, remembrance of the Jewish experience in the Holocaust “has emerged as a paradigm and model for memory-making world wide” (De Cesari and Rigney 10). And so, while Rothberg’s elaborate analysis of the influence of (Jewish) Holocaust memory on other memory discourses and Knittel’s concept of internal multidirectionality both illustrate that cultural memory is dialogical and dynamic, they simultaneously illustrate that cultural memory is not exempt from power relations.

Paying attention to memory’s multidirectionality and (re)mediation not only foregrounds the fluid borders of cultural memory and its cross-pollination, such an approach also emphasizes the transnational frameworks of cultural memory and its dialogical and traveling nature. Specifically when it comes to analyses of Holocaust remembrance and Romani memory culture a transnational perspective cannot be disregarded, since the first has spread across the globe and fostered “a new international morality based on human rights” (De Cesari and Rigney 11), and since the latter is diasporically scattered across European and global nation-states. A transnational perspective allows us to look beyond national frameworks of memory and pay attention to those marginalized memories that have fallen between the cracks of national remembrance, such as those of the Roma, which have been largely excluded from national cultural memories in and outside of Europe. Taking a transnational

approach, however, as argued recently by Rothberg, “cannot simply leave behind national memory if it is to offer a new approach, for such a move would only repeat modernity’s logic of abstraction and supersession, essential components of national memory” (“Germany” 126-127). Moreover, Rothberg argues that studying memory’s multidirectionality “means not only linking different *layers* of memory – that is, different traditions and historical or cultural legacies – but also mediation between different *scales* of memory (local, national, transnational, etc.) without subordinating one to the other” (“Germany” 127).

Rothberg’s differentiation between memory’s layers and scales encourages us to look at cultural memory as dynamic in all its facets. This includes looking at how sites of memory influence each other and gain or lose prominence through (re)mediation, paying attention to transnational flows as well as looking at national frameworks, and finally taking into account that cultural memories are often used to legitimize the existence of a certain group. Necessarily, such an approach cannot gloss over memory politics: specifically regarding the marginalization and discovery of the Porrajmos within European cultural memory processes of in- and exclusion play an important role. However, as pointed out by De Cesari and Rigney, understanding memory politics includes more than “the simple paradigm of silencing and obliteration” (10), but also “means acknowledging the double role of memory:” on the one hand, memory “functions as an instrument of discrimination and a measure of exclusion” and on the other hand “it offers a conduit to recognition and empowerment on the part of the marginalized and dispossessed” (11). Both roles are applicable in the case of the Roma – stereotypical images of Gypsies are so deeply embedded in our European societies that they have become a part of cultural memory (Bogdal, “Europe”), which fosters antiziganism, while several Romani activists are now using cultural memory of the Porrajmos in order to combat antiziganist attitudes.

Before elaborating further on the double function of memory in the case of remembrance and marginalization of the Porrajmos in the public discourse, Rothberg’s argument that we should consider memory’s layers and scales without subordinating one to the other needs more attention. Rothberg’s warning is apt and necessary: an emphasis was earlier (problematically) placed on national remembrance, which overshadowed and downplayed those memories that cross national borders. The approach of cultural memory as a dynamic negotiation opens up new understandings of

“traveling memory,” yet it still seems to be commonplace within memory scholarship to privilege certain memory media. Memory sites such as novels, films, monuments and museums appear to be the most commonly studied sites of memory – perhaps since the former two convey cultural memory as narratives, while the latter two make the past present through “real” sites and objects.¹⁰ Even though a focus is now placed on the cross-referencing, borrowing, and (re)mediating between the various sites, those more tangible sites still appear to take center stage within contemporary memory studies, certainly in part resulting from their central role within European discourses. The emphasis on “static” sites within academia is perhaps in part due to the fact that research on these sites is easier to conduct than on non-written sites of memory – at least for those of us rooted in literary studies rather than in the social sciences. While historians and anthropologists have studied oral traditions extensively, little attention has been paid to Romani oral traditions, and those volumes of Romani oral history that have been published have remain widely disregarded in scholarly and public discourses (Lemon).

Romani cultural memory, besides being inherently transnational, is not so much crystallized in tangible sites of memory, but rather in sites that are both difficult to grasp from the outside and not shared with the outside at all. As argued by the anthropologist Michael Stewart, who has done extensive fieldwork among Hungarian Roma, Romani memory culture sharply contrasts its European counterparts in that, generally speaking, the Roma remember without commemoration. Furthermore, he implies that at first sight Roma appear to lack memory sites and cultural memory altogether, when he writes about the beginning of his research that “talk about the war was rare and moreover popped up in fleeting, fragmentary images. There were no forms of collective commemoration in which the historical memory of persecution was re-lived and re-created anew for each generation” (565). Following the conceptualizations by Nora and the Assmanns it would be a small step towards labeling Romani cultural memory as communicative and perhaps even a *milieu de mémoire* – a problematic outcome since Nora aligns these true environments of memory with premodernity and the Assmanns focus primarily on cultural memory within civilization.” The consequences of such an

¹⁰ Jan Assmann points out that “the term ‘cultural memory’ was proposed in the context of the literary text” (“Cultural” 7), which might point towards the emphasis on literature and other sites that narrate a story.

approach might lead to the assertion that the Roma have indeed turned forgetting into an art (Fonseca; Clendinnen). Stewart emphasizes the peril of “the suggestion that Roma have somehow healed themselves of a painful past by insulating themselves from traumatic memory” and argues that “Roma are no more able than anyone else to forget [trauma] in such a simple or unproblematic fashion” (568). More importantly, Stewart directs our attention to the possible danger of claims that Roma, in the words of historian Inga Clendinnen, “seek no meanings beyond those relevant to immediate survival” (8): a statement that ultimately denies the trauma endured by Roma, and moreover problematically implies that Roma live outside of modernity and that there is no need to include them in the overarching remembrance of the Holocaust.

The dual stigmatization of Romani culture pointed out by Klaus-Michael Bogdal is eminent in the general perception of how Roma deal with their past. Alaina Lemon points out that on the one hand scholars have fetishized the supposedly defiant Gypsy forgetfulness and their living in the present, while on the other hand it has been claimed that Gypsies have no use for history altogether. This double stereotype has penetrated scholarly discourses on Romani memory and contributed to the general assumption that Roma do not “publicly perform memories in writing, speech, painting, or video” (Lemon 168). It certainly seems that Romani cultural memory is more dependent on oral traditions and perhaps more secluded than other memories, yet it simultaneously does not exist in a vacuum. In fact, as argued by Lemon, Romani forms of “memory work” – such as Matéo Maximoff’s wartime memoirs and Tony Gatlif’s representation of the Porrajmos – have been performed publicly more often than is commonly recognized, but are often disregarded. If these works are acknowledged, they are “often dismissed as ethnically inauthentic, even insincere” (168). According to Lemon, such an essentialist assumption strips away the possibility of seeing Roma as “historical agents, or even as ordinary folk with selective memories” (168).

Especially in the case of Romani cultural memory the role of individual agencies is disregarded, yet it appears that contemporary memory studies in general is rather pessimistic towards the power of the individual when it comes to shaping cultural memory. Indeed, as mentioned by Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussy and Daniel Levy, it is incredibly challenging for individuals to embark on such a journey and actually penetrate collective memory, yet it is neither impossible nor rare – in Guatemala, for instance, so-called “memory workers” are (re)inscribing forgotten pasts

in order to combat institutionalized forgetfulness (Hoelscher, 199). Granted, these individuals have a difficult road ahead of them in a country that still partly denies its governmental corruptness and genocidal history, but they nevertheless opened the door to a more inclusive cultural memory. Although the Guatemalan context differs from its French, German and European counterparts, the concept of memory workers, defined here as individuals who actively attempt to add to or counter the existing collective memory through various means, is interesting for this thesis since various Romani individuals are actively “lobbying” for remembrance of the Porrajmos on (trans)national levels. Astrid Erll discusses the role of the individual within cultural memory when she writes that there is no such thing as a “Cultural Memory (with capital letters) that is detached from individuals and embodied only in media and institutions. Just as socio-cultural frameworks shape individual memories, a “memory” which is represented by media and institutions must be actualized by individuals, by members of a community of remembrance” (5).

It is not difficult to imagine that when individuals are stripped of their agency and denied access to a certain community of remembrance on the basis of stereotypical images, they are given little to no opportunity to add to or counter a hegemonic cultural memory – for if they do attempt such a thing, their work might be labeled inauthentic. Claiming that Maximoff’s writings and Gatlif’s films are inauthentic is problematic not only since it places Roma culture outside modernity and denies the agency of these individuals, but more so because it reinforces the assumption that European Roma are a homogeneous society – which is simply not the case. In this light, labeling the work of Romani individuals “inauthentic” simply because these works circulate beyond Romani society enforces the dichotomy between European “modernity” and Gypsy “tradition.” Moreover, following Lemon’s argument, I suspect that those critics and scholars’ view of Romani “authenticity” is more in line with stereotypical images rather than with the real lives of Roma across Europe, which is yet another illustration of the subtle workings of antiziganism in the scholarly discourse. As with all stigmatizations, there is a massive disconnect between the stereotype of “the Gypsy” and actual Romani individuals, yet, the first does ultimately impede dialogue between Romani and non-Romani societies: anthropologists and other scholars have expressed anxiety to research Romani culture for they regard it overwhelmingly difficult to gain rapport with and access to such a secluded group of people. The Romani scholar Ian Hancock, for instance, points out that

of all the (popular) scientific work on the so-called impoverished lexicon of the Gypsies he delved into, “none of the ... writers sufficiently overcame their stereotypical preconceptions of Gypsies or of what they *expected* ... to ask a Gypsy himself whether these words existed, or even to consult a Romani dictionary” (“Duty” 6, emphasis in original).

Antiziganist images are apparently so deeply engrained in our non-Romani societies that even scholars refrain from initiating a dialogue with Romani people. While Aad Wagenaar is a journalist rather than a scholar, his search once again illustrates this impediment rather well. Near the end of his journey to uncover the identity of the girl with the headcloth, Wagenaar found himself in the home of Crasa Wagner, a Romani Holocaust survivor who was deported from Westerbork to Auschwitz-Birkenau on 19 May 1944. “I was with the girl in the wagon,” said Crasa Wagner, “I sat on the floor behind her and she stood there at the front, near the door. We could hear the doors being bolted on the outside ... Her mother yelled: “Settela, get away from the door, or your head will get stuck!”” (95, 98) To Wagenaar’s question why she never mentioned this information to anyone else, Crasa Wagner simply replied: “[b]ecause no one ever has asked me” (95).

Walls of Secrecy

More than a month after Wagenaar’s visit to Crasa Wagner, “it became clear that certain Gypsies considered that [he] had trodden on forbidden ground with [his] questions about the Steinbach family and their fate in the war” (119). Wagenaar describes how he was informed that “a man from the Steinbach family” – a nephew of Settela’s father called Veigli – “had flown into a great rage and cursed everyone and everything” (119-120). Veigli had reproached everyone in Crasa’s camp violently, stating that “[a] Gypsy does not act like that ... you never speak to outsiders about members of someone else’s family. And especially not when those Gypsies are dead and ... have been murdered or died of grief!” (120). Veigli’s condemnation quickly spread throughout the Romani community where Wagenaar interviewed most of his informants, giving rise to “a high wall of secrecy” (120). This unanimous refusal to share any further information on the Steinbachs appears symptomatic of the difficulty *gáze* scholars and others encounter when trying to gain access to Romani societies across Europe (Fonseca; Lemon).

Communication between Roma and non-Roma is blocked not only as a result of antiziganist tendencies within the scholarly discourse, but this dialogue is also hindered from within Romani societies. While it must be noted that not all Romani societies seclude themselves so distinctly as in the case of Wagenaar's research,¹¹ the argument has been made that even Romanies who appear to be more welcoming towards scholars and journalists deeply distrust outsiders and recognize in *gaže* "threats and danger" (Stewart 575).

Stewart states that the Romani groups he researched live in a "state of siege vis-à-vis the outside world" and, moreover, that present antiziganist policies continuously remind them of their persecution prior to, during and after World War II. "In brief," he writes, "the Roma do not need commemorations to remember – the rest of the world does it for them on a daily basis" (576). While Stewart aptly reminded us of the possibly essentializing claim that Roma have mastered the art of forgetting, he offers a rather homogenizing picture of what he calls "European Roma" and "the Roma" interchangeably. Despite acknowledging that his research was mainly conducted in Hungary, Stewart seems to gloss over the fact that the Romani diaspora is scattered across European nation-states and as such he disregards the particular situation of specific Romani groups. Antiziganism seems to prevail more vigorously in Eastern Europe compared to Western Europe (Kapralski "Memory"), and so Romani societies in one country might foster a larger sense of distrust and hatred towards their non-Romani counterparts than in other countries. However, considering Bogdal's extensive account of the construction of Gypsy stereotypes, it cannot be denied that Roma have been excluded from European nation-states since they first arrived in the Middle Ages. Recent ethnographical fieldwork on Romani societies across Europe suggests that Roma internalize antiziganism to such an extent that it has become one of the determining aspects of Romani identity.¹²

The centrality of antiziganism in both Romani memory and identity is illustrated even more solidly in Tony Gatlif's film *Latcho Drom (Safe Journey)*, which follows the routes of various Romani communities from India to France and Spain. While Gatlif pays

¹¹ The Romani society that Wagenaar dealt with (Dutch Sinti) is known for being exceedingly isolated (by force and by choice).

¹² Such as Paloma Gay y Blasco's research among Gitanos in Spain, Patrick Williams' research among Mănuș in France, Maurits Eycken's research among Vlach in the Czech Republic, and Stewart's research among Roma in Hungary.

tribute to the richness of Romani culture and, as such, foregrounds the heterogeneity of Romani communities, he nevertheless captures a commonality between the various groups: their constant persecution. Traveling through the Hungarian countryside the consequences of continuous antiziganism for Romani identification become especially eminent when a young Romani girl sings the following lines:

The whole world hates us
We're chased
We're cursed
Condemned to wandering throughout life.

The sword of anxiety cuts into our skin
The world is hypocritical
The whole world stands against us.

We survive as hounded thieves
but barely a nail have we stolen.
(*Latcho Drom*)

Living in a world that continuously excludes them from social and political institutions and depicts them as criminal vagabonds, it is not accidental that Romani communities build high walls of secrecy and identify through their shared suffering of antiziganism. In certain ways, Romani communities exclude themselves from the national commemoration of the Porrajmos by leaving these walls (partly) intact rather than attempting to tear them down – as illustrated by the end of Wagenaar's search. Certainly, the seclusion of Romani communities adds to the marginalization of the Porrajmos and their overall exclusion from European nation-states. Taking this argument too far, however, can have some problematic outcomes. Isabel Fonseca, for instance, argues that "fatalism [is] stronger ... than common sense" among European Roma. It cannot be denied that the above quoted song has some dire-like characteristics; yet, Fonseca appears to imply that Roma dwell in self-pity and have no intention whatsoever to combat antiziganist tendencies – a claim which (again) strips away

Romani agency.¹³ Romani agency is perhaps asserted through the thick walls of secrecy built around their communities: rather than excluding themselves from “our” world, they defiantly refuse outsiders access into their communities.

Veigli’s condemnation of those Romani individuals that helped Wagenaar with his inquiries illustrates his agency instead of his self-pity, and, moreover, the construction of the high walls of secrecy quite literally serves the solidarity of his community. Even though he might have compromised this solidarity when he flew into a great rage and cursed everyone (thus creating tension), his claim that Roma do not speak to outsiders about a fellow Rom’s family – certainly not about death – struck a chord, since none of the members of the Romani community in Zuid Limburg helped Wagenaar afterwards. Veigli did not appear necessarily concerned with contemporary antiziganism, but rather seemed to tap into the harrowing memory of persecution in reminding his fellow Roma that “a Gypsy does not act like that” (120). Excluding non-Roma is perhaps considered a necessary defense mechanism simply because the past has proven that letting in outsiders and sharing information can have destructive consequences for Romani society. The so-called “fieldwork” carried out by Dr. Robert Ritter and Eva Justin is a case in point: after these two Nazi ‘scientists’ conducted an in-depth study among German Roma, their work was used to formulate an answer to the “Gypsy Question” and helped justify their elimination (Lewy).¹⁴ While it cannot be stated with certainty whether the Roma involved in Ritter and Justin’s investigations cooperated voluntarily or were forced to do so, the destructive outcomes of Romani participation in these interviews and medical examinations justify contemporary distrust towards outsiders of Romani societies – even more so if we take into account that neither Ritter nor Justin were sentenced in court on the claim that there was insufficient evidence (Lewy).¹⁵

¹³ This claim is also simply false since multiple Romani organizations and individual activists are now actively combating the marginalization of the Porrajmos in the public sphere, which is the topic of the second and third chapters of this thesis.

¹⁴ Dr. Robert Ritter is not to be confused with the commander of the *Luftwaffe* Robert Ritter von Greim (Schmidt-Degenhard).

¹⁵ The USHMM states on their website that Ritter committed suicide in 1950, which, the page claims, is why his trial ended (quite possibly this has to do with the confusion between Dr. Robert Ritter and Robert Ritter von Greim since the latter committed suicide, however, he did so five years prior to 1950). In his

The refusal of the Romani community in Zuid Limburg to further cooperate in Wagenaar's research and the song from *Latcho Drom* not only illustrate how deeply antiziganism affects Romani identities but also how their ongoing persecution is an important aspect of their cultural memory. Shedding light on the link between Romani identity and memory, Slawomir Kapralski defines the first "as an imagined link between a group's past, present, and future" which "is related to memory in a mutually determining way" ("Memory" 197), by which he means that collective memories are not only determined by a group's self-identification in the present but also serve to reinforce this shared identity. In the case of antiziganism and Romani communities, this mutual reinforcement is especially vivid: contemporary antiziganism not only determines Romani identity in the present, but it also reminds Roma of their constant persecution since they first entered Europe. Antiziganism thus appears to be, following the Assmanns, one of Romani cultural memory's "fixed points" – although it is constantly reconfigured in the present, it remains a decisive factor for Romani identities. Ironically, the cultural memory of antiziganism serves to exclude outsiders from Romani communities, which exemplifies De Cesari and Rigney's definition of the first role of memory. Simultaneously, however, Romani organizations and activists draw on their cultural memory of persecution in order to combat antiziganism and inscribe the Porrajmos into Holocaust remembrance (which is the topic of my second and third chapters).

Before delving into the various mechanisms that underpin the exclusion of Roma within European societies and that thus impede the possible integration of the Porrajmos within the wider discourse on the Holocaust, Veigli's reproach illuminates another aspect of Romani remembrance that has often been pinpointed as a cause of the marginalization of the Porrajmos: the taboo on speaking of the dead (Lemon). Lemon highlights how Western journalists and scholars have interpreted this taboo as yet another illustration of the Romani's deliberate ignoring of the past. Rendering the absence of talking about the deceased as illustrative of Romani forgetfulness is not only problematic, but also simply false, as argued by Patrick Williams, who has done

account of Ritter's life and crimes, Tobias Schmidt-Degenhard states that the Nazi psychologist died a year after his case was closed in court (on the grounds of a lack of evidence) as a result of high blood pressure.

extensive fieldwork on the meaning of the dead among Manouche in central France.¹⁶ Williams writes that the taboo of death is a matter of integrity: “[s]o that the living be assured of their immutability, of their existence, it is necessary for the dead to lie in peace” (54). Neither Lemon nor Williams explicitly state that the continuous exclusion of Gypsies provoked the Romani disapproval to talk about death; however, they do imply that the secrecy surrounding death secures the social solidarity of Romani communities.

A thin line runs between pointing towards the strong walls built around Romani communities as a mechanism to cope with antiziganism and the problematic claim that Roma are ultimately the ones who keep antiziganism intact through their seclusion. Certainly the lack of dialogue between Roma and non-Roma as a result of these walls hinders the fight against antiziganism and the inclusion of the Porrajmos into the wider cultural memory of the Holocaust, but we must ask ourselves carefully whether this is the fault of Romani communities themselves, or a consequence of the European invention of the Gypsies. While there is some truth in claiming that Roma remember in seclusion simply because their culture is different, it seems to be commonplace to ignore the causes of this exclusion in the first place, which, possibly, adds to the problematic claim that Gypsies are essentially different from “us.” It is more fruitful to turn the tables and ask *why* Romani memory is so secluded from our mnemonic frameworks – a change of perspective from the “Other” to ourselves which necessarily involves acknowledging antiziganist policies. What if we accept that “the world” has condemned Roma “to wandering throughout life,” as the song goes in *Latcho Drom*? Following Bogdal, it is my contention that since their first arrival in Europe, Roma served as scapegoats of modernity and, moreover, that this continuous exclusion shaped their (memory) culture and gave rise to those walls of secrecy – which ultimately enforces present antiziganism and marginalizes remembrance of the Porrajmos.

¹⁶ Again, it must be noted that in some Romani communities talking of death is more of a taboo than in others.

Remembering the Holocaust and Marginalizing the Porrajmos

The Roma occupied a unique position from the outset. They belonged to those who were not there from the beginning, who were not expected and who therefore had to disappear again.

– Klaus-Michael Bogdal, “Europe invents the Gypsies”

An analysis of the mechanisms that underpin the marginalization of the Nazi persecution of the Roma cannot gloss over Holocaust remembrance, since the Porrajmos is both part of and separate from this wider memory discourse. Thus, it requires paying close attention to the construction of this discourse and, simultaneously, to antiziganist attitudes that exclude Roma from institutions that shape European memory discourses. Jeffrey Alexander, in the first chapter to *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, implies that the Nazi persecution of the Jews has become a “master narrative” of cultural memory in European nations and across its borders (13). As will become clear throughout this part, Alexander’s elaboration on “master narratives” is especially helpful to understand why and how the Holocaust takes on such a central role within European memory discourses while the Porrajmos is delegated to the periphery.

Before delving into the mechanisms that maneuvered the Holocaust into such a central position, it must be noted that I by no means intend to claim that the Holocaust has “become one totalizing signifier containing the same meanings for everyone” (Levy and Sznajder 92). As pointed out by Daniel Levy and Nathan Sznajder, the meanings attributed to the Holocaust differ per local, national, trans- and international context, and, moreover, “evolve from the encounter of global interpretations and local sensibilities” (92). Thus, Holocaust remembrance is neither homogenous nor “set in stone,” yet, it is perhaps what the Assmanns would call a fixed point. Although remembrance of the Holocaust is subject to processes of negotiation and differs per context, it plays a foundational role in cultural memories and self-identifications of Germany and France, and, moreover, as argued by Claus Leggewie, now “provides Europe with a *negative* founding myth” (123, emphasis in original).

It has often been argued that the trial of Adolf Eichmann, which took place in Jerusalem in 1961, propelled Holocaust remembrance into the public sphere in and beyond Germany and France – both countries that, at the time, failed to acknowledge the close involvement of their own governments in Nazi crimes (Rothberg “Work”). As

noted by the historian Klaus Wiegrefe, the 1961 German government influenced Eichmann's prosecutors to replace "Germans" with the word "Nazis" whenever possible in order to evade prosecution of contemporary German officials who were involved with Nazism (Wiegrefe). The French government of 1961 similarly evaded recognizing the role played by the Vichy government in Nazi crimes, "not to mention the collaboration of French citizens in the murder of the Jews and the deep-rootedness of [antisemitism] at all levels of society" (Leggewie 123-124). While it would take decades after the Eichmann trial to break the (institutional) silence surrounding the responsibility of German and French officials, Eichmann's prosecution can still be understood as the starting point of the Holocaust as a master narrative. The trial was specifically designed by the Israeli government to foster prominent news coverage and, in the words of then Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, present "[t]he Holocaust that the Nazis wreaked on the Jewish people [as] a unique episode that has no equal [and] as the only crime that has no parallel in human history" (qtd. in Rothberg, *Multidirectional* 176). In contrast to the Nuremberg trials of 1945-46, in which the Holocaust was "perceived as part of larger practice of war crimes" (Levy & Sznajder 94),¹⁷ the Eichmann trial focused almost exclusively on the Nazi genocide of the Jews and laid the foundations of the above mentioned uniqueness-paradigm.

The Eichmann trial gave compelling answers to two questions Alexander deems crucial for the articulation of a "successful process of collective representation" (12): namely "[w]hat actually happened?" and "[w]hat group of persons was affected by this traumatizing pain?" (13). The first question, related to the nature of the pain, refers to a more or less consensual account of how many victims perished and the specific circumstances of their death, while it also pays attention to what happened to the "wider collectivity" of which the victims were and are a part (13).¹⁸ During the trial, the prosecutors backed their case through citation of numbers, dates, and official documents – all of which were anchored by 111 witness testimonies (Rothberg, "Work"). More importantly, perhaps, the trial clearly established Alexander's second question, namely

¹⁷ As pointed out by Daniel Levy and Natan Sznajder, the term "Holocaust" was not widely used in referring to the Nazi persecution of the European Jews at that time.

¹⁸ Referring to this first question as "*the nature of the pain*," and then linking it to the particular group and the wider collectivity of which this group is (or was) a part, is problematic since it suggests that even those members of the "wider collectivity" were traumatized without suffering actual individual trauma. Taking it even further, such a statement implies that *all* members of this collectivity are victims.

the nature of the victim. It has been widely argued that the inclusion of (Jewish) survivor-testimonies marked a turning point for Holocaust memory since it transferred previously intimate individual and familial memories onto the public sphere (Rothberg "Work"). In doing so, as noted by Annette Wieworka, "the survivors acquired the social identity of survivors because society now recognized them as such" (88). Not only did the inclusion of these testimonies help apprehend Jews as actual living human beings, the stark differentiation between them and Eichmann (who apparently showed no remorse from his glass booth) also clearly established their victimhood vis-à-vis the Nazi perpetratorship.

If the Eichmann trial is indeed regarded as the foundational event of contemporary Holocaust remembrance, Romani victims of the Nazis (and other victim groups) have been marginalized from the very beginning. While the judges of the Jerusalem District Court charged Eichmann with the deportation, concentration and extermination of tens of thousands of Roma, they concluded that "it has not been proved before us that the accused knew that the Gypsies were being transported to destruction" (Arendt 245). In the words of Hannah Arendt, this "meant that no genocide charge except the "crime against the Jewish people" was brought ... [even though] Eichmann had admitted during the police examination that he knew of the [extermination of Gypsies]" (245). Adding to this marginalization is the simple fact that none of the 111 witnesses testifying against Eichmann were Romani. As such, the Romani survivors of Nazism did not acquire the social identity of survivors because they were neither presented as such during the Eichmann trial, nor publicly recognized as a victim group in the direct aftermath – even though, as noted by Arendt, it was well known at the time that Roma had been victims of genocide.

While Romani victims of Nazism are more often included in Holocaust commemoration, and separate commemorative events and memorials for the Porrajmos now exist (most notably so the memorial in Berlin, which is the topic of the following chapter), even contemporary memory discourses in both Germany and France fail to give compelling answers to the first two questions foregrounded by Alexander. Part of this is due to lack of historical knowledge and scholarly work on the Porrajmos. For instance, as noted in the introduction of this thesis, no consensus has been reached regarding the number of Romani victims. The Nazis, known for their impeccable documentation, often filed the Gypsies under categories such as "criminals" and

“asocials” (Chagoll). As a result, it is difficult to establish how many Roma were murdered during the Nazi regime. More problematic, however, is the flourishing of antiziganist tendencies: seventy years since the end of WWII, Roma are regularly depicted as wandering vagabonds who leech off of national economies. Some historians have even suggested that “in some way the Gypsies provoked their own persecution” for their criminal existence (Stewart 571). These and other antiziganist statements, which can be seen as a form of Holocaust (or Porrajmos) denial, are fortunately becoming uncommon within academia. Nevertheless, within European societies and across their borders, this version of antiziganism still seems to prevail, while claiming that Jews caused their own destruction is (rightfully) condemned. Bogdal’s assertion that stereotypical images of the Gypsy as a wandering vagabond without *Heimat* (simultaneously as a criminal and as a romantic figure) has seeped into European commemoration of the Holocaust can be confirmed, for example, when Dutch author Harry Mulisch wondered whether “the death of the Jews [would] have been less of an evil if they were a people *without a culture*, such as the Gypsies who were also exterminated?” (qtd. in Arendt 96, emphasis mine).

Even if Roma are recognized as victims of Nazism, they are at times depicted as causing their own persecution, or their persecution is deemed “less of an evil” compared to the Nazi persecution of the Jews. These stances are deeply entwined with the cultural memory of Gypsy stereotypes. As pointed out by Bogdal, the dual stigmatization of European Gypsies is a figment of European imagination. “The Gypsy” does not exist as a real person but is a constructed image. This image, however, has impeded remembrance of the Porrajmos, since it has taken away the personhood and individuality of those Roma that have fallen victim to the Nazi regime. Romani lives, then, can be seen as what Judith Butler calls “ungrievable”: lives that “cannot be apprehended as injured or lost [since] they are not first apprehended as living. If certain lives do not qualify as lives or are, from the start, not conceivable as lives within certain epistemological frames, then these lives are never lived nor lost in the full sense” (1). Gypsies are not considered living, and they are, as stereotypical images, no actual human beings in the first place. And so Seymour Siegel’s doubts about whether “Gypsies even “existed as a people” during the justification of the Holocaust Museum’s preemption of Romani victims does not strike as odd as it may seem (Finkelstein 76). However, Siegel did not point towards the stereotypical image of the Gypsy but rather ridiculed “the call for Gypsy

representation” while simultaneously acknowledging that “[t]here should be some recognition or acknowledgement of the gypsy people ... if there is such a thing” (Finkelstein 76). As noted in the introduction of this thesis, the current French Prime Minister made a similar statement in referring to the Roma as an “object” rather than as people. Constantly referring to actual people as Gypsies essentializes them into one thing and one thing only, and so their suffering or death is not recognized as trauma or loss, for they are not apprehended as living in the first place. Even if they are acknowledged as victims, claims are made that their suffering was somehow their own fault or, even more problematically, that their lives were less worthy of living than others.

Everyday antiziganism is part of the reason why the Porrajmos fails to be articulated collectively, since it blocks compelling answers to Alexander’s third question with regards to representations of mass violence: namely the “[r]elation of the trauma victim to the wider audience” (14). Fortunately, antiziganist tendencies and arguments seem to have lost force in official German, French and European institutions. The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), for instance, has established a “Committee on the Genocide of the Roma” (“Genocide”), and, since France and Germany are both members of the alliance, they are morally inclined to follow the (mostly educational) recommendations of this committee. Even in these cases however, where “the nature of the pain has been crystallized and the identity of the victim established, there remains the highly significant question of the relation of the victim to the wider audience” (Alexander 14). Despite acknowledgement of Roma as “bearers of a tragic history” (Alexander 14), this tragic past remains largely excluded from popular discourses on the Holocaust, since most non-Romani Europeans do not identify with the Romani victims of the Holocaust. Yvonne Robel and Kathrin Herold, in their analysis of the representation of Roma as victims of genocide in (West) Germany since 1945, write that “the dominant German collective memory of [the Porrajmos] is [still] characterized by a history of denial, silence and exclusions and closely linked to antiziganist tendencies which still exist today” (61). In a similar vein Sylvain Aubry points to the 2010 eviction of Roma from France as a continuation of “views and attitudes from the Vichy ideology ... relating to specific groups who are regarded as a ‘threat’” (106). While Robel and Herold, and Aubry agree that “it is now widely accepted [in official institutions] that the Roma were victims of Nazi persecution and extermination in a

similar way as were the Jews” (Robel and Herold 106), they highlight the break between official remembrance and everyday antiziganism.

This break is backed by two recent polls held among French and German societies. A 2009 study on racism and xenophobia in France concluded that 69% of the French held great suspicion against the Roma and regarded them as “outside society” (Aubry). While Germany has not evicted large groups of Romani refugees and is often seen as more progressive and inclusive towards Roma than France, a 2004 poll showed that 67% of the German population opposed the building of a memorial for the Romani victims of Nazism in Berlin (van Baar, “Cultural Policy”). Certainly, the two polls differ significantly: in the French case the outcomes of the study clearly point towards antiziganist tendencies, while the outcome of the German poll might be motivated by other arguments relating to Holocaust commemoration in general. Nevertheless both studies highlight that Roma are generally considered to exist on the margins of French and German societies. Changing the perspective to the wider context of Europe, the situation might appear radically different in light of European integration after 1989, which, in the words of Leggewie, “has indisputably been a success” (139). Political theorist Huub van Baar argues that the Holocaust has contributed to the emphasis placed on integration as Europe’s moral obligation, and, more importantly, he illuminates how this obligation has significantly shifted “the approaches of European institutions toward the Roma” since the early 1990s towards a “Europeanization of Roma representation” by Romani and non-Romani agencies (“Cultural Policy” 8-9). On the one hand, van Baar claims, this “has enabled Romani groups and their advocates to mobilize European stages and forums, such as those of EU institutions, to address the Roma’s plight throughout Europe, including the disregard of their situation in European and national histories” (9). On the other hand, however, van Baar detects a negative side of Roma representations in the EU contexts:

The construction of the Roma as a homogenous ethnic European minority that faces large-scale exclusion risks the promotion of a stereotypical image of the Roma as an un-integrated group or even a group that actively resists attempts to be included in mainstream society. Focusing on the Roma as a homogeneous European minority and on the necessity to integrate this minority population into mainstream European societies disregards those Roma who live ‘integrated’ and,

even more importantly, ignores the complex mechanisms that have recently and historically produced the exclusion of many Roma. (“Cultural Policy” 9)

Van Baar’s insistence to regard the mechanisms that have excluded Roma ever since they first arrived in Europe from the Middle Ages onwards, once again points our attention to the formation of Gypsy stereotypes as the result of, and perhaps even condition for, the construction of “Fortress Europe” as the cradle of modernity. As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, European Roma have been labeled as wandering rogues who resist assimilation into European societies because they supposedly lack roots. Only a cursory look at contemporary representations of Roma in French and German media demonstrates that Romani settlements – often labeled as “dangerous” and “unhygienic” – are still considered to be threats to threats for European conceptions of *Heimat* (Aubry; Robel and Herold).

Constant insistence that Roma are a wandering people without roots not only renders the relation of the Romani victims of the Holocaust with the wider audience asymmetrical, it furthermore offers no room for Romani experience within national memory cultures in both France and Germany, simply because Roma are not included as part of the nation. Peter Carrier, in his elaboration on the memory cultures of Germany and France, writes that while the Holocaust can be considered a transnational “multipolar site of memory” which is maintained in and across the borders of European nation-states, “memory cultures continue to be maintained institutionally on a national basis” (5). Alexander similarly asserts that “national governments deploy significant power over the trauma process” (21), yet, he distinguishes between various institutional arenas through which cultural memory is articulated. Offering only a preliminary glance at how European Roma are represented in these German and French arenas shows that they lack representatives in all fields. I have already noted that Romani representations of the Porrajmos remain largely absent from what Alexander calls the aesthetic arena. While the Jewish experience of the Holocaust has been prominently and repeatedly represented in this arena, narratives of the Porrajmos are difficult to find – and if they are found, they are often deemed inauthentic. Another arena highlighted by Alexander is the legal one, which again illuminates an “uneven distribution” between Roma and Jewish memories of the Holocaust (Alexander 21). The dramatic testimonies of Jewish victims during the Eichmann trial have not been paralleled by Romani testimonies. It

certainly must be noted that some perpetrators involved in the Porrajmos have been brought to justice (Robel and Herold), yet, these trials did not receive wide media coverage. The first part of this chapter already highlighted how the Porrajmos remained mainly absent from yet another arena, namely the scientific one. While it is not true that there are no Romani scholars active in the academic field – Ian Hancock is a case in point – they are often considered by non-Roma as “elitist” and, again, inauthentic (Lemon).

Providing a full account of all the arenas from which the Romani voice is excluded would exceed the scope of this thesis and, moreover, it would not add anything to my argument, as all the points on the list would boil down to the same underlying cause of exclusion: antiziganism. Roma across Europe still lack representatives on all institutional levels (Lemon; Kapralski; van Baar). *If* the Porrajmos is articulated within these arenas, the outcomes are either regarded as distinctively Gypsy (and thus separate from non-Romani experience) or as inauthentic (and thus not representative for the imaginary homogeneous group of European Roma). Put differently, Romani memories of the Porrajmos have never been given the chance to be inscribed in national memory cultures but are apparently forced to wander across Europe. It must be noted, however, that new articulations of Romani memory in conjunction with the creation of what Kapralski calls “Roma political nationalism” tapped into this line of thought and in doing so have been (partly) successful in fostering acknowledgement of the Porrajmos (“Identity” 269), illustrated by the establishment of the memorial in Berlin (which is the topic of the next chapter). This new transnational form of Romani nationalism also highlights the apparent important role of national institutions in constructing cultural memories and begs the question whether the Jewish victims of the Holocaust would be so widely commemorated if the state of Israel did not exist (and if Eichmann had never been trialed).

Before moving to a more positive account of the inclusion of Romani memory in chapters three and four, one last question emphasized by Alexander deserves attention – a question that perhaps renders the current situation of the Porrajmos within German French, and European cultural memories even bleaker. The last condition for a successful cultural representation of mass violence mentioned by Alexander is the “[a]ttribution of responsibility” (15). Earlier I have noted that in some cases the Roma themselves are claimed to be responsible for their own deaths, and are thus stripped of their victimhood. More seems to be at stake regarding this question, however. First of

all, Alexander points out that no consensual answer has been given to this question with regards to the Holocaust in general: “Did “Germany” create the Holocaust, or was it the Nazi regime? Was the crime restricted to special SS forces, or was the Wehrmacht, the entire Nazi army, also deeply involved? Did the crime extend to ordinary soldiers, to ordinary citizens...?” (15). Indeed, as rightfully put forth by Alexander, these questions remain at the center of one of the fiercest controversies within scholarship on the Holocaust. A cursory glance at official documents in the public sphere, however, illustrates that the Nazis are still singled out as the sole perpetrators. The IHRA reports on Holocaust education in France and Germany, for instance, continuously refer to “Nazi Germany” and the “Nazi regime” respectively (“Holocaust Education”).

Even though official institutions such as the IHRA refrain from explicitly presenting “the Holocaust as an outrage committed by born criminals, sadists, madmen, social miscreants or otherwise morale defective individuals” (Bauman 19), they nevertheless enforce precisely such interpretations by framing the crimes committed by the Nazi regime as a historical aberration. Along similar lines, the brochure accompanying the planned opening of the “European House of History” summarizes the history of the Holocaust as follows:

Under the leadership of the Nazi party, Germany – although considered to be among the most culturally and economically advanced countries – built up a totalitarian regime founded on an ideology of race hatred, and planned a war which would culminate in the occupation of large parts of ... Europe and in the mechanized mass murder of millions of Jews. The ‘break of civilization’ of the Shoah is the beginning and the nucleus of the European discourse of memory. (“Brochure” 34)

The brochure not only illustrates the general marginalization of non-Jewish victim groups, in mentioning only the “mass murder of millions of Jews,” it moreover presents the Holocaust as an event that is now deeply buried in the past – even though it is described as the “nucleus” of European cultural memory. In his seminal work *Modernity and the Holocaust*, the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman challenges the understanding of the Holocaust as a tragic deviation “from an otherwise straight path of progress” (7). Following Bauman’s argument, the interpretation of the Holocaust as a historical

aberration or, in the words of the brochure, a “break of civilization,” is misleading since it suggests that the “final solution” was antithetical to modern civilization. Depicting the Holocaust as a “break of civilization” implies that the “final solution” was an irrational and abrupt event, and, in doing so, it glosses over the sociocultural context of the Holocaust (Knittel). Rather, Bauman emphasizes that the Holocaust was not antithetical to rationality, but possible only “in the house of modernity” (17). Bogdal takes a similar stance in his groundbreaking work on Europe’s invention of the Gypsies, when he argues that Europe, in the process of modernization, invented necessary “Others” in order to invent itself “as the agent of civilizing progress in the world” (Bogdal “Europe”).

If closer attention is paid to the sociocultural context of the Holocaust, it becomes evident that the “final solution” was not “an irrational outflow of the not-yet-fully-eradicated residues of pre-modern barbarity” (Bauman 17), but instead resulted from a genuine concern for society. Deeply influenced by the theory of eugenics, described by Knittel as “the application of genetics to demography in an effort to control the development of a nation or people and prevent the proliferation of inferior genetic material” (18), National Socialists considered society to be a garden in which “cultured plants” had to be separated from “weeds” (Bauman 18). Gypsies, Jews, homosexuals, the disabled, the mentally ill, “asocials,” and others who were considered a “threat” to the garden of National Socialism, were to be removed from society. Bauman highlights that the road towards the “final solution,” however, was a twisted one. It is by now widely known that the Nazi bureaucrats initially viewed forced emigration of German Jews across its borders as be the best “solution.” Harkening back the Nazi bureaucrat Tobias Portschy’s thesis, it becomes evident that emigration of Gypsies was, prior to Portschy’s writing in 1938, similarly considered the best solution for the “Gypsy problem.” When it became clear that such an endeavor would be unmanageable, another solution had to be found quickly, since, in Portschy’s words, “Gypsies, as a people of habitual criminals and parasites do untold damage to our national organism and greatly endanger the purity of [German] blood” (3). And so Portschy urged then head of the Reich Chancellery Hans Heinrich Lammers to begin “managing” the “Gypsy plague” by “effectively preventing their reproduction, by forcing them to work and to remain in labor camps, and by encouraging their voluntary emigration abroad” (5).

Shedding light on the Nazi’s “twisted road” towards the “final solution” not only illustrates that the image of the Holocaust as a “break of civilization” is misleading, it

moreover shows that such interpretations are, in fact, dangerous (Knittel). By describing the Holocaust as an historical aberration; as a chapter in Europe's past that is now dealt with; or as a "break of civilization;" we fail to make the link between the past atrocities and present responsibilities. This is dangerous precisely because it causes a failure to recognize that certain patterns of violence against those individuals who are considered social deviants continue to this very day. As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, France continues to deport thousands of Romani immigrants back to Romania and Bulgaria every year, a policy backed by arguments that show an uncanny resemblance to Portschy's claims: Manuel Valls legitimized these actions by claiming that the Gypsies fail to integrate into Western European societies, and that their settlements pose hygienic risks. Shifting the perspective to Eastern Europe illuminates that the policies proposed by Portschy, and implemented under National Socialist rule cannot be considered an aberration in history. Romanian governments have started to build walls around Romani settlements; although no longer an official, governmental policy, Slovakian hospitals continue to sterilize Romani women without their consent; and Roma all over Eastern Europe are continuously encouraged to settle somewhere else in Europe (Stoyanova). While acts of mass-extirpation have, and hopefully remain, delegated to the past, it seems that European governments still, to a certain extent, take on the role of the "gardener" which needs to separate the "weed" from the "cultivated."

Moreover, in dealing with what is (problematically) called Europe's "Roma Problem," European governments continuously avoid taking responsibility for the stigmatization and marginalization of its largest diasporic community. It is this failure on behalf of European governments and other official institutions to assume responsibility for the mistreatment of Roma, both in the past and in the present, which upholds the marginalization of the Porrajmos. As pointed out by Bogdal, the history of the Roma reveals "a less auspicious aspect of Europe's grand narrative of modernity" (Bogdal "Europe"). The memory of the Porrajmos challenges the self-identification of Europe as the "agent of civilizing progress in the world" (Bogdal "Europe"), not only since it debunks the interpretation of the Holocaust as a "break of civilization," but more so since it places the responsibility for the ongoing marginalization of Europe's Roma firmly in the present, and firmly with European governments. The memory of the Porrajmos might force European governments to reflect on their present antiziganist policies, and, as such, it is more comfortable to simply "forget" that hundreds of

thousands of Roma were murdered in WWII. As the following two chapters demonstrate, Romani activists and Romani civil rights organizations are aware that the memory of the Porrajmos is marginalized in part because it confronts Europe with its true “problem” – namely the failure to link past atrocities to present responsibilities, and letting similar patterns of perpetratorship continue to this very day. Thus, as will become clear, the road of Romani activists towards delegating antiziganist policies and attitudes to the past is necessarily conjoined with the road towards gaining recognition for their suffering in WWII.

Chapter 2

REMEMBERING THE PORRAJMOS, PART I

The Sinti and Roma Memorial in Berlin

On 28 April 1989, the German newspaper *Die Zeit* published an article in which Romani Rose, the chairman of the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma (henceforth referred to as Central Council), responded to the West German citizens' initiative that proposed the construction of a national memorial to the Jewish victims of the Holocaust. Rose's petition opened by stating that "it is a shame" that no memorial for the victims of the Nazi genocide had been established in the forty years of existence of the Federal Republic of Germany (Rose). Interestingly, Rose argued in favor of acknowledging the "uniqueness of the Nazi genocide" which, he claimed, was crystallized in the attempted total destruction of both Jews and Gypsies on the basis of their racial affiliation and "mere biological existence" (Rose). Rose's inclusion of Romani victims in the earlier described uniqueness-paradigm did not become widespread in the post-1989 memorial landscape in and beyond Germany, nor did Rose's appeal for a memorial that would commemorate both Jewish and Romani victims of the Holocaust simultaneously ("*Ein Mahnmal für alle Opfer*"). Rose warned against the potential construction of a hierarchy of victims if the other groups persecuted by the Nazis were separately commemorated – a hierarchy which, Rose claimed, would insult and injure Romani victims and survivors.

Both petitions (the one for a memorial in honor of the Jewish victims of the Holocaust and Rose's response) can be interpreted as aftereffects of the so-called *Historikerstreit* (historians' dispute) of the mid-1980s, "which at the time seemed to represent a crucial epochal turning point" (Olick 378). While the debate was partly concerned with the accountability of the (West) German state for Nazi crimes, it was not so much based on significant historical knowledge but rather focused on "the ways in which [the Nazi period] had been represented in the years since 1945" (Olick 378). Intellectuals of the right and the left quarreled over whether the Holocaust could be compared to other instances of mass violence (most notably the Soviet gulag) or should be considered as a unique event, and that, as was argued, comparisons with other

genocides and atrocities would be attempts to “free Germany from its particular stain” (Blumer 97). The two petitions partly shifted the perspective from asserting responsibility to acknowledging victimhood, yet specifically Rose’s appeal and the later debate regarding the memorial projects in Berlin addressed similar concerns as the *Historikerstreit*: could the Jewish victims of Nazism be compared to other victim groups? And, more importantly, should all victims be commemorated simultaneously or separately?

Ten years passed until the Bundestag officially approved the construction of a central memorial for the Jewish victims of the Holocaust and individual memorials for the “other victim groups,” specifically for the Romani and homosexual victims of the Holocaust (Blumer), thus deciding that the victims of Nazism should be commemorated separately. Sociologist Nadine Blumer points out that this delay was not incidental but the result of long debates regarding Holocaust commemoration, propelled by aspiration of the “German nation ... to rewrite itself in the wake of reunification and the end of the Cold War” (15).¹⁹ In the midst of the reconfiguration of the Berlin memorial landscape, Rose’s fear that a hierarchy of victims would be engraved in the geographical area of its city center appeared to become reality. Indeed, taking the “Third Reich Tour” in present-day Berlin seems to confirm the “continuum of suffering based on the rank order of persecution experiences” (Blumer 7): while most memorials (the Sinti and Roma memorial included) and “authentic” sites of the Nazi regime (the site of Hitler’s bunker, the *Topographie des Terrors*) are addressed, and attention is thus given to both victims and perpetrators, a strong focus is placed on the Jewish victims of the Holocaust and the Jewish community prior to Nazism, while the other victim groups receive only scant attention (“Third Reich Berlin”).

The “memorial hierarchy” in Berlin’s city center was enforced when the German Bundestag “passed legislation conferring full administrative control of [the existing and planning of memorials for the victims of Nazism] to the Foundation for the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe” with as main aim to integrate all memorials “under one

¹⁹ The Bundestag approved a Memorial to the Victims of National Socialist “Euthanasia” Killings in November 2011 and the memorial was inaugurated in 2014. In 1999, however, the patients of psychiatric clinics and people with mental illnesses and disabilities who were murdered by the Nazi regime were not included in the category of “other victim groups.” For more information on the memorial, see the website of the memorial at gedenkort-t4.eu. For a longer discussion of the issue of recognition of the victims of the T4 program as victims of Nazi persecution, see Susanne Knittel’s *The Historical Uncanny*.

roof" (Blumer 3). This legislation illustrates the workings of internal multidirectionality rather well. First of all, the cultural memory of the Porrajmos (together with those memories of other victim groups) is partly included in the commemoration of the Jewish victims, since the newly established Sinti and Roma Memorial (short for "Memorial to the Sinti and Roma of Europe Murdered under the National Socialist Regime"), is considered a part of Berlin's memorial web of the Holocaust. At the same time, however, the memorial for the Romani victims of the Holocaust is separated from the immense Holocaust Memorial, since it is almost hidden among the trees in Tiergarten Park. Second, the Sinti and Roma Memorial relies on the dominance of the large Holocaust Memorial, while it simultaneously alters the general conception of the Holocaust as a uniquely Jewish event. Thus, the memorial illuminates the dynamics of internal multidirectionality, not only since the memorial is simultaneously part of and separate from the larger Holocaust Memorial, but, more obviously, since the mere existence of the memorial reconfigures Berlin's memorial landscape. In other words, the "marginal memory" of the Porrajmos reconfigures the "majority memory" of the Holocaust, and, as will become clear throughout this chapter, vice versa.

The memorial landscape of Berlin (in ways emblematic of the wider German and European discourse on the Holocaust) appears to illustrate the role of cultural memory as an exclusive and discriminatory instrument: the cultural memory of the Jewish victims of the Holocaust is placed at the center, while those other victim groups are commemorated in its periphery. However, the hierarchy of commemoration in Berlin's city center does not function as a one-way road. Rather, we are dealing with a memorial network that is constantly reconfigured as a result of dialogue between the various actors, illustrated by Rose's response to the first petition which was followed by a long debate regarding the memorial sites. Although Rose's call for inclusion of the Romani victims of the Nazi regime in the central memorial failed, it nonetheless served as an important catalyst for the (separate) commemoration of those victims and, ultimately, changed the general discourse on the Holocaust. This chapter shifts the focus from the exclusionary outcomes of the mnemonic hierarchy in Berlin to the ways in which Romani lobbyists drew upon the already available central position of the Jewish victims in the Holocaust discourse. In doing so, these Romani activists not only gained recognition and empowerment for the marginal memory of the Porrajmos, they moreover altered the general conception of the Holocaust as a uniquely Jewish

experience. As such, I will not only pay attention to the physical site of the Sinti and Roma memorial, but also consider the “debates between people who advocated or contested [its] form and necessity” (Carrier 4). Following Peter Carrier’s suggestion that memorials can be considered memory sites “[p]rior to their material existence” precisely because of these debates (4), I deviate from interpretations of sites of memory as static entities and pay close attention to the mechanisms that paved the way for the eventual establishment of the Sinti and Roma Memorial.

Lobbying for Remembrance and Civil Rights

Rose’s petition for joint commemoration of the Jewish and Romani victims of the Holocaust in Berlin’s city center was not the first attempt to inscribe the Porrajmos into the wider commemoration of the Holocaust. The Roma civil rights movement had been lobbying for recognition of their persecution ever since the war ended, a struggle directly linked to the fight against antiziganism from the very beginning: although it was apparently known in the early years after the war that Roma fell victim to Nazism (Knesebeck; Kenrick), many Romani survivors were denied compensation, since “arguments from National-Socialist-era institutions ... were taken at face value, so that somebody who had been imprisoned as an ‘asocial’ rather than a ‘Gypsy’ was regarded as not having been racially persecuted, even if the victim claimed that his race had been the real motivation” (Knesebeck 95). Thus, as made clear by historian Julia von dem Knesebeck, Romani victims were forced to deal with “deep rooted prejudices” in order to be considered “worthy of compensation” (95-96). The early attempts to combat these stereotypes and to gain recognition of Romani victimhood directly coincided with the struggle against certain judicial policies that excluded Roma from German society, policies that not only had formed the basis for the Nazi persecution of the Roma in the first place, but that continued in the direct aftermath of WWII. The clearest example is the reestablishment and continuation of the intelligence service, founded in 1899, that collected information on those individuals labeled as Gypsies, and had played a central role during the Nazi persecution of the German Roma. After the war, this service continued to collect information and photographs – even though the subjects of this investigation were now officially registered as *Landfahrer* instead of *Zigeuner* – until the organization was dismantled in 1965 (Robel and Herold). It was against this backdrop

that Oskar Rose, Romani Rose's father, founded a national association in order to "further the cause of compensation" (Knesebeck 97). The association did not find much support outside Romani communities, however, and it ceased to exist shortly after its formation in 1956.

Nearly two decades after his father's attempt to mobilize the German Roma for the recognition of their victimhood, Romani Rose played a pivotal role in a string of events that would lay the foundations for the eventual Sinti and Roma Memorial. Often pinpointed as the event that propelled remembrance of the Porrajmos into the German public sphere (Robel and Herold), is the 1979 international ceremony of remembrance at the former concentration camp Bergen-Belsen. During the ceremony, which was jointly organized by the Association of German Sinti (founded by Rose and the predecessor of the Central Council), the international organization Romani-Union, and the Society for Threatened Peoples, a memorial plaque was placed on the so-called *Wall of Remembrance*. Yvonne Robel and Kathrin Herold write that the main aim of this event was not solely to combat the marginalization of the Porrajmos through demanding inclusion of the topic into school curricula, but that "those present [also] requested that German society acknowledge its responsibility for the survivors by granting them compensation for their suffering, and that attention be paid to the current situation of marginalization and discrimination of Sinti and Roma" (67). Only a few months later, Rose organized and participated in a two-week hunger strike that took place at another concentration camp memorial. Since the strike "had been widely announced beforehand, [it] prompted many national and regional newspapers to write about the [Porrajmos] as well as the situation of the Roma in post-war (West) Germany" (67).

These two events, part of a larger set of protests initiated by the Roma civil rights movement in the early 1980s, gave rise to the first public recognition of the Nazi persecution of the Roma when Helmut Schmidt, then chancellor of West Germany, made the following statement during a meeting with the Central Council on 17 March 1982: "[t]errible injustice was done to the Sinti and Roma by the National Socialist dictatorship. They were subject to racial persecution. ... They suffered the crime of genocide" ("Press Kit"). The protests, however, did not stop after this statement. Rather, as Robel and Herold write, a new "battlefield" was opened up during the late 1980s:

Increasingly, Roma were targeted as unwanted in the rising wave of nationalism in central, eastern, and southeastern Europe and fled in particular to West Germany in order to escape physical danger and social and economic exclusion. The decision of the West German government to deport them back to their countries of origin gave rise to a new wave of civil rights activities, again using the sights set up to commemorate the victims of Nazi persecution to demand the right of Roma refugees and migrants to stay in West Germany. (69)

In the midst of this nationalist violence targeted at European Roma, the protests initiated by German civil rights movements gained a more transnational character. Hundreds of Romani refugees in West Germany actively participated in the protests, for example by setting up camp on the former concentration camp site Neuengamme in 1989 in order to protest “against their impending deportations” (Robel and Herold 69). Moreover, international Romani organizations sought more actively to construct a transnational Romani identity. In his assessment of Roma political nationalism, Slawomir Kapralski writes “[i]t is significant that, at a time in which violent nationalisms are re-entering the European political stage, one of the basic aims of Romani elites in the area of human rights is to be recognized as a nation.” (“Identity” 270). We can thus see a shift of focus within Roma civil rights movements. Whereas activists initially focused on furthering compensations and acknowledgement of their suffering within the boundaries of the (West German) nation-state, they adapted a more transnational perspective in the 1980s and considered “recognition for Roma national identity [... as] one of the most important objectives” (Kapralski, “Identity” 272).

The Central Council plays a pivotal role in what Kapralski refers to as the process of Romani ethnogenesis, which he defines as “a conscious attempt toward achieving the accepted status of a non-territorial, ethnic-national group” (“Identity” 269). This process is inherently transnational, since it aims to unify Romani communities scattered across European nation-states, and is marked by “an increasing tendency among Romani elites and organizations to refer to the genocide of the Roma alongside the Jewish Holocaust on the one hand, and to rely on Holocaust references in Romani identity building processes on the other” (van Baar, “Romani Identity” 117). Drawing on the already available discourse on the Holocaust, partly through equating the “Nationalist Socialist policy of murder of those persecuted as Gysies with the policy against the Jews”

(Zimmerman 1), the attempts of Romani civil rights movements to inscribe the Porrajmos into the wider frameworks of European cultural memory exemplify the second role of memory foregrounded by Chiara De Cesari and Ann Rigney. The Central Council in particular, uses the cultural memory of the (Jewish) Holocaust in order to unify German Roma on the one hand, and to gain recognition for Roma as a German national minority on the other. On the road to recognition, the Central Council has slowly but surely changed from an initially grassroots organization into an authority that, seemingly, speaks on behalf of the entire Romani minority, and works in close cooperation with the German government. While the Central Council has been largely successful in their journey – they played an important role in achieving the 1995 official recognition for German Sinti and Roma as a national minority, and, as will become clear, they functioned as the main motor behind the construction of the Sinti and Roma Memorial – their authority overshadows other, smaller Romani civil rights movements (Coomans). Nevertheless, the Central Council cleverly draws upon the already available discourse on the Holocaust in order to shape a national Romani identity, and, more importantly, to combat the marginalization of Roma. The historian Michael Zimmerman puts it differently when he writes that “[t]he history of how people have dealt historically and politically with the National Socialist persecution of the Jews may appear to be an attractive role model, well worthy of imitation, precisely for advocates who articulate the cause of socially marginalized groups of the persecuted” (23). Whereas other Roma civil rights organizations refrain from using this “attractive role model,” the Central Council used it to gain recognition and empowerment, most visibly so in their lobbying for a national memorial for the Romani victims of the Holocaust.

The Sinti and Roma Memorial Under Construction

Holocaust memorial-work in Germany today remains a tortured, self-reflective, even paralyzing preoccupation. Every monument, at every turn, is endlessly scrutinized, explicated, and debated. Artistic, ethical, and historical questions occupy design juries to an extent unknown in other countries. In a Sisyphean replay, memory is strenuously rolled nearly to the top of consciousness only to clatter back down in arguments and political bickering, whence it starts the climb all over again.

– James E. Young, “The Counter-Monument”

Inscribing the Porrajmos into the wider frameworks of German and European cultural memory can be pinpointed as one of the central concerns of Romani civil rights organizations. This does not mean, however, that these different organizations agree on how this can be achieved and on how the Nazi persecution of the Roma is to be remembered. In the years prior to the inauguration of the Sinti and Roma Memorial, two organizations in particular, the earlier mentioned Central Council and the Sinti Alliance Germany, had different opinions regarding the “mode of remembrance ... [and specifically] the message in the form of the brief inscription on the memorial” (Zimmerman 5). The Sinti Alliance favored the use of the terms *Zigeuner* and *Gypsy*, with quotation marks, so that non-Sinti and non-Roma *Zigeuner* victims of the Holocaust, such as the Jenisch, would be recognized in the memorial as well (Blumer). The Central Council, on the other hand, considered usage of either of these two terms a continuation of “Nazi jargon” and thus an insult and humiliation (Zimmerman 6). Zimmerman writes that in 2005 the Central Council refused to “accept the rather ineffective attempts at a compromise to placate those concerned by the then Culture Minister Christina Weiss, who proposed several variants: a memorial without any text [or] an inscription in English ... : ‘We commemorate all the children, women and men who were persecuted and murdered as Gypsies in Germany and Europe by the National Socialists in their brutal and inhuman race insanity’” (6). Later in 2005, Rose came to an agreement with Weiss’ successor Bernd Neumann and proposed the following inscription: “We commemorate all Roma who became victims of the planned murder by the National Socialists” (Zimmerman 6-7). According to this agreement, from which the Sinti Alliance was excluded, further information on the Nazi persecution of the Roma was to be inscribed in additional plaques. A few months later, the Sinti Alliance responded to this proposal by stating that “if the superordinate concept Gypsies is replaced by Roma, that shows disrespect for discrimination and humiliation of all other Gypsy peoples” (Zimmerman 7).

Robel and Herold point out that during the debates on the memorial, which ultimately took more than two decades from Rose’s initial petition to the actual inauguration in 2012, the German press and German politicians “were quick to conclude that the main reason why decisions over the Roma memorial were delayed was the fact that the Roma themselves could not reach an agreement” (74). It was generally believed

that the delay was caused by the lack of unanimity amongst the two Romani organizations that were seen as constantly “squabbling” (74). The long debate between the involved groups might be considered illustrative of the heterogeneity of the Romani nation, which is still under construction. However, as demonstrated by Carrier’s analyses of the debates that preceded the inauguration of Berlin’s large Holocaust Memorial and Paris’ Vél’ d’Hiv’, most national memorials – certainly those commemorating victims of the Holocaust – are constructed in a slow process in which several parties argue over the final result. Not only does the depiction of Roma as eternally squabbling gloss over the simple fact that reaching an agreement over national memorials is rarely easy, and, to a certain sense, that all nations are always under (re)construction, it moreover “feeds into the prevailing antiziganism” (Robel and Herold 75). From claiming that the Roma themselves were responsible for the long delay of the memorial it is “a small step to blame [them] for the fact that they had not obtained a proper place in the German politics of memory” (74), and, more problematically, that Roma themselves have caused their social marginalization and discrimination.

It cannot be denied that the realization of the Sinti and Roma Memorial still took considerably longer than the other national Holocaust memorials in Berlin’s city center: even the immense memorial for the Jewish victims of Nazism took approximately three years less to build. Part of this delay is due to the discussion regarding the location of the Sinti and Roma Memorial. In 1994, and again in 1999, it had already been approved that the memorial would be located in between the Reichstag and the Brandenburg Gate, in Tiergarten Park, at a five minute walking distance of the central Holocaust Memorial. Despite this resolution, the then governing mayor of Berlin, Eberhard Diepgen, strongly advocated for a different location. Other politicians even attempted to halt the realization of the memorial altogether. Diepgen, however, did agree that a memorial had to be built, yet insisted that this memorial would be located in Marzahn, a Berlin outer suburb. This site had “historical authenticity” since it was where the first *Zigeunerlager* was set up in 1936, from which Roma were deported to Auschwitz and other concentration camps. Moreover, “[i]t was also out of fear of “inundating” Berlin with “history’s dark side” that Diepgen was so steadfast about a memorial location outside of the capital city” (Blumer 12). Obviously, placing the memorial in the outskirts of Berlin would further push commemoration of the Romani victims of Nazism into the periphery, since it had already been agreed that all the other sites of Holocaust commemoration

would be situated in the city center. After years of debate between German political institutions and leaders of the Romani civil rights movements, it was finally agreed in 2007 that the memorial should be placed in central Berlin.

Another point of ongoing discussion was the inscription that would accompany the memorial. As mentioned above, the Central Council and the Sinti Alliance were engaged in an extensive debate regarding the terminology of the victims, until they reached an agreement that the following statement made by then Federal President Roman Herzog in 1997 would be included at the memorial site:

The genocide of the Sinti and Roma was motivated by the same obsession with race, carried out with the same resolve and the same intent to achieve their methodical and final extermination as the genocide against the Jews. Throughout the National Socialists' sphere of influence, the Sinti and Roma were murdered systematically, family by family, from the very young to the very old. ("Press Kit")

At the time of Herzog's speech, this statement received little attention, yet in "the years 2004 and 2005, German newspapers reported widely on the dispute over the question whether [it] should be used for the text of the inscription on the planned memorial, implying to some extent that in particular ... Rose demanded using it because it compared the murder of the Roma with the Shoah" (Robel and Herold 73). At the center of the debate was the question whether the Nazi persecution of the Roma could be compared to the Shoah, and even whether it could be called a genocide in the first place, not in the least because historians were (and are) unable to give compelling answers to these questions. Ultimately it was Zimmerman who came to the conclusion that the persecution of the Roma was to be called a genocide. He simultaneously, however, argued against "a questionable equating" of the Shoah to the Porrajmos (24), for this "could act ultimately even to delegitimize the memory of those murdered as Gypsies" and lead to competition between victim groups for public attention (24).

During the same meeting in which the location of the memorial was chosen, it was decided that Herzog's statement was to be included in the memorial – not in a central position, as proposed by Rose, but integrated in the chronology of the Nazi persecution of the Roma and "displayed on a separate series of panels at the memorial site" (Blumer 13). An agreement was also reached in this meeting regarding the official

name of the memorial (“Memorial to the Sinti and Roma Persecuted under the National Socialist Regime”) yet this name would eventually be altered into “Memorial to the Sinti and Roma of Europe Murdered under the National Socialist Regime.” The replacing of the term “persecuted” with “murdered” and the addition “of Europe” shows some clear resemblances to the official name of the Holocaust Memorial (“Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe”), which hardly seems coincidental. More than a year after the meeting, in December 2008, the ground was broken and the construction could finally commence, under leadership of the Jewish-Israeli architect Dani Karavan, who had been commissioned fourteen years earlier by Rose to design the memorial during a private meeting (Blumer). The Federal Government approved of Rose’s decision, and thus no public competition concerning the design of the memorial was set in motion. Surprisingly enough, Rose’s choice to hire Karavan is “perhaps one of the only features in the memorial’s biography that did not lead to conflict” (Blumer 231). Only Natasha Winter, the chairperson of the Sinti Alliance, expressed dissatisfaction with the decision during a personal interview with Blumer. In the interview, Winter complained that she “didn’t want the government and Romani Rose to decide who the artist would be. They have already decided though and it will be Dani Karavan and while I’m sure he understands the emotion of the Holocaust because he is Jewish, I would have liked to have a Gypsy architect involved. But again, decisions are only made by Romani Rose and the government” (Blumer 232).

While Winter expressed her dissatisfaction with the situation, and, moreover, with the dominance of Rose and the Central Council in the whole process, she (reluctantly) accepted the decision, and so the construction of the memorial, lead by Karavan, commenced. Shortly before the inauguration in 2012, Karavan stated that the project was the “most problematic [he] ever had,” and that while he was satisfied and overjoyed that the memorial was nearly finished, he remained frustrated with the long process (Aderet). In an interview with an Israeli newspaper, Karavan expressed that the blame for the long delay of the memorial was to be placed with the German authorities. Karavan said to the Germans: “If it were for the Jews you’d have completed it long ago. But because it’s gypsies, you’re allowing yourselves to procrastinate. For me as a Jew, it’s easy to say this. The whole attitude here was one of scorn. Why spend money on this. What for? It’s just gypsies.” Throughout the interview, Karavan vocalized his displeasure

with German bureaucracy, and firmly asserted that “[t]he Germans ... are responsible for this delay” (Aderet).

The Continued Memorial

The official inauguration of the Sinti and Roma Memorial, on 24 October 2012, was the core of a larger set of cultural events collectively titled *Denkmal Weiter*, translated in the official press kit as “Continued Memorial” (“Press Kit”). The events, called for by representatives of the Federal Government and organized by the Central Council and its branch organization the Documentation Cultural Centre of German Sinti and Roma, aimed to sketch out the full image of the Porrajmos (“Press Kit”). Seen as such, the project’s title can also be translated into “think further,” especially considering the wide variety of events organized all over Berlin’s city center, such as lectures, theatre performances and book readings. While each of these occasions was an act of commemoration in its own right, they were all centered on the inauguration of the memorial by German Chancellor Angela Merkel, during which she addressed a crowd that included survivors of the Porrajmos and their families, Romani activists and prominent German politicians. In line with the motif “think further,” Merkel not only provided information on the Nazi persecution of those labeled as *Zigeuner*, but also acknowledged that this persecution had received “far too little attention ... for far too long” (Kuhla). Merkel “thought even further” when she emphasized the memorial’s importance at a time when Roma across Europe remain victims of discrimination and exclusion: “[i]n the commemoration of victims always lies a promise, and this is how I see our duty to protect our minorities” (Cottrell). Merkel thus presented the memorial as a long overdue acknowledgement of Romani suffering under Nazism and simultaneously as a constant reminder that “[i]t is a German and European task to support [Roma] wherever they live” (Kuhla). After the speech, Merkel, accompanied by several survivors, politicians, Karavan, and Rose, walked over to the memorial site. They stood on the edge of the circular pool of water while a young Romani girl disappeared below grounds to place a flower on the triangular stone. Somber violin music played as the stone, placed at the center of the pool, slowly rose out of the water (Cottrell).

From the brochure that is available near the entrance of the memorial site, visitors learn that a fresh flower rises from the circular pool every single day, which, in

the words of Karavan, symbolizes a “prayer that reminds us never to forget, never” (Cottrell). The triangular stone on which the flower is placed refers to the patch Romani inmates were forced to wear in the concentration camps, and, according to Karavan, the water basin symbolizes tears and is meant to create the illusion that the visitors looking at their reflection are “buried in a pit” (Aderet). The pool, twelve meters in diameter, is surrounded by stones inscribed with the names of the concentration camps in which Roma were murdered, and on the pool’s edges visitors read the following words written by the Romani poet Santino Spinelli:

Pallid face
dead eyes
cold lips
Silence
A broken heart
without breath
without words
no tears.²⁰

While the title of the poem is not included in the engravings on the edge of the water basin because Karavan worried that the memorial would be identified solely with Auschwitz (Aderet), it is mentioned twice on the set of panels that separates the memorial site from the rest of Tiergarten Park. Moving from the reflecting pool to this “wall,” Santinelli’s poem is engraved on two separate concrete plaques on the far left and far right. Both show Spinelli’s poem in its original Romani dialect, followed by translations in (standardized) Romani, German in English.²¹ These four versions of the poem follow directly after the capitalized words “for the victims of the Nazi terror who

²⁰ This English translation of the poem is inscribed on the edges of the water basin and on the two large concrete plaques. The brochure accompanying the memorial, however, offers a different translation: “Sunken in face/extinguished eyes/cold lips/silence/a torn heart/without breath/without words/no tears.”

²¹ Unfortunately, I have not been able to identify the language in which Spinelli’s poem is written. The concrete slabs make no mention of the original language of the poem, and the *Denkmal Weiter* press kit refers to it as the “Original version.”

were murdered in the concentration camps,” which is, in contrast to the poem, only displayed in German and in English.

The two plaques displaying the poem enclose a set of bluish, nearly see-through, glass panels, which narrate the chronology of the Porrajmos from the first discriminatory measures taken against those individuals who were labeled as *Zigeuner* in 1933 to the end of the war in 1945. Like the accompanying sentence to Spinelli’s poem, this chronology is only displayed in English and in German, yet not following directly after each other but separately: the English version of the chronology can be read from the Tiergarten side of the memorial (the “outside”), while the German version is shown on the side of the water basin (the “inside”). Directly opposed to the German version of this chronology, on the far end of the memorial site, four other panels are situated, which feature the statements made by Helmut Schmidt and Roman Herzog in respectively 1982 and 1997 (as quoted above). These four panels mark the end of the memorial site, and, together with the Scheidemannstraße and a row of trees, they separate the memorial from the Reichstag. The building that houses the German Parliament, however, is never fully absent from the memorial site: even if the building is not faced directly, its towering image is present through its reflection in the pool and the glass panels. In his speech that followed shortly after the memorial’s inauguration, Rose stated that he was “thankful that the German government [had opened] this memorial to the public,” and, moreover, that he “saw its location, so close to the German Parliament, as an attempt to make amends” (Cottrell). The memorial’s close proximity to the Reichstag can indeed be interpreted as a form of redress, since it literally places the memory of the Porrajmos in the Parliament’s “backyard.” Considered as such, the memorial’s location affirms Merkel’s statement that it is the responsibility of the German government to protect the Romani minority. Moreover, it highlights the importance of the statements made by the two chancellors who preceded Merkel, since the panels showing Schmidt’s and Herzog’s statements are literally placed in front of the Reichstag. Put differently, the juxtaposing of the memorial site and the German Parliament not only draws attention to the responsibility of the German Government for failing to protect the Roma and for the failure to recognize their suffering, it also places the responsibility of the German Government to protect Romani minorities firmly in the present.

The omnipresence of the Reichstag at the memorial site can, however, also be

interpreted as an impediment to commemoration of the victims of the Porrajmos, since the building overshadows the memorial site. While Rose interprets the memorial's location as a form of redress, some tourists who visit the site might not even be aware that the Reichstag houses the German Parliament, and thus fail to make the link between the German Government and the memorial. Others, perhaps, only visit the memorial site to view one of Berlin's most visited tourist attractions from a different angle. Even visitors who intend to commemorate the Romani victims of Nazism cannot escape the memorial site's colossal neighbor, and for them the Reichstag might feel like an intrusion on the memory of the Porrajmos. From standing at the memorial site it certainly seems as if it is located a stone's throw away from the Reichstag. From the other side of the four panels, however, the site is hardly even visible: the row of trees on the memorial site's edge and the Scheidemannstraße, together with a bus stop, not only separate the memorial from the Reichstag, these elements also render the memorial nearly invisible from the outside. Approaching the memorial from any other angle proves no different. Even when walking towards the entrance of the site, located in Tiergarten Park, the site appears secluded behind the inscribed panels and the trees enclosing the memorial. As a result, the memorial is quite literally removed from sight, which creates the possibility to pass the memorial without realizing it was there.

The concealment of the Sinti and Roma Memorial sharply contrasts the visibility of the Holocaust Memorial, not only since the sheer size of the latter demands attention – the 2.700 stelae of the memorial cover a patch of land that is roughly 19.000 square meters – but, moreover, because the Holocaust memorial is accessible from all four sides. The Sinti and Roma Memorial, shielded by panels and trees, is only accessible via one entrance point, and, since the memorial is almost hidden from sight, this entrance is easy to miss. The isolation of the memorial gives it the impression that it is “hidden,” which can be interpreted as illustrative for the marginalization of the Porrajmos within cultural memory of the Holocaust. Moreover, it is illustrative of the role of cultural memory as an exclusive and discriminatory instrument: commemoration of the Jewish victims of Nazism takes center stage in the form of the massive Holocaust Memorial, while the Romani victims are commemorated in the bushes of Tiergarten Park. Considered as such, the location of the Sinti and Roma Memorial only adds to the further marginalization of the Porrajmos within German cultural memory of the Holocaust. Like the Sinti and Roma Memorial, the other two memorials dedicated to non-Jewish victims

of the Holocaust – the Memorial for the Victims of National Socialist “Euthanasia” Killings and the Memorial to the Homosexuals Persecuted under the National Socialist Regime – are located in the periphery of the large Holocaust Memorial, which adds to the hierarchy of commemoration inscribed in Berlin’s city center. Simultaneously, however, the three memorials for non-Jewish victims of Nazism rely on the prominence of the Holocaust Memorial, for it seems that these three “Other” memorials would attract few visitors if the Holocaust Memorial did not attract so many. More importantly, their existence reconfigures the memorial landscape in Berlin and, in doing so, challenges the public discourse on the Holocaust. While the Holocaust was earlier mostly remembered as an exclusively Jewish experience, the memories of the “Other” victim groups challenge this interpretation, and, in doing so, they partly rely on the already existing prominence of the Holocaust.

The insistence of several politicians and Romani activists to place the Sinti and Roma Memorial in Berlin’s city center thus appears to have paid off, for it is unlikely that the memorial would attract a similar number of visitors if it was located in Marzahn. What remains questionable is the memorial’s near invisibility. As mentioned before, tourists can easily walk past the site without noticing its existence. Yet, this appears to have a positive side effect, for it seems that those people who visit the site do so with the clear intention to commemorate the Romani victims of Nazism (or, perhaps, to see the Reichstag from another angle). Moreover, the seclusion of the memorial from the hustle and bustle of Berlin’s city center adds an element of calmness to the site – while the larger Holocaust Memorial is surrounded by busy traffic and crowded terraces, the Sinti and Roma Memorial is situated in a quiet corner of Tiergarten Park. The stillness of the memorial, partly resulting from the panels and trees that together give the impression of a wall, is in line with Karavan’s intention. He describes the memorial as a “quaint, unimposing site ... [a] site of inner sadness, a site for feeling pain, for remembering and not letting the annihilation of the Sinti and Roma ... fall into oblivion” (“Information”). Following this line of thought, the pool is intended to convey a sense of dispossession, since it symbolizes the tears and the lives lost in a dark pit. Moreover, Karavan emphasizes that the dark pool reflects the images of the visitors as though they are buried themselves, while they are also “covered by the sky” (“Information”). To add to this sense of loss, visitors can hear the single note of a violin in the background, which, in the words of Karavan, “sounds “[l]ike a train cracking on the tracks ... The sound [is]

very weak, to the point where you think it doesn't exist except inside your head" (Aderet).

Certainly, the memorial site's stillness has the potential to invoke contemplation. At the same time, however, I wonder whether visitors truly reflect on their own lives and commemorate the hundreds of thousands Romani lives that are now lost, for the memorial site also simply offers a nice lacuna in a hectic city center. Moreover, the dark, nearly black water of the pool not only reflects the visitors, it also reflects the sky and the Reichstag, which might not provoke the sense of being buried in a pit at all. The reflection might also be nothing more than aesthetically pleasing. Moreover, the other aspect Karavan emphasizes in the brochure – the “murdered melody” of the violin (“Information”) – might not be interpreted by most visitors as referring to the trains that carried so many Romani victims to their final destination, but rather as a chintzy reference to Romani culture. Nevertheless, the tone of the violin is one of the unique aspects of the Sinti and Roma Memorial, and so is the inclusion of a poem written by a Romani artist. Yet, similar to the single note of the violin, the poem gains more meaning if we fully understand its context and the intention of the artist. Spinelli, who is not only a poet but also a musician and a scholar, has devoted his art and scholarly career to the plight of his people (Toninato), in which he pays special attention to the Porrajmos. Like Zoni Weisz, Romani Rose, and other Romani activists, Spinelli actively tries to combat marginalization of the Porrajmos within European cultural memory (Toninato).

The first part of “Auschwitz” refers to the death and decay in the concentration camps (“Pallid face/dead eyes/cold lips”), while the second part points to the silence that surrounded the Nazi persecution of European Roma for so long (“Silence/a broken heart/without breath/without words/no tears.”). For those familiar with Hebrew literature, Spinelli's poem might show some clear resemblance to the poem “Vow,” written in Hebrew by Abraham Shlonsky. Both Spinelli and Shlonsky use similar imagery in order to provoke an emotional response, yet there is one difference. Spinelli's poem does not explicitly urge us to remember, while Shlonsky's reads like an extension of the Hebrew commandment “Zakhor!” (Olick et al.): “I have taken an oath: to remember it all/To remember, not once to forget!” (Bronstein 399). These two lines become even more relevant to the Sinti and Roma Memorial if we take into consideration that Karavan had actually suggested inscribing them on the edge of the circular pool, a proposal rejected by the Central Council since the poem was already

engraved on a wall at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem (Aderet).²² Fortunately so, I would argue, since inscribing a Jewish poem at a memorial site for Romani victims of the Holocaust seems inconsiderate, for it would deny Romani poets to lend their voice to the memorial.

While the sound of the violin might seem somewhat kitschy, and while Spinelli's poem can be interpreted as an adaptation of an earlier Jewish poem, these two elements nevertheless add a Romani character to the memorial site. Other aspects of the memorial, on the other hand, make clear references to Jewish acts of commemoration and other familiar memorials and monuments. First of all, as noted by Blumer, the simple fact that Rose commissioned an Israeli-Jewish artist to design the memorial was in part to ensure "that the memorial site ... [would] be physically imbued with a "Jewish" element" (231). Blumer moreover argues that this decision was an active attempt to guarantee symbolic proximity to the commemoration of the Jewish victims of Nazism. With Karavan as its designer, the Sinti and Roma Memorial indeed achieved this proximity. The triangular stone at the heart of the pool, for instance, not only symbolizes the badge *Zigeuner* inmates were forced to wear, but simultaneously draws upon already familiar imagery of the Holocaust. As noted by the historian Harold Marcuse, triangular shapes have been incorporated in Holocaust memorials ever since the war ended, as reference to one of the most "iconic features of the Nazi camps" (231). Similarly in line with the "genre" of Holocaust memorials, also illustrated by Marcuse, are the stones surrounding the water basin, which are inscribed with the names of concentration camps where Roma were murdered. Marcuse writes that "listing [the names of multiple Holocaust sites] is common in Holocaust memorials not situated at historic locations" (68). The addition of these stones to the Sinti and Roma Memorial thus serves to convey the entirety of the Porrajmos, while the stones also add legitimacy to the memorial, which cannot be drawn from the patch of land on which it is situated. Like the incorporation of these stones and the triangle, the circular pool placed at the center of the Sinti and Roma Memorial draws upon familiar memorial imagery, since reflecting pools are recurrent aspects of memorials and other sights of national

²² It seems plausible that Shlonsky's poem was also rejected because he was Jewish rather than Romani. Unfortunately, I could not find any evidence pointing towards this direction.

significance all over the world.²³

By placing several recognizable symbols at its core, the Sinti and Roma Memorial draws upon the universal memorial language, and, in doing so, the memorial possibly strikes a familiar chord among those who visit the site. Since the reflecting pool, the triangle, and the stones carrying the names of the concentration camps have become universal symbols for acts of commemoration and the Holocaust, it is not unlikely that the average visitor knows how to interact with the memorial. Indeed, from what I could observe during my visit to the site in May 2015, most visitors walked straight to the circular pool, traced its edges to read Spinelli's poem, while they gazed at the reflection of the water and followed the inscribed stones. The final words of the poem end close to where another, more contemporary aspect of the memorial genre begins: the set of panels narrating the chronology of the Porrajmos. These panels together offer compelling answers to at least three of the questions foregrounded by Jeffrey Alexander: it is clear who the victims were and what happened to them ("hundreds of thousands of individuals [were] persecuted as 'Gypsies'"), and who and what was responsible ("the National Socialist state and its race ideology"). The familiar imagery with the panels combined, the Sinti and Roma Memorial undoubtedly offers a powerful and recognizable narrative, which gains strength through the use of less familiar symbolism: the poem, the single note played by the violin, the daily placing of the fresh flower. The incorporation of familiar and novel symbols sets the memorial apart as a tribute to the Romani victims of the Holocaust, while it simultaneously provides the visitor with an apprehensible rhetoric.

The combination of these symbols encourage the visitors to "think further," and change their initial interpretation of the Holocaust as an exclusively Jewish event through commemorating the Romani victims of Nazism. Moreover, the memorial is also, quite literally, a "continued" one, since a new, fresh flower is placed on the triangular

²³ The National Mall in Washington D.C., for instance, includes not only the famous Lincoln Memorial pool (1923), but also a "Pool of Remembrance" as a part of the Korean War Veterans Memorial (1995). The WWII memorial in Washington D.C. (2004) has also been called a "reflecting pool," yet, since it includes a fountain, it does not completely fit the category. Other examples of reflecting pools in the United States are the recently inaugurated National September 11 Memorial in New York (2011) and the Holocaust Memorial in Miami Beach (1990). The incorporation of reflecting pools, and more generally the usage of materials that reflect the image of the visitors (such as glass, marble, etc.), indeed seems to thrive in the US specifically, but the theme of reflection has spread to other continents.

stone every day. The continuation of this ritual seems to be informed by the Hebrew commandment to remember, since Karavan describes it as a “prayer that reminds us never to forget, never” (Cottrell). While the centrality of such Jewish symbolism might be considered inappropriate in a memorial dedicated to the Romani victims of the Holocaust, it nevertheless, again, inscribes a very recognizable element onto the site. Likely to have been the costliest element of the memorial since it is supported by an elaborate technical construction (including a lift and an underground maintenance room), the daily ritual at the memorial’s center truly renders Karavan’s design unique. Even though most visitors might not view the rising of the flower themselves, the brochure informs them that a “new blossom” rises every day (“Information”).²⁴

This daily repetition adds a counter-monumental aspect to the Sinti and Roma Memorial, which otherwise might appear to be rather static. James E. Young, an interdisciplinary scholar who has written extensively on Holocaust memorials, attributes the following characteristics to counter-monument: “its aim is not to console but to provoke; not to remain fixed but to change; not to be everlasting but to disappear; not to be ignored by its passersby but to demand interaction; not to remain pristine but to invite its own violation and desecration; not to accept graciously the burden of memory but to throw it back at the town’s feet” (“Counter-Monument” 277). Clearly, the Sinti and Roma Memorial does not adhere to all of these characteristics. The memorial is definitely not intended to disappear, for it would be rather problematic to create such a memorial to commemorate an already marginalized victim group. Still, the flower disappears each day and is replaced with a new one, while the rest of the memorial is meant to remain unchanged; the reflection of the Reichstag in the pond is intended to provoke, while the placing of responsibility with the Nazi regime on the panels, and thus in the past, serves to console; the memorial’s location in central Berlin demands attention, while the site remains hidden in the forests of Tiergarten Park. Karavan’s mediation between these two forms of memorials is ultimately what renders it so powerful, for it counters and fits into the traditional monumental genre at the same time.

²⁴ Neither the brochure accompanying the memorial nor its website include information regarding the time of the daily ritual or whether it is possible for visitors to volunteer. Certainly, it would add to the memorial’s significance if the visitors were able to directly interact with the ritual. Sharing the time of the daily ritual, however, might pose some practical issues, for it could lead to a rise in the number of visitors.

While we may never know whether visitors of the Sinti and Roma Memorial truly commemorate the Romani victims of the Holocaust, or visit the site solely because of its close proximity to the larger Holocaust Memorial, the joint effort of Karavan and the Central Council has resulted in a powerful memorial that mediates between traditional and counter-monumental modes of remembrance. Moreover, it successfully uses the hierarchical memorial landscape of Berlin (and beyond) to gain recognition and empowerment for German and European Roma. The Sinti and Roma Memorial commemorates the Romani victims of the Holocaust, and, as such, it finally recognizes Romani lives as grievable ones. As will become clear in the next chapter, the Romani artists Matéo Maximoff and Tony Gatlif have similar intentions with their work. In navigating their way between Roma and non-Romani cultures, both artists offer indispensable accounts of the Porrajmos that draw upon the already available discourse on the Holocaust, and simultaneously sketch out new narratives.

Chapter 3

Remembering the Porrajmos, part II

Dites-le avec des Pleurs and Korkoro

The story of the Jews, and their suffering, the final Holocaust, the massacre of millions of them has been told by thousands of authors. But who will tell the story of the Gypsy genocide?

– Matéo Maximoff, *Dites-le avec des Pleurs*

Considering that it took forty years for the French government to acknowledge the responsibility of the French state in the deportation of Jews to the death camps in Eastern Europe, it is perhaps not surprising that it would take another fifteen years until it was acknowledged that French *nomades* – most of them of Romani ethnicity – fell victim to racist crimes during WWII. On 18 July 2010, the National Remembrance Day for the victims of racist and anti-Semitic crimes committed by the French state, then Secretary of State Hubert Falco officially recognized the role of the French government in the internment of French Roma. Falco stated: “We ... remember the Gypsies, on this day we pay tribute to the memory of victims of racist crimes of the French state ... France bows today in their memory. It does so with deep respect and great pain” (Falco). At the time, Falco’s statement received little media coverage, for it was overshadowed by a series of events that would mark the summer of 2010. A day before Falco’s speech, in the village Saint-Aignan, the police had shot Luigi Duquenet, a 22-year old Rom, who was held in custody because he supposedly stole 22 euros (Aubry).

The death of the young Rom infuriated the local Romani community and “dozens of them went on the rampage attacking the village police station, burning cars, and hacking down trees (Aubry 99). Shortly afterwards, then president of France Nicolas Sarkozy called a meeting with the French Council of Ministers, to discuss how the French authorities should deal with “the problems caused by the behavior of some Travellers [*gens du voyage*] and Roma” (Aubry 99). Sarkozy emphasized that he aimed to avoid “an unfair equation of offenders and the majority of Travellers who want to live in peace and respect for the republican order,” and singled out Roma who had migrated to France

from Eastern Europe in claiming that these people are characterized by “a state of lawlessness” (Aubry 99). Later in the summer of 2010, on 28 July, Sarkozy announced that all illegal encampments would be dismantled and that their inhabitants would be “systematically evacuated” (Suddath). Over the course of the next month more than one thousand Roma were sent back to Romania and Bulgaria, bringing the number of Romani immigrants expelled from France in 2010 to 8,300 (Suddath). Ironically, these events not only overshadowed but also counteracted Falco’s acknowledgement of Roma as victims of racist crimes. Despite Sarkozy’s differentiation between Roma who have lived in France for centuries and Romani immigrants who recently travelled to the country, he was criticized for his lumping together of the two groups and stigmatizing these people. Luigi Duquet’s community, for instance, did not consist of immigrants, but of French citizens. Furthermore, Sarkozy was criticized for his failure to recognize the reasons behind the migration of Bulgarian and Romanian Roma in the first place. Many of these Roma fled increasing antiziganism and poverty, and, moreover, as EU citizens, they were allowed to travel to France. Sarkozy’s glossing over these vital facts, and his stigmatization of all Gypsies in France as “lawless,” fostered accusations that he drew on antiziganist and xenophobic sentiments by scapegoating the Romani population in order to win votes from the far right for the upcoming presidential elections (Siddique).

The most critical response came from the Vice President of the European Commission, Viviane Reding, who not only stated that the policy of expulsions of Roma by the French government was a disgrace and that “[d]iscrimination on the basis of ethnic origin or race has no place in Europe” (Aubry 97), but went even further when she linked these expulsions to the treatment of Jews during WWII. Reding’s analogy was quickly attacked by various European leaders. Angela Merkel, for instance, expressed that she “found the tone and especially the historical comparisons unsuitable” (Siddique). Following these points of critique, Reding “expressed regret for comparing treatment of Roma with that of Jews during the second world war” (Siddique). Clearly, Reding’s comparison of the eviction of the Roma from France with the Jewish experience during the Holocaust was considered controversial. However, the simple fact that Reding condemned France’s policies towards Roma because it reminded her of how European Jews, instead of European Roma, were treated during WWII, is symptomatic for the wider forgetting of the Porrajmos. Apparently, she was unaware of the fact that

hundreds of thousands of people labeled as Gypsies were murdered in the Holocaust. The politicians who were quick to condemn Reding's statements similarly displayed their ignorance of the fact that Roma were killed alongside Jews. If the Porrajmos had been included within France's cultural memory and the wider European discourse on the Holocaust, would Reding's statements be considered similarly problematic? And moreover, if this were the case, would she still have linked the current antiziganist policies towards Roma to the Jewish Holocaust, instead of the Romani Porrajmos? In the light of the events in the summer of 2010, and the ongoing marginalization of Romani victims within the French discourse on the Holocaust, Falco's statement appears to be what the anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot has called an abortive ritual, a speech act that carries no transformative effects for the victims but primarily serves as symbolical and moral redemption for the perpetrators (Trouillot). Interpreted along these lines, Falco's call to remember the Romani victims of the Holocaust is nothing more than a rhetoric gesture, intended to cover up the clearly antiziganist attitudes displayed by Sarkozy and to uphold the self-identification of the French Government as morally righteous and civilized. While we can never know whether Falco's speech was intended as such (certainly the French government will not provide us with any insights), it seems peculiarly coincidental that it was voiced just one day after the events in Saint-Aignan. Even if we discard the possibility of any correlation between Falco's speech and Sarkozy's hard lined policies towards Romani immigrants, the fact that the two events occurred nearly simultaneously highlights that, ironically in the words of Falco, "it is time that ... the memory [of the persecuted Roma] starts playing a role in the national memory" (Falco).

During the summer of 2010, French and international non-Romani human rights organizations protested against the expulsions of thousands of Roma from France (Plaut). The Central Council of German Sinti and Roma similarly critiqued the events, in warning that Sarkozy's policies were "weakening the rule of law and simultaneously making far-right attitudes acceptable in society" (Mara). Among the myriad of protests, the Romani French voice, however, was mostly absent (Plaut). This is largely due to the fact that, in contrast to the Central Council in Germany, no "central" Romani civil rights organization exists in France. The Romani civil rights organizations that do aim to combat antiziganism are scattered all over the country and seek to empower Roma through grassroots initiatives rather than on national levels. The grassroots

organization *La Voix des Roms*, founded in 2005, for example, protested against the 2010 “systematical evacuation” of Romani settlements through local petitions.²⁵ In that same year *La Voix* also organized the first edition of the annual *La Fête de l’Insurrection Gitane*, intended as “a great manifesto against structural racism, discrimination, and an act of affirmation of a ... new identity” (“Fête”). The festival, which received little attention from national media, consisted of “positive” activities, such as Romani music performances and carnival games, while it simultaneously drew attention to the Porrajmos during lectures on “genocide and colonialism” (“Fête”). The *Fédération Nationale des Associations Solidaires d’Action avec les Tsiganes et les Gens du Voyage* (FNASAT), which attempts to combat the marginalization of French Roma on a national level yet seeks to do so through grassroots initiatives, similarly combines “positive” aspects of Romani culture with lectures on the Porrajmos.²⁶

The Romani author Matéo Maximoff was perhaps the earliest advocate of this grassroots activism in France (Comfort). Maximoff had been lobbying for recognition of the persecution of the Roma ever since the war had ended, first by sending letters to the French media urging them to report on the suffering endured by him and his community, and later by narrating his and his family’s experiences and lobbying for UN recognition of what he called the “Gypsy genocide,” until he passed away in 1999 (Comfort). The literary scholar Paola Toninato informs us that Maximoff’s internment in Lannemezan during WWII served as a catalyst for his writing career, and that his main aim was “to document the sufferings and persecution of the Roma through the ages [and that] he devote[d] particular attention to narrating the life of the Roma interned in concentration camps” (“Romani” 83). *La Septième Fille* (*The Seventh Daughter*, 1969), Maximoff’s first novel dealing with the Romani experience during WWII, tells the story of a four-year-old girl who is endowed with supernatural powers and interned at Lannemezan with her family. In *Routes sans Roulottes* (*Roads without Trailers*, 1993) Maximoff also devotes special attention to the internment camps in France, yet this work narrates the author’s family history from the early 18th century until the end of WWII. *Dites-le avec des Pleurs* (*Say it with Tears*, 1990), which preceded *Routes sans Roulottes*, is the last work to be added to the list of Maximoff’s novels on the Romani experience during WWII. *Dites*, however, differs significantly from the other two works

²⁵ For more information on *La Voix des Roms* see their blog: roms.blogspot.nl.

²⁶ For more information on FNASAT see their website: www.fnasat.asso.fr.

in scope and in style, since it attempts to offer the full story of the Porrajmos and contains autobiographical, historical, and fictional elements.

In the late 1970s, Tony Gatlif, born in 1948 as Michel Dahmani in Algiers, approached Maximoff with the idea to make a documentary on the suffering of the (French) Roma during WWII (“Tony”). While this joint venture was soon abandoned since the duo could not obtain the necessary material, and, more problematically, because none of the survivors they approached were willing to talk about their experiences (let alone have their testimonies filmed), Maximoff and Gatlif remained closely connected. Just a few years after the two artists went on the journey to uncover the history of the Porrajmos, Gatlif directed the films *Corre Gitano* and *Canta Gitano* (*Run Gypsy* and *Sing Gypsy*, 1981). Both films received only scant attention at the time, and by now it is largely forgotten that these two films were Gatlif’s first attempts of telling the story of the Porrajmos. While another decade would pass until Gatlif directed the widely acclaimed musical documentary *Latcho Drom* (partly narrated by Maximoff), these two forgotten films marked the beginning of Gatlif’s devotion to illuminate the lives of (European) Roma. Like Maximoff, Gatlif has dedicated most of his attention to offering insights into Romani culture, yet, unlike Maximoff, the suffering of the Roma and the Porrajmos have been less centrally represented in his work. According to Gatlif, this difference with Maximoff’s work has nothing to do with disinterest, but rather with a “fear of failure,” since, he states, “ I wanted to do a film about the Roma Holocaust ever since I started making movies. But the subject frightened me” (“Korkoro”). Nevertheless, Gatlif did not lose determination to tell the otherwise untold story of the Porrajmos, a perseverance that culminated in *Korkoro* (2009), the first feature film directed and scripted by a Rom that deals primarily with the Porrajmos.²⁷

Before delving into these works, it must be noted that, unfortunately, neither *Dites* nor *Korkoro* have reached wide audiences. While Maximoff’s oeuvre has been widely translated from French to other languages, and some of his works are available in paperback in Germany, *Dites* has not been translated to German or any other language

²⁷ To my knowledge, there are no other films depicting the Porrajmos made by Romani artists. The only other film that deals with the Nazi persecution of Roma that I have encountered in my search is *And the Violins Stopped Playing* (1988) by the Polish director Alexander Ramati. In his elaboration on Holocaust film, the historian Lawrence Baron dedicates two sentences to the depiction of Roma in Holocaust films and mentions the inclusion of romantic relationships between Jewish and Roma characters in the feature films *Train of Life* (1998) and *The Man Who Cried* (2001).

(Comfort). Even in France the work remains widely unknown outside a small group of non-Romani and Romani scholars dealing with the internment of French Roma and other individuals who are interested in the plight of French Roma (Comfort). Further impeding the circulation of the novel, is the fact that it is only distributed by Maximoff's daughter and not sold in stores – in order to obtain a copy of *Dites*, I had to personally approach Nouka Maximoff. These factors combined, then, it might not be surprising that the number of reviews and scholarly analyses of the text is negligible. The situation of *Korkoro* might appear a little less bleak since the film was, for the most part, critically acclaimed and at least some scholars analysed the work (Burgin, McGregor and Nettelbeck). This success can be attributed to the fact that the film was shown at various film festivals, where it won several awards.²⁸ More importantly, perhaps, *Korkoro* simply reached a wider audience than *Dites*, since the film was screened at various cinemas in and outside of France. Part of the critical acclaim is likely due to the popularity of Gatlif's earlier films, and part of the reason why the film was screened at various locations—and made in the first place—was thanks to the funding Gatlif had received from state sponsored funds such as the *Fonds Images de la Diversité* (Burgin, McGregor and Nettelbeck). Nevertheless, *Korkoro* struggled at the box-office, and it is currently rather difficult to find a copy of the film (which I experienced myself). Following these observations, the conclusion can be drawn that neither *Dites* nor *Korkoro* have reached wide audiences outside of selective circles, and that both works have failed to impact cultural memory and thus remain what Astrid Erll calls “dead material” (5).

Dites and *Korkoro* are nevertheless interesting forms of “memory work,” not only because both Maximoff and Gatlif have implied that their main goal was to present the full story of the Romani experience during WWII, but moreover since both works can be described as what the literary scholar Mary Louise Pratt has called instances of “autoethnographic expression” (9). While Pratt is specifically concerned with literary expressions of colonized subjects in Latin America, her approach nevertheless explains some of the structural features and techniques used by Maximoff as well as by Gatlif. In her analysis of the strategies used by Romani authors, Toninato approaches Romani

²⁸ *Korkoro* won three awards (*Grand Prix des Amériques*, Most Popular Film of the Festival and the Prize of the Ecumenical Jury) at the Montréal World Film Festival, and it won the award for Best Feature at the Jerusalem Film Festival. The film was nominated for the award of Best Music at the César awards in France.

literature along these lines, and defines “autoethnography” as “a strategy used by the Roma to represent themselves ‘through the eyes of the other’ without losing their cultural specificity” (“Translating” 233). Following Pratt’s and Toninato’s discussions of this “genre,” Maximoff and Gatlif can be seen as “autoethnographers,” since they “represent themselves in ways that *engage with* [non-Roma] terms” (Pratt 9, emphasis in original). While Pratt and Toninato focus specifically on literature, both *Dites* and *Korkoro* can be regarded as instances of autoethnographic expression. Both Maximoff and Gatlif use French as the main language in their representations of the Porrajmos, and, in doing so, they use the language of the dominant group. Specifically *Dites-le avec des Pleurs* illuminates that Maximoff’s usage of French was not only intended to reach a wide audience, but that usage of the French language serves as a vehicle to offer insights into Romani cultures and memories. Autoethnographies, however, not only involve language and idiom. *Dites* and *Korkoro*, can, in fact, be already seen as autoethnographies since both of the works use a “dominant” medium – literature and film – in order to inscribe the memory of the Porrajmos into the wider discourse on the Holocaust. Yet, *Dites* and *Korkoro* are not only instances of autoethnobiographic expression solely because they exist, and because they exist in French, but more so, as will become clear throughout this chapter, because Maximoff and Gatlif use their insider-outsider positions in order to give non-Romani audiences insights into the experiences of (French) Roma during WWII.

Dites-le avec des Pleurs

As noted by the literary scholar Sara R. Horowitz, many works of Holocaust fiction written by survivors “utilize the settings of ghettos, forests, labor camps, or situations of hiding to convey the texture and inner experience of Nazi persecution” (435). Maximoff introduces the main character of *Dites-le avec des Pleurs*, Mateï,²⁹ whose character is based on the author’s own experiences, in such a setting:

²⁹ It is worth noting that the name of the protagonist is spelled as “Matéi” in the first few chapters, while Maximoff changes this spelling throughout the rest of the novel into “Mateï.” Since the latter version is used more often I will use this spelling. There is no indication that the two characters differ from each other.

It was the first time that the camp was so quiet. No sound was made ... The complete silence was most reassuring, unless it meant that the whole world was dead; only the harsh light shining from the projectors isolated the camp from the rest of the night. ... It rains softly; all is calm, so all is well. Nothing will happen until the morning comes. (13)

Mateï is trying to catch some sleep on a wooden plank. His dreams are interrupted by a projector that enlightens the complete darkness of the barrack, in which he, sick and alone, lies engulfed by a false calmness that is peaceful and haunting at the same time. The harsh light does not appear to intrude in the gloominess, but rather enforces the gravity of Mateï's situation and his lack of hope. The stillness of the night is broken when Mateï's bag falls to the ground, after which he starts collecting his things that lie scattered on the floor. At that very moment, "the projector's light shines through the barrack" (13), giving Mateï the opportunity to look at some of the postcards he had intended to send to his family. Especially the card showing a smiling girl that carries the message "*Dites-le avec des Fleurs!*" (13), grasps his attention.

Literally translated *dites-le avec des fleurs* means "say it with flowers," which appears to be a pleasant expression referring to the present of flowers as a way to express certain sentiments, printed on postal cards such as the one rediscovered by Mateï. The phrase, however, is simultaneously rather sarcastic: if a person needs to share a hurtful or painful message, *dites-le avec des fleurs* means to point out that s/he should cloak the gravity of the truth – in this light, the expression means "you better bring flowers." Shortly after we read that Mateï cried out "*Dites-le avec des Fleurs!*" (13), the narrator intervenes and describes, in past tense and cursive lettering, that Mateï collected his items and returned to his bunk, where "tears welled up in his eyes, and he cried ... *dites-le avec des pleurs!*" (14). At the end of the first chapter, after more information on Mateï's family is shared, it is revealed that the young Rom is interned at a German concentration camp, and that he "knew that his days were numbered and his time limited, unless a miracle intervened. [He] looked at the old postcard that showed his handwriting ... and could not help but cry again: *Dites-le avec des pleurs!*" (21). These first pages of *Dites* already exemplify how the text works with and appropriates the dominant idiom, and can thus be seen as an autoethnographic instance, since the change from *dites-le avec des fleurs* to *dites-le avec des pleurs* literally alters a well-known French expression. The title, however, is more than a simple alteration of the expression

encountered on the postcard. Interpreted from the perspective of the main character, the phrase emphasizes the failure to embellish the gravity of Matei's situation – he cannot say it with flowers and thus says it with tears. Moreover, the postcard is hopelessly out of place in the context of the camp, and, as such, it reads as a bitterly ironic twist on the text of the postcard, which enforces the gravity of Matei's situation.

After describing the rediscovery of the postal card, the narrator intervenes at the beginning of a new (short) part of the first chapter. Again, described in the past tense and in cursive lettering, we learn that Matei's father and his family lived in Spain "a long time before" the young Rom was interned in a concentration camp (14). Like the rest of the plotline in *Dites*, the first chapter consists of vignette-like passages, in which the narrator constantly switches from past to present tense and interweaves descriptions of the characters' histories with snippets of dialogue between the main characters. Even those readers who know nothing of Maximoff's own experiences during WWII, can read from the back cover of *Dites* that the text is largely based on the author's own life: just as Matei's family, the Maximoffs migrated from Barcelona to France in 1917, where they initially maintained their travelling lifestyle and where his father taught the young Matéo how to read and write (Toninato "Romani"). Starting with Matei's hopeless situation in the concentration camp and ending with a very brief description of his situation after the war, the first two thirds of *Dites* offer a non-chronological overview of Matei's and the other characters' experiences. Yet, interestingly, Matei's plotline is interrupted in the final chapter of the part entitled "During the War:" without any accompanying introductory comments of the narrator, the reader is presented with an historical account written by the sociologist/criminologist Bogomila Michalewicz. In this overview, presented in a scholarly form, Michalewicz narrates the history of the European Roma during WWII. The essay ends with a note that highlights Michalewicz' position as a secretary of the "Committee researching crime and discrimination perpetrated against the Gypsy people" (all capital letters in the text, 198) of which, the narrator informs us, Matéo Maximoff is president.

The narrative is not only interrupted by an historical overview of the Porrajmos written by a scholar, it is also interspersed with a section of photographs from the 1960s of Roma throughout Europe, presumably taken by Maximoff himself. This section includes photographs of Romani settlements, such as the one of a small girl standing in front of a tent that is described as "miserable" (131) and a photograph of Romani

caravans (154), an image of a Romani woman reading tarot cards (135), and pictures showing Romani families (130, 133). While the photographs clearly depict Romani life after WWII, and as such might be interpreted as a bridge between the past and the present, they are cut off from the rest of the narrative, since the narrator neither introduces these photographs nor gives any other explanation. Moreover, these photographs are included in the middle of the second part of *Dites*, entitled “During the War.” All of this combined, then, the images seem utterly out of place and appear to carry no clear function in the text – yet this changes when Maximoff takes on the narrative voice in the final parts of the text. Before shedding light on this part, however, there is another aspect of *Dites* that gives the text its assemblage-like character. In the third part of *Dites*, which follows after Michalewicz’ essay and is titled “After the War” (199), the narrator reflects on the numerous times the Jewish story of the Holocaust is told, especially in comparison with its Romani counterpart, and directly asks the reader: “Who will tell the story of the Gypsies?” (202). Moreover, the chapter offers a key insight into why those earlier pictures, especially the photographs showing the “miserable” tent, might have been included, for it informs the readers that the situation of European Roma has not changed since WWII (201). Interestingly, the narrator returns from these two statements, which together read as a manifesto for remembering the Porrajmos and combating antiziganism, to Matei:

Matei, who knows how to read and write, became a writer because he could, to try to become the historian of his race. But alone he was not up for the task. He hopes that many Roma ... follow into his footsteps [and] give their testimonies. Here are a few testimonies recorded by Matei’s tape recorder. All given in Romani, he translated them into French, but with respect for the Romani idiom. (204)

This passage not only serves as an introduction to the three fictional testimonies that follow directly afterwards, it moreover emphasizes the importance of testimonies when it comes to telling the story of the Porrajmos. In including these testimonies, Maximoff shows his awareness of the privileged position of survivor testimony within the discourse on the Holocaust, while he simultaneously reflects on how Romani survivor testimonies have remained largely absent within the discourse on the Holocaust. Part of

this, as illustrated by Mateï's hope that other Roma will give their testimonies, is due to the simple fact that most Romani survivors refused to talk of their persecution during WWII. Most of them remained silent, or, at least, refused to share their personal accounts of persecution with (non-)Romani interlocutors – illustrated by Maximoff and Gatlif's failed attempt to document such testimonies, and, harkening back to the first chapter of this thesis, similarly highlighted by Aad Wagenaar in his quest for Settela's identity. Indeed, as pointed out by Susanne Knittel, the absence of survivor testimonies can and has led to marginalization of certain victim groups within scholarly and public discourses on the Holocaust (Knittel 12). By adding three invented testimonies, Maximoff not only responds to this privileging, he also appears to critique the central role of testimonies since the ones in *Dites* are completely fictional, and, moreover, by framing Mateï as the character who has (successfully) recorded three interviews with survivors of the Porrajmos, he reflects on his own impossibility to do so.

All three testimonies are framed as interviews, and all three are situated roughly thirty years after the end of the war. Furthermore, the testimonies include footnotes in which Mateï further explains certain answers, and in all of the testimonies we read how Mateï urges the survivors to share as much information as possible. Like the two other testimonies, the first transcript begins with Mateï presenting himself and asking the survivors their name and Romani "tribe" (205). "I am Yayal," answers the first interviewee, "I was interned at a camp in Riquewihr. We were hungry and cold. Fortunately, I was with another Rom who was an excellent companion ... of misery" (205). The transcript continues:

M.: Do you remember his name?

Y.: Yes, his name was Alphonse...

M.: I know him, as a matter of fact, was he in Belgium?

Y.: Yes, that's right. He was with me. There were five Jews with us. They were relatively young.

M.: Excuse me! I am interrupting you because I want to collect as much information as possible regarding the camps. Do you remember the name of the Jews?

Y.: No, the names, I don't remember them anymore, because it is such a long time ago; already thirty years have passed, and I have a very short memory, I cannot remember their names. (205-206)

This snippet of the first transcript not only forefronts the difficulty of remembering, for Yayal expresses that he is unable to recollect the names of the Jews he was with more after thirty years have passed. It also highlights the necessity of this information in Mateï's attempt to paint a full picture of the experience in the camps: it is not unlikely that Mateï asks Yayal for these names in order to find out whether these five Jews have given testimonies of their experiences. In all three testimonies, we read how Mateï urges the survivors to share as much information as possible, and how the survivors struggle in giving this information – not only because they cannot remember, but more so because of the trauma they experienced. Another survivor interviewed by Mateï, Paprika, describes how she was interned at Auschwitz and Ravensbrück, how a number (Z 9771) was tattooed on her arms, and how her child was the “first baby girl to be burned in Auschwitz” (208). She is unable, however, to elaborate further on her own experiences, since she finds it “shameful” to talk about (214).

Unlike the first two transcripts, the third testimony blurs the lines between fictional and non-fictional, with what initially seems to be a minor difference: this transcript does not begin with “Mateï,” but with “Matéo.” For the reader, it thus appears that Maximoff himself translated this testimony, yet this assumption is problematized when the survivor who is interviewed, Lotcho, continuously refers to Matéo as Mateï – and so the testimony seems fictional after all. Or, interpreted along different lines, Maximoff was Mateï all along – and Mateï is simply one of his nicknames – which challenges the reader's understanding of the narrative and the testimonies up until that point. Who was the main protagonist, Maximoff himself, or Mateï? While I was reading the text I wondered whether this blurring might not have been intentional but just a simple mistake. Since *Dites* is self-published, perhaps because Maximoff had difficulty in finding a publisher or had no intention to do so in the first place, it appears that the text lacked thorough final editing: in the opening scenes, for instance, the name of the protagonist is spelled as “Matéi,” while his name is spelled as “Mateï” throughout the

rest of *Dites*.³⁰ Whether intentional or not, the switching between “Matéo” and “Mateï” in the last testimony implies that both Maximoff and the main character of *Dites* saw themselves as the lone voices in telling the story of the Porrajmos.

Like much of Holocaust literature, *Dites* is marked by a “self-reflexive ambivalence about literary representations [that] rests on a fundamental paradox: the drive to recount, describe, and remember clashes with a strong sense of the limitations facing any account” (Horowitz 430). Horowitz argues that many literary representations of the Holocaust produced by survivors, for this reason, work by indirection. “Rather than plunge readers into the dark heart of atrocity,” writes Horowitz, “it presents narratives that spiral around and toward moments of horror that are not fully narrated, or layers together fragments of imagery and narrative that suggest the whole, without claiming to fully represent it” (430). Certainly, much of *Dites* seems to be guided by a sense of indirection. All of its different elements – the narrative, the fictional testimonies, the photographs, the constant (meta)commentary of the narrator that points to the “author’s” other writings and urges the reader to remember – converge into a hybrid text, which suggests that all of these elements are necessary to tell the story of the Porrajmos.

Besides Paprika’s short description of her experiences in the camps, *Dites* never explicitly narrates the horrors of the gas chambers, nor does it provide elaborate descriptions of Mateï’s predicament in the camps after the opening scenes. Nevertheless, *Dites* offers an insight into the horrors faced by hundreds of thousands of Roma during WWII, precisely because the narrative invokes familiar Holocaust imagery. All of the elements in *Dites* refer to the Nazi persecution of Europe’s Jews. The “Jewish tragedy” (145), for instance, is mentioned during one of the many frame stories when Moursha, Mateï’s cousin, describes his experiences in the Warsaw ghetto. Moursha tells Mateï that he and his family were forced to live in the ghetto “because, unfortunately, our names were similar to the names of the Jews” (32). It is thus implied that “the Germans” treated the Polish Roma similarly as the Polish Jews, yet, Moursha and his family were extremely lucky for they were able to buy their way out of the ghetto after they collected

³⁰ The lack of thorough editing is visible throughout *Dites* at different instances: while all of the chapters carry a title (“*Chapitre I*” etc.), one of the last chapters carries no title at all. Moreover, the very first page of *Dites* apparently contained a mistake, since it is visible that the sentence “*Dites-le avec des pleurs*,” was altered by hand into “*Dites-le avec des Fleurs*.” Similar inconsistencies occur throughout the text.

a “large amount of money” and bribed a German officer (32). Clearly, Moursha’s story intersects with the familiar setting of the Warsaw ghetto – which has become an iconic site of Holocaust memory – with the cultural memory of the Nazi persecution of the Jews, for separation of the two seems untenable. Nevertheless, the Jews are not mentioned simply because they were *there*, they are mentioned because they were there *with Roma*. This becomes clear in the earlier mentioned testimony given by Paprika. Paprika not only narrates her own experiences in Auschwitz and Ravensbrück, she also tells Mateï that “Jews were put in the ovens ... and went to the gas chambers [while the Gypsies] stayed in the camp” (210). By placing the Jews and the Roma together in the settings we have gotten so familiar with through the many representations of the Holocaust, Maximoff has no need to further describe what happened to many of the Roma who were sent to the camps.

Unlike Horowitz’ assertion that many literary representations of the Holocaust offer an insight into a certain aspect of the horrors rather than attempt to provide a holistic representation of the event, Maximoff clarifies in the three last chapters of *Dites* that it was his intention to fully represent the Porrajmos. In these last chapters, written in September 1989, Maximoff takes on the role of the wise storyteller, “Le Papo,” and addresses his community in a tone characteristic for the Romani oral tradition. Each of these chapters starts of with a variation on “my children,” and together they read as a plea for remembrance: “Every now and then, one of you asks me to tell a story I already told a dozen times. I repeat this story on purpose, to let it impregnate your memory. ... [So that] you can turn to your children and grandchildren to tell them the story.” (237) According to Maximoff, this story is not solely concerned with the Porrajmos, but with the entire history of the Romani “race” (244). Following these statements, *Dites* seemingly deviates from Horowitz’ assertion that much of Holocaust literature does not attempt to fully represent the atrocities. Instead, as Maximoff claims, *Dites* is aimed to provide the full story of the Porrajmos for non-Romani *and* for future Romani generations. With this claim, all the different elements of *Dites* fall into place, and, moreover, it affirms Maximoff’s role as an autoethnographer. Indeed, taking all the different parts of *Dites* into account, the text can be read as an ethnography in the anthropological sense, yet written by a Romani “insider” rather than a non-Romani “outsider”: the first three thirds of *Dites* serve as vignettes in which Romani culture and history is described, Michalewicz’s essay functions as an historical framework, the

photographs give insight into Romani culture shortly after the war, the testimonies sustain a flow characteristic of anthropological interviewing techniques, and the final three chapters provide the reader with Maximoff's conclusional remarks.

The above quoted introduction to the three fictional testimonies can be interpreted as a *mise en abîme* for Maximoff's role as an autoethnographer. Mateï not only translates the Romani testimonies into French, and does so "with respect for the Romani idiom" (204), the transcripts of the testimonies moreover contain Romani expressions. Following Pratt's theorization, autoethnographic expressions often include several languages. Moreover, the fact that these survivor testimonies are included in *Dites*, and that they are recorded by Mateï for he saw the necessity of doing so, is also an instance of autoethnographic expression, since the Romani experience during the Porrajmos is described through a dominant form. When we take this explanation to the level of *Dites*, it becomes clear that Maximoff himself took on the role of the autoethnographer. Not only did he translate his own experiences from his mother tongue (Romani) to the dominant language (French), and used the privileged genre of literature to tell the story, he moreover translated between two cultures. As will become clear in the final part of this chapter, both Maximoff and Gatlif used their insider-outsider position in order to mediate in between worlds.

Korkoro

Similar to the opening scene of *Dites*, the first shot of *Korkoro* draws upon familiar iconography of the Holocaust while it simultaneously foreshadows the horrific end of the road for so many Roma. These first twenty seconds of the film show a close up of separate rows of barbed wire bobbing up and down like snares of an instrument, mirrored by the sorrowful tones of a guitar and a cimbalom, with in the background the image of a few empty barracks. After the barbed wire and the barracks slowly dissolve into an image of greyish clouds floating into the sky, foreshadowing the danger awaiting the still unknown characters of the film, the last tone of the piano abruptly marks the beginning of a flashback. In contrast to the image of the barbed wire, the barracks, and the clouds, the first scene of the flashback, which shows a caravan clanking through a tunnel, is shot in vibrant colors. During this scene the audience is first introduced to the family whose routes the film follows, while we also learn that the cut has taken us back

to France in 1943, not through a voice over – which Gatlif used in *Latcho Drom* – but via text inscribed in the shot.

While *Dites* is a complex and fragmentary work of literature, *Korkoro* appears to be a rather straightforward example of an historical drama. Loosely based on an historical anecdote, the film tells the story of a Romani family, the Lavilles, who are trying desperately to maintain their itinerant lifestyle and avoid deportation. During their journey across the French countryside, the extended family, who have reluctantly adopted the nine-year-old *gaže* Dickensian orphan Claude and renamed him Chourouro (which means “poor”), arrives in a pastoral French village to find seasonal work in the vineyards. It soon becomes clear that the Roma cannot stay in the village temporarily for the Vichy government forces them to stay put, yet, they cannot stay in their caravans and tents either because they are not allowed to do so. The village’s mayor and veterinarian, Théodore Rosier, comes to their aid by selling the family his old family house for only 10 francs. Mademoiselle Lundi, a teacher at the local elementary school and clerk in the city hall who is active in the resistance, similarly helps the Roma by forging their passports. Unfortunately, the Roma remain shunned by the rest of the villagers and cannot adjust to a sedentary lifestyle, causing them to take to the road again in an attempt to reach Belgium. The last scene of the film shows the Nazis rounding up the Roma and murdering the most free-spirited member, Taloché, before they are taken away in trucks. The closing credits of the film inform us that the “Gypsy family that inspired this film was interned in Mechelen, Belgium, before being deported to Auschwitz by convoy Z on January 15, 1944” and that the character of Miss Lundi was based on the resistance fighter Yvette Lundy “who was deported to Ravensbrück and freed in 1945.”

A similar fence as depicted in this very first scene only returns once throughout the rest of the film, namely when the Romani family is temporarily held at an internment camp in France specifically set up for *nomades*. The portrayal of this camp, which remains unnamed, follows the historical accounts: the barracks are cramped with Romani families, and the prisoners alternate between waiting hopelessly for the end of the war and standing in line for their daily ration of food. The image of the seemingly endless lines of Romani prisoners is paired with weeping violins on the soundtrack. The scenes depicting the Vichy internment camp for *nomades* are crucial moments in *Korkoro* for several reasons. First of all, the temporary internment of the Romani family is vital for the narrative. After it is shown that the family is thrown into the camps, in

order “to get rid of France’s vermin,” the scene abruptly shifts to Théodore Rosier and his lawyer, who are filling out the official documents that transfer the ownership of Théodore’s great-great-grandfather’s house to the matriarch of the Lavilles, Natasha, for just 10 francs. The solicitor asks Théodore why he is doing this, for the whole village will be against him. The town’s mayor responds: “If my land can save a whole family, I’m positive. I asked the prefect. Nomadic Gypsies are being put in camps all over France. If they own a house, they’re allowed out.”

The image then cuts back to the internment camp, showing the arrival of Théodore and Miss Lundi and the release of the Lavilles. When most of the Laville family members are gathered on the right side of the barbed wire, they realize that Taloché is still on the other side of the fence, and they start to panic. Miss Lundi apprehensively re-enters the camp, and faces the guards in order to find the missing family member. Taloché, who is arguably the most important character of *Korkoro* since he embodies what Gatlif has called the “Gypsy soul ... with his purity and [naivety], his fantasy, freedom and extravagance” (“Korkoro”), is found clinging a fence, staring at what lies beyond it. Taloché’s situation appears to parallel the first time we are introduced to Mateï in *Dites* – both characters have seemingly lost hope and accepted their eventual fate, illustrated, in the case of Taloché, by his stillness which contrasts the vivacity he shows throughout the rest of the film. In the scene in *Korkoro*, however, it is not night but day, and the camp is certainly not cloaked in silence. Babies and young children are crying, and, more importantly, behind Taloché a fellow Rom is running in circles and constantly crying out “Korkoro,” followed by a short sentence in Romani, together translated by the English subtitles as “Freedom” and “I want to be free.” As if addressing a child, Mademoiselle Lundi tells Taloché “come on, get up” immediately after she finds him in this situation. When she sees that he is wounded and asks him “what did they do to you?” Taloché responds poetically: “I wanted to fly away... Like a wild goose, to get over the barbed wire.” In an interview that accompanied the release of *Korkoro*, Gatlif expresses that “[t]here is no word in [Romani] language that means [freedom]. Gypsies don’t use this word because they are free” (“Korkoro”). *Korkoro*, translated into French as *liberté* and into English as freedom (both of which used as secondary titles for the film) actually means alone in Romani language, which interestingly parallels the first scene of *Dites*: both Mateï and Taloché, stripped of their freedom, feel alone and isolated from the world in which they live. The dual meaning of the word *Korkoro* is an

interesting example of an autoethnographic instance, yet, in contrast to the juxtaposing of “*Dites-le avec des Fleurs*” and “*Dites-le avec des Pleurs*,” this appropriation occurs the other way around: instead of altering a typical French expression, Gatlif uses Romani language for the title of his film to set it apart.

Despite the fact that the title can be considered an instance of autoethnographic expression, the rest of the film at times seems to be a mere appropriation and mirroring of the Holocaust films Western audiences have become so familiar with. The movie critic Glenn Heath, for instance, links the opening shot of *Korkoro* to those of *Inglourious Basterds* and *Saving Private Ryan*: “Gatlif infers the devastating brutality of the former while deconstructing the overt symbolism of the latter with the staggering first shot of ... *Korkoro*” (Heath). Another critic compared *Korkoro* to *Schindler’s List* and even claimed that the first seemingly directly copied the plot and the style of the latter, “minus the happy ending” (Hill). Scott Tobias writes that “Théodore goes to extraordinary – in movie terms, Schindlerian – lengths to protect the Gypsies” (Tobias). Indeed, Gatlif seems to have drawn on *Schindler’s List’s* portrayal of its main protagonist as a “good German,” yet, the difference between Oskar Schindler and Théodore Rosier is that the first gradually evolved into a rescuer and hero, while the latter is already represented as one from the very beginning of *Korkoro*. Moreover, the characters of Théodore and Miss Lundi are placed in stark contrast to the angry villagers, who constantly harass the Lavilles, Pierre Pentecôte, the French collaborator who is depicted with a pitiful look and a few extra pounds he gained since the beginning of the war, and the Nazis, who eventually deport the family. Considered as such, *Korkoro* is nothing more than another take on “the early [French] postwar celebration of resistance and vilification of traitors” (Baron 451). Or, as one critic put it, “[t]he Nazis and the townspeople are portrayed as one-dimensional bigots who hate the gypsies simply because the screenplay demands it” (Lafferty).

As noted by Baron, many cinematographic works depicting WWII reduce “the Holocaust to its tragic impact on small groups, families and friends, parents and children, brothers and sisters so that the victims of trauma [become] everyman and everywoman, every child and every parent” (446). In its portrayal of the Lavilles and their experiences on the pastoral French countryside, *Korkoro* quite clearly follows this “prototype.” Harkening back to Horowitz’ elaboration on Holocaust representations, the depiction of the Lavilles points towards the massive impact of the Porrajmos

(emphasized by the closing credits) without having to depict the full story. Moreover, Gatlif parallels the persecution of the French Roma with the French Jews, in order to suggest the whole without having to represent it. Shortly after we see three young Nazi soldiers washing up with well water, filmed in a style reminiscent to Leni Riefenstahl's work, Taloché is portrayed as if in a certain trance, an image emphasized by the rhythmic violin music that follows the Rom's every move. Gatlif describes the scene as follows: "Taloché understands something is going on, that a train on its way to a concentration camp has been through there. [He] is afraid ... begins to run and falls, throwing himself on the ground by the racks" ("Korkoro" 8). While sprawling across the train tracks, Taloché finds a watch with Hebrew inscriptions on it. According to Gatlif, this is the moment when Taloché realizes "[w]e're on the path of extermination. Of all exterminations. The extermination of the Jews and of the Gypsies as well. Of all those who were martyred by the Nazis" ("Korkoro" 8). This scene is powerful precisely because of Gatlif draws on the already available discourse on the Holocaust in order to foreshadow the danger that awaits Taloché and his family. Seen as such, the familiar imagery of the Holocaust in *Korkoro* functions to add gravity to the otherwise forgotten stories told by Gatlif – the watch points to the deportation of the Jews, and, as such, there is no need for Gatlif to further directly depict the horrors in the train wagons, concentration camps, and gas chambers.

From the very first scene of *Korkoro* until the very end, which is similarly iconic for Holocaust cinematography since it shows how the Nazis – in their uniforms and with their shepherd dogs (one of them named "Otto") – round up the Lavilles and place them into trucks, it is clear that Gatlif draws upon familiar imagery of the Holocaust in order to tell the story of the Porrajmos. Nevertheless, it is also clear from the very beginning that Gatlif does so through, in the words of the critic Rachel Saltz, "a Gypsy lens" (Saltz). While *Korkoro* is often labeled as an historical drama, its "narrative focus is scattered, panicked, lyrical, fleeting, and tangential, playing out like a memory as opposed to a more concrete version of historical recreation" (Heath). Similar to Gatlif's other films, the camera roams freely throughout the entire film. Despite mostly shown in chronological order (with as exception the flashback at the very beginning of the film), the scenes seem to be detached from each other. Without any explanation one scene cuts to the next, from the concentration camp in France back to Théodore, and so on. One critic, Brian Lafferty, writes that *Korkoro* "never gathers momentum [because] [n]o

explanation is given for the family's need to roam" (Lafferty). While I am skeptical of Lafferty's approach of the film – in his article he states that *Korkoro* was nothing like the "interesting stories" his "Uncle John" told him about how "the Gypsies" snatched children – he seems to have a point: for those viewers unfamiliar with the Romani past and present, *Korkoro* might indeed lack context and character development.

While Lafferty critiqued the narrative and screenplay of *Korkoro*, the majority of the critics praised the film precisely for its charting of the Lavilles' wandering and search for freedom through a loose set of vignettes. The assemblage-like character of *Korkoro*, according to Saltz, is in line with how Gatlif, especially since *Latcho Drom*, "seems more anthropologist than storyteller" (Saltz). In this respect, Lafferty failed to recognize that *Korkoro* is intended to offer an insight into the Porrajmos from the Romani perspective, rather than yet another stereotypical representation of what he calls "interesting" stories of "the Gypsies" (Lafferty). The many vignettes of *Korkoro* neatly reflect on the difficulty of remembering such traumatic events, which often resist conventional ways of story telling. At the same time, approaching *Korkoro* as a set of vignettes, and following Saltz' suggestion that Gatlif is more of an anthropologist than a storyteller, fits Pratt's theorization of autoethnographic expressions. Not only since Gatlif has expressed that he wanted to represent Romani communities throughout his work ("*Korkoro*"), moreover because he literally uses a privileged medium and familiar iconography to tell the story of the Porrajmos. At the same time, however, *Korkoro* has a uniquely Romani character. Like *Latcho Drom* and Gatlif's other films, Romani music (violins, piano, guitar) plays a vital role in *Korkoro*. As the critic Ronnie Scheib writes "[a]s always in Gatlif film, music determines meaning. In one of the pic's most nuanced and moving scenes, an impromptu post-harvest dance briefly brings townfolk and Roma together in fragile harmony" (Scheib). In the absence of a voice over, the soundtrack serves to bring the different vignettes together, or, as illustrated by the very first scenes of the film, to mark the end of one scene and the beginning of another.

Gatlif's depictions of certain Romani intimate customs, such as their covering of the wheels of the caravans and the hooves of their horses with pieces of cloth in order to muffle their sounds and evade getting caught (Schager), and healing the wounds of Théodore with a mixture of raw eggs found in the field and cow dung, offer compelling insights into Romani culture. As Nick Schager writes in his critique, "[s]uch ethnographic specifics provide depth" and "robust emotion" to the film (Schager). These close ups

differ from *Dites-le avec des Pleurs* in that Maximoff never provides the reader with such clear insights, and rather focuses on the characters' history in order to provide the "full picture" of the Porrajmos. Gatlif's autoethnographic expression, in that sense, differs from *Dites*, for rather than claiming to give a holistic approach, Gatlif highlights certain elements of the lives of the Lavilles, and, in doing so, offers a unique insight into Romani culture. *Korkoro* fits Pratt's theorization of autoethnographic expressions rather directly, since the characters not only express themselves in French but also in Romani. Gatlif explained in an interview that he found nine non-professional Romani actors in Transylvania for the roles of the Lavilles, and most of the other actors depicting the Lavilles – some played by professional actors and some not – in Albania, Georgia, Serbia, and Norway ("Korkoro"). Thus, *Korkoro* can be interpreted as a transnational autoethnographic work, for Gatlif highlights that finding all the actors to depict the Roma characters in the film was a long journey that took him across and beyond the European continent. Seen in this light, it is clear that *Korkoro* was not only a form of "memory work" in unearthing the history of the Porrajmos, it was moreover the result of Gatlif's long search for Romani culture. In this light, *Korkoro* might indeed be considered to be the outcome of an autoethnographic type of fieldwork.

Mediating between Worlds

As noted by Toninato, Maximoff emphasized the "mediating role of the Romani writer, whose main task he consider[ed] to be that of using his/her mastery of the written medium to serve as an interpreter and a historian in the name of his/her people" ("Romani" 82). Following in Maximoff's footsteps, Gatlif similarly seeks to represent the Romani community through his work ("Korkoro"). Their self-proclaimed role as mediators between Romani and non-Romani cultures already foreshadows how their representations of Romani culture and the Porrajmos serve as autoethnographic expressions: both works are (mostly) in French, both Maximoff and Gatlif used privileged media as a conduit for recognition and empowerment, and both artists draw upon the dominant cultural memory of the Holocaust in order to tell their stories effectively. Moreover, in their representations of the Porrajmos, they intend to break down walls between non-Roma and Roma, and they do so through similar tactics:

through challenging certain Gypsy stereotypes, and, simultaneously, through drawing a parallel between the Porrajmos and ongoing antiziganism.

In the last three chapters of *Dites*, Maximoff expresses that the work was intended to combat certain existing stereotypes, and that “his children” should do the same. The first stereotype Maximoff attempts to debunk with *Dites* is that of the illiterate Roma who resists education. Obviously, this stereotype is already debunked through Maximoff’s performance of writing *Dites* itself. Nevertheless, the narrator emphasizes Matei’s literacy throughout the text:

How can you go to school when you travel every day and are chased from one village to the other by the police[?] There is no possibility for a Romani child to be educated in accordance with the laws of the country. [Matei’s] school is nature itself, he learns from the adventurous life of each day, and the little reading and writing his father taught him. But how can more be learned? The Roma have the habit to cross borders and thus be in contact with other languages, other laws, etc. And yet, there are educated individuals among the nomadic people. Proof? The author of these lines! (45)

This specific interruption is interesting since it highlights Matei’s (and Maximoff’s) education, and, more importantly, implicates that the responsibility for their itinerant lifestyle and the resulting lack of education is to be partly assigned to the police (and the overarching institutions and laws). As such, the quotation counters the common cliché that Roma are illiterate and have no interest in education, since it shows that both “the author” and the fictional character based on his life are “educated individuals.” The statement thus offers an explanation on the high rates of illiteracy among French and European Roma, while it simultaneously emphasizes Maximoff’s literacy.

In *Korkoro* this stereotype is addressed as well, Gatlif expressed that his aim was “to demystify certain clichés,” and thus to humanize these images rather than directly counter them (“Korkoro”). Gatlif offers the Romani perspective of the French educational system during the scene that shows the resentment of the Laville parents to let the children go to school when Miss Lundi enters their encampment bravely stating that they “should learn to read and write, all right.” The parents respond by asking Miss Lundi “how much will you pay for that?” and saying “we don’t leave our children, they’re

always with us.” Later on in the film, Taloché and two other Laville children unexpectedly show up in Miss Lundi’s classroom, and their first experience in her class is depicted as a whimsical affair. None of the three Roma know how to behave, and Taloché eats the chalk, while the Romani girl drinks the ink before they leave the school through the window. It can be argued that these depictions of the Lavilles, and specifically the framing of Taloché as the embodiment of the “Gypsy soul,” contribute to stereotypes, for Roma are, again, portrayed as deviants to the norm. The music of the film has been similarly described as stereotypical (Karter), most clearly so when the Lavilles play their violins and guitars in a coop, again, a rather comical demystification of a cliché, for it quickly becomes clear that the concert is not for the chickens but for their owner, who used the chickens as an excuse for the Roma to play their music. Throughout *Dites* and *Korkoro* other stereotypes are addressed in a similar fashion: Maximoff offers an explanation of how these images were created and counters them, while Gatlif demystifies certain clichés through whimsical scenes.

Dites and *Korkoro*, two vastly different yet simultaneously complementary works, are powerful because they offer a Romani perspective without labeling all non-Romani as perpetrators: while the Roma might have been marginalized and stigmatized as Gypsies for hundreds of years, Maximoff and Gatlif refrain from returning the favor. Both artists intended to offer historically accurate narratives of the persecution of French Roma prior; during; and after WWII, and in doing so, wanted to, in the words of Gatlif, “show [Roma] the way they are” (“Korkoro”). Especially when dealing with a complicated history of the Porrajmos, certain stereotypical images cannot be evaded since many Roma simply were musicians, blacksmiths, and horse traders, while many non-Roma discriminated against Gypsies and enforced Vichy and Nazi rule. *Dites* and *Korkoro*, however, broaden our perceptions of Roma (and perhaps even the Romani perception of non-Roma), by showing that Roma are writers and filmmakers as well, and that non-Roma are not always antiziganist bigots. In their mediating between two worlds, Maximoff and Gatlif compel both societies to “reflect on their stereotypical images of the “Other” and to build bridges instead of walls.

Moreover, both *Dites* and *Korkoro* mediate between the past and the present, not simply because they represent the Porrajmos, but more so because they draw parallels between the past and the present. Similar to Germany’s intelligence service set up in 1899, the French government started to collect information on individuals labeled as

nomades by forcing all individuals who lead an itinerant lifestyle – most of them Roma – to carry a *carnet anthropométrique* in 1912 (Filhol). While the document was influenced by the rise of eugenic thought – it contained two photographs (profile and front) and a long list of physical traits (such as eye color, fingerprints, length and width of the head, etc.) – it “contained neither racial references nor any ethnic identifiers ... in keeping with republican principles” (Fogg 27). The law that enforced the existence of the *carnet* was passed in order to enhance “public security,” and ultimately this legislation led to the incarceration of those considered “vagabonds” (Filhol 999). As Filhol points out in his extensive study on the matter, prior to World War II many Roma and people with an “undefined nationality” were incarcerated on the basis of this law since they were seen as threats to the French nation “suspect of espionage” (999). Apparently, French citizens who lead an itinerant lifestyle remained suspect for a very long time. Even though the 1912 law was reconfigured in 1969 – physical traits were no longer listed in the *carnet* which was renamed *livret de circulation* and *nomades* were from then on defined as *gens du voyage* – all those individuals who lacked a permanent home were still forced to carry documents which contained information on their identity and routes of travel until this legislation was finally abolished in June 2015 (“L’Assemblée”).

In *Dites*, the identification document is extensively described as a means to control and falsely accuse French Roma of crimes, an approach likewise adopted by Gatlif in his depiction of how the Lavilles are forced to stamp their booklets at every village they enter on various instances during their stay. Since the *carnet* contained neither racial nor ethnical signifiers, the historian Shannon L. Fogg asserts that, unlike the French Jews, the French Roma were never *officially* persecuted on racial grounds. This, she argues, was largely the result of the Nazis’ inability to implement their racial definition of Gypsy “because a comprehensive census of both itinerant and sedentary Gypsies did not exist in France” (32). Fogg asserts that the lack of ethnic and racial identifiers in the *carnet*, and the fact that the few Roma leading a sedentary life did not have to carry such a document, made it impossible for Nazi officials to persecute French *Bohémiens* as vigorously as they persecuted German *Zigeuner*. For these reasons, Fogg remains uncertain whether to call the Vichy treatment of itinerant Roma a genocide,³¹

³¹ The Hungarian historian László Karsai states that “the overwhelming majority of Gypsies in France, Belgium, etc. survived the war undisturbed” (228). It is uncertain to which other European countries Karsai refers with the “etc.” Moreover, the historian makes some other false statements: he for instance

yet she simultaneously speculates that if the Germans had been able to continue their antiziganist measures, the French Roma would have been deported to extermination camps en masse.

Neither Maximoff nor Gatlif explicitly mention that the *carnet* did not include any ethnic and racial identifiers, yet, they nevertheless counter the problematic statement that Roma were not persecuted for their race, but for their travelling lifestyle. While Fogg emphasizes that French Roma were not *officially* persecuted on racial grounds, she emphasizes that they nevertheless fell victim to *unofficial* racism. Nevertheless, glossing over this statement might be problematic, for it might lead to claims that French Roma were responsible for their own persecution and death. Maximoff addresses this problematic tendency when he asks the reader several questions that has been posed to him and his people so often (167): why do the Roma live like this, can they not simply change their ways? Are they just social deviants who reject assimilation? Maximoff counters these questions by showing throughout *Dites* that he and his family have tried everything to avoid persecution and incarceration. The clearest example is when we learn that Matei's family bought a home, thus allowing them to live without a *carnet* and evade the racist policies of the Vichy regime. To no avail, unfortunately, for Matei's family were interned despite their newly adopted sedentary lifestyle. *Korkoro* depicts a similar situation. After the Lavilles buy the house of Théodore's great-great-grandfather, some French villagers come to protest their new neighbors. They start building a fence around the house, and attack the mayor for letting the Roma stay: "We don't want a gang of thieves around here!" (*Korkoro*)

In *Korkoro* more reasons are given why the Lavilles could not maintain their sedentary lifestyle and thus take to the roads again: the rats in the cellar scared them and they believed the brick walls were filled with ghosts. It is not unimaginable that this fear is the result of the simple fact that Romani families such as the Lavilles were not used to living in a permanent home, precisely because they were never given the chance by their neighbors to *feel* at home. Gatlif and Maximoff seem to suggest that while Roma across France, living on the road or not, might not have been *officially* persecuted on

remarks that "SS "experts" usually spared the lives of "pure-blooded" Gypsies" (228), that the German Sinti were "left alone" (228), and that there were no Roma deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Since the publication of his article, these statements have been debunked and widely critiqued (Bársony and Daróczi).

racial grounds, racism against them nevertheless underpinned their persecution and made it nearly impossible for them to escape incarceration. In other words, the Vichy government, helped by French individuals who maintained antiziganist tendencies, persecuted so-called Gypsies on racist grounds under the false pretense of “promoting assimilation” by forcing *nomades* to abandon their travelling ways. The clearly visible trace of eugenic thought in the *carnet* seems to suggest that the whole system of policies towards *nomades* was, in fact, a smokescreen to cover up the racist ideology that underpinned these policies. Why would French authorities deem it necessary to maintain a list of physical characteristics in the first place? And furthermore, why were mostly Romani individuals – many of whom were in fact French citizens – singled out to carry such a document while non-Romani individuals were able to travel through the country freely and unnoticed? Following the scene in *Korkoro* that shows us how the Laville family is treated once they try to adjust to French society, it is clear that French Roma were persecuted not because their traveling lifestyle posed significant problems, but because they still failed to fit the norm once they adopted a sedentary lifestyle.

Harkening back to the beginning of this chapter, or rather, moving from the past to the present, it becomes clear that many of the antiziganist attitudes challenged by Maximoff and Gatlif continue to exist, exemplified by the fact that the *livret de circulation* was only denounced earlier this year. *Dites* and *Korkoro* thus not only build bridges between Romani and non-Romani cultures through their challenging of stereotypical images of Gypsies, they moreover build bridges between the past and the present. In so doing, they *make* the past present. Maximoff continued to lobby for recognition of the Romani identity and remembrance of the Porrajmos and against on-going antiziganism until his death in 1999 (Comfort). Similarly, Gatlif is a prominent Romani activist. In the interview accompanying *Korkoro*, the filmmaker expressed that he did not want to create “just a historical recreation of the past,” but that he intended the film to “echo what’s happening today. We’re living through the same thing today, only there’s no death in the end. There’s no more political extermination, but from a psychological and political point of view nothing really has changed” (“Korkoro”). Thus, both *Dites* and *Korkoro*, as autoethnographic expressions, not only literally draw upon already familiar Holocaust imagery and do so through privileged genres, they attempt to use these discourses in order to gain recognition and empowerment for Romani communities in

the present. Seen as such, both works exemplify the role of cultural memory as a conduit for the marginalized and the repressed (De Cesari and Rigney).

Like (most) literary and cinematographic representations of the Holocaust, *Dites* and *Korkoro* explored the capacity of narrative to depict atrocity and persecution. In this respect, it seems as though the works have solved the puzzle by layering together vignettes that suggest the horrors of the Porrajmos (*Korkoro*), or that these vignettes and other elements aim to present the whole, without plunging the reader into complete settings of horror (*Dites*). Through the use of familiar imagery, *Dites* and *Korkoro* were able to do so. Unlike most representations of the Holocaust, however, Maximoff and Gatlif were faced with another problem. As elaborated on in the first chapter of this thesis, Romani lives are often not regarded as grievable ones, for the dual stigmatization of them as Gypsies impedes viewing them as alive in the first place. While I would say that *Dites* and *Korkoro* have reached this goal through their challenging of commonly held stereotypes of Gypsies, both representations of the Porrajmos have not reached another goal set by Maximoff and Gatlif: to reach wide audiences. Certainly, *Korkoro* was widely acclaimed and awarded with prizes, yet, it did not do well at the box office. *Dites* resonates with its intended audience even less, and it is mostly read by individuals already interested in the Porrajmos, not by those who have never heard of the Nazi persecution of the Roma. Part of the fact that both works have failed to become “living” sites of memory, rather than stay “dead material,” seems to be closely connected to Alaina Lemon’s observation that the performances of Romani artists through non-Romani genres are often labelled “ethnically inauthentic” (168). This label strips away the possibility of Roma as historical agents, and thus glosses over *Dites* and *Korkoro* as forms of “memory work” in the first place. Yet, more seems to be at stake regarding the question why these two works have had little effect on French (and European) cultural memory. First of all, *Dites* might be considered a too complex work of literature, while *Korkoro* might fail – as in the case of the earlier mentioned critic – to tell an “interesting Gypsy story.” Yet, these statements can only be made *after* individuals have actually read (parts of) *Dites* or seen *Korkoro*, not before. Rather, it seems to me that both works fail to impact the discourse on the Holocaust precisely because the Romani victims of the Holocaust remain in a marginalized position. I only encountered both works after I began searching for Romani representations of the Porrajmos, and, since neither of the two works reaches wide audiences, it seems unlikely that those individuals who do not

embark on such a search will find out that they even exist. Perhaps, now that the Porrajmos appears to be seeping into the wider discourse on the Holocaust, Maximoff's and Gatlif's efforts to tell the story of the Romani victims of Nazism will become engrained in French and European cultural memories a few decades from now. In the mean time, it is my firm belief that both *Dites* and *Korkoro* merit more attention from scholars, precisely because both works are interesting forms of making the past present, and, more importantly perhaps, because both build bridges rather than walls.

CONCLUSION

Our Otherness was not an ineffable essence, but rather the sum of different historical experiences. Different webs of signification separated us, but these webs were not at least partially intertwined. But a dialogue was only possible when we recognized our differences, when we remained critically loyal to the symbols which our traditions had given us. By so doing, we began a process of change.

– Paul Rabinow, *Reflections*

During the last few months of writing this thesis, two programs on Dutch television devoted special attention to what is so often described as “Europe’s Roma problem.” The first one, *Brandpunt (Focal Point)*, travelled to Romania in order to uncover the failure of the European Union’s attempts to improve the living conditions of Romani communities. Taking the viewers to a garbage dump in Cluj, a place hundreds of Roma call “home,” *Brandpunt* unveils that of the hundreds of millions of euros the EU had pumped into projects aimed to help Romanian Roma, not a single dime reached its goal. The activist Dan Oprescu Zenda, a non-Romani who quit his job as advisor for the EU on behalf of a Romani organization over the misuse of funds, highlights that the EU was looking for a “quick fix” to solve the problem. In his words, “the guilty rich West” feels responsible for “the poor East.” Within this sense of “guilt,” Roma in Eastern Europe are singled out as the perfect receivers for these funds, “a box that needs to be ticked” in order to uphold the myth of Europe as the continent that goes above and beyond in trying to integrate all its citizens. The second program, *De Muur (The Wall)*, similarly portrays the harsh reality of Romani communities in Eastern Europe. Taking the viewers to Slovakia, the Dutch television presenter Menno Bentveld struggles to figure out why the Slovakian government has built fourteen walls around Romani settlements over the last decade, designed to shield Slovakian communities from the poverty-stricken Roma. *De Muur* shows how the Slovakian government’s policy of building these walls only aggravates antiziganism, yet Bentveld simultaneously questions why the Romanian communities refuse to undertake any meaningful action to improve their situation. At the end of the documentary, Bentveld pessimistically concludes that sufficient solutions for the “Roma problem” fail to be formulated on the Romani and non-Romani sides of the walls.

Both *Brandpunt* and *De Muur* reiterated what I already suggested in the introduction of this thesis: the contemporary situation of European Roma uncannily mirrors eugenic thought that underpinned the Holocaust, the walls – both the symbolical ones enforced by antiziganist policies and the concrete ones in Slovakia – only make matters worse, and European Roma are constantly depicted as a “problem” rather than as actual human beings. It is, as pointed out by Sylvain Aubry, inconceivable that mainstream European politicians could refer to certain problems as “Jewish” ones, precisely because this would uncannily resemble Nazi discourse (Aubry). Whereas antisemitism is (rightfully) condemned in memory of the Holocaust, antiziganism seems to prevail without being critiqued for those very same reasons, most clearly illustrated by Manuel Valls’ condemnation of “Holocaust humour” in contrast to his failure to acknowledge that his antiziganist statements could hurt Romani survivors of Nazism. While some scholars reject the moral claims of memory, and follow Friedrich Nietzsche’s warning that an overflow of history can become the gravedigger of the present, George Santayana’s dictum that those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it, seems to be more in line with the current situation of on-going antiziganism and the marginalization of the Porrajmos (Olick). Following this assumption, this thesis has attempted to uncover the mechanisms behind the marginalization and recent discovery of the Porrajmos within European cultural memory.

In the first chapter of this thesis, I sketched out a conceptual framework while I simultaneously highlighted some apparent gaps within the current field of cultural memory. Michael Rothberg’s minimalist definition of memory as the past made present served as an important notion throughout this chapter, and the rest of this thesis, for it illuminates that remembering is performative and multidirectional. Following Chiara de Cesari and Ann Rigney’s suggestion to acknowledge the double role of memory, I delved into how the contemporary discourse on the Holocaust marginalizes the Porrajmos, after which I paid close attention to the ways in which those Romani “memory workers” attempt to inscribe the Porrajmos and combat antiziganism by drawing upon the already inscribed cultural memory of the Holocaust. When it comes to the marginalization of the Porrajmos, I sought to distinguish between the scholarly and the public discourses on the Holocaust. On the one hand, scholarship has contributed to this marginalization, not only since it is at times (problematically) claimed that Roma have mastered the “art of forgetting,” more so because the ways in which European Roma

shape their cultural memories are largely neglected. In this chapter, I also touched upon the Romani “walls of secrecy,” which impede dialogue between non-Roma and Romani frameworks of memory. However, following Klaus-Michael Bogdal’s assertion that Roma served as scapegoats of modernity ever since they first arrived in Europe, these walls appear to be a coping mechanism to secure social solidarity of Romani communities. In the third part of this chapter, I moved to the public discourse on the Holocaust. I traced Jeffrey’s Alexander’s theorization of how “master narratives” of cultural memory are articulated, and concluded that the Romani lives lost in the Holocaust are not recognized as victims. This conclusion is closely tied to the prevalence of contemporary antiziganism, since the stigmatization of invented Gypsies fosters the labelling of actual Roma as “threats” for European society. In the last part of this chapter, I argued that the representation of the Holocaust as a “break of civilization” is misleading and dangerous, for it causes a failure to make a link between past atrocities and present responsibilities. The cultural memory of the Porrajmos might indeed reveal “a less auspicious aspect of Europe’s grand narrative of modernity” (Bogdal “Europe”), for it shows that certain structures of Nazi perpetratorship continue in the present, and, more importantly, because it places the responsibility for the on-going marginalization of European Roma firmly in the present, and firmly with European governments.

In the second and third chapters I focused on how Romani activists attempt to inscribe the Porrajmos into the wider discourse on the Holocaust, and how their “memory work” conjoins combatting antiziganism in the present with remembering the past. Susanne Knittel’s theorization of internal multidirectionality, paired with De Cesari and Rigney’s elaboration on the second role of memory, have been vital in my analysis of the Sinti and Roma Memorial in Berlin, which I discussed in the second chapter. In focusing on the long road towards the actual inauguration, it became clear that the Central Council specifically drew heavily on the majority memory of the Holocaust, and, along the way, they looked for close (spatial and symbolical) proximity to the larger Holocaust Memorial and Holocaust commemoration in general. In my close analysis of the actual memorial, I concluded that the memorial mediates between traditional and counter-monumental modes of remembrance, and draws upon the dominant position of the Jewish victims of the Holocaust within cultural memory in and across Germany’s borders as a conduit for recognition and empowerment. At the end of this chapter, I

concluded that the Sinti and Roma Memorial – even though it is hidden amongst the forest in Tiergarten Park – finally recognizes Romani lives as grievable ones.

In the third chapter I set out to uncover how the Romani artists Matéo Maximoff and Tony Gatlif tell the story of the Porrajmos in *Dites-le avec des Pleurs* and *Korkoro*. Following Paola Toninato's and Mary Louise Pratt's theorization of autoethnographic expression, I delved into the ways in which *Dites* and *Korkoro* mediate between Romani and non-Romani cultures, and between past and present. Like the Sinti and Roma Memorial in Berlin, both works rely heavily on familiar imagery of the Holocaust in order to represent the Porrajmos, and, both Maximoff and Gatlif use privileged memory media to inscribe the Porrajmos in the French and European discourse on the Holocaust, while they simultaneously seek to combat antiziganism. While neither *Dites* nor *Korkoro* have reached the wide audiences they were intended for, in part because both works are difficult to obtain and in part because they are largely unknown due to the overall marginalization of the Porrajmos, it is my firm belief that they have the potential to shatter the walls between non-Roma and Roma.

These three chapters combined have illustrated that the marginalization of the Porrajmos within the discourse on the Holocaust cannot be detached from on-going antiziganism in the present. Moreover, this thesis showed that the hierarchy of Holocaust commemoration does not function as a one-way road, but that Romani activists – such as Romani Rose, Matéo Maximoff, and Tony Gatlif – have (effectively) drawn upon the already available central position of Jewish victims of the Holocaust on their roads towards empowerment and inclusion. Their efforts seem to pay off, since the Porrajmos is now slowly but certainly seeping into the cultural memory of the Holocaust. This discovery is impeded, however, by the continuation of antiziganist thought that depicts European Roma as a “forgetful people” and as “social deviants,” and, furthermore, continuously fosters regarding Romani communities as a “problem” rather than as actual human beings who suffer from constant marginalization and xenophobia. Constantly referring to European Roma as a “problem” not only uncannily reflects Tobias Portschy's thesis on the “Gypsy Problem,” the mere fact that this reiteration is not recognized highlights that the Romani victims of the Holocaust remain marginalized. Moreover, the failure to make the link between the past and the present only enforces the walls built by both Romani and non-Romani communities, since it enables European

officials to evade responsibility for the current marginalization of its Romani communities.

Finally, I would like to point out that this is a small-scale study of the mechanisms that underpin the marginalization and subsequent discovery of the Porrajmos. While several official institutions – such as the EU, local municipalities in Eastern Europe that continue to build walls, and national governments – seem to evade responsibility, it is my firm belief that scholarship offers the opportunity to shed light on otherwise forgotten histories. It would be interesting, for example, to see how Maximoff's and Gatlif's representations of the Porrajmos, and Romani life in general, have changed over the years. Juxtaposing this development with a close analysis of the dynamics of Holocaust remembrance might illuminate how marginalized memories are represented in conjunction with their dominant counterparts. With regards to the Sinti and Roma Memorial, it would be interesting to see how this and other (smaller) memorials that honour the Romani victims of the Holocaust, affect the individuals who visit the site and how they contribute to the wider discourse on the Holocaust. Further research might also delve into the ways in which the memory of the Porrajmos travels across and beyond the European continent, and how the public perception of Roma changes along these routes. From all of this it is clear that this thesis is far from exhaustive, yet it is my hope that this thesis opens up the possibility of starting a dialogue instead of enforcing walls. The past has already shown that scholarship can have destructive outcomes, yet, I hope that further research on the Porrajmos and contemporary antiziganism might initiate a process of change.

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