Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro
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Re-memory and construction of the Romani identity: a reading of *The Eighth Sin*, by Stefan Kanfer, and *Zoli*, by Colum McCann

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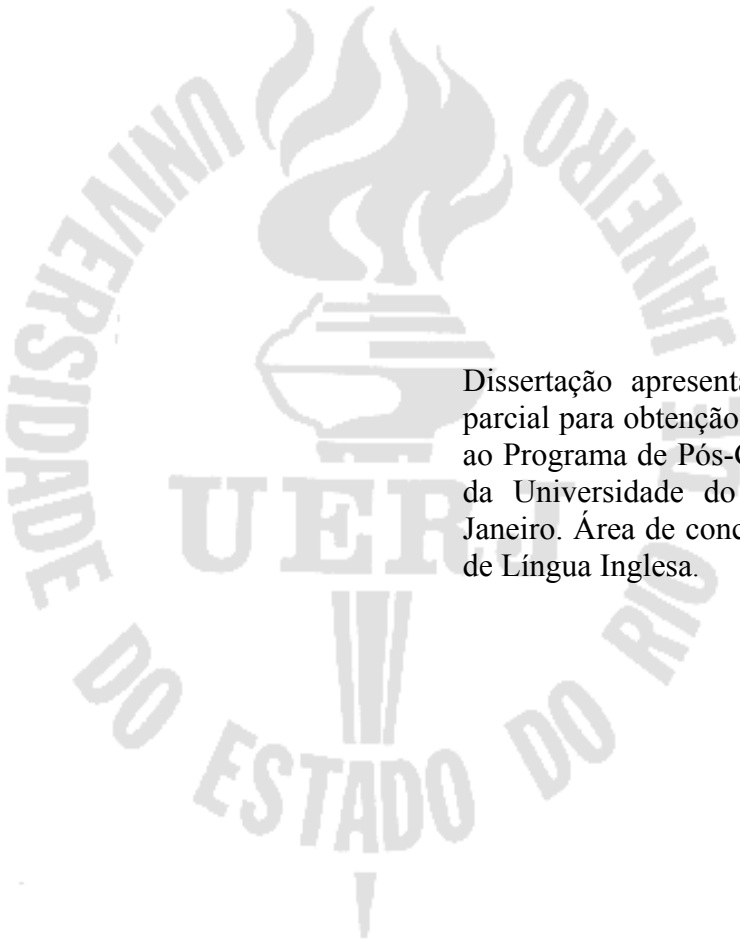

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There are crimes that must not be forgotten, victims whose suffering cries less for vengeance than for narration

Paul Ricoeur

RESUMO

PEREIRA, Pilar Castro. *Re-memory and Construction of the Romani Identity: a reading of The Eighth Sin, by Stefan Kanfer, and Zoli, by Colum McCann*. 2010. 98 f. Dissertação (Mestrado em Literaturas de Língua Inglesa) - Instituto de Letras, Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, 2010.

Através dos séculos, em locais e tempos distintos, o povo Romá (comumente conhecido como cigano) foi alvo de discriminações e de visões estereotipadas: tidos como ladrões e enganadores; ou como magos com poderes sobrenaturais de prever o futuro e de conjurar maldições; ou ainda como pessoas livres e sem destino, nômades em caravanas coloridas vivendo uma vida romântica fora da "civilização". Durante a Segunda Guerra Mundial estima-se que mais de 250.000 Romás[1] foram assassinados em campos de concentração - fato não muito conhecido ou divulgado. A *Porrajmos* (a "Devoração", denominação do Holocausto em romanês) promovida pelo regime nazista marcou profundamente a história deste povo como um dos mais tristes e cruéis episódios de todo o histórico de ódio e perseguição sofridos pelos Romás. Os romances *The Eighth Sin* (1978) e *Zoli* (2006) lidam de diferentes maneiras com este momento específico da história, oferecendo uma outra imagem dos Romás, diferente daqueles estereótipos tão comumente encontrados na literatura mundial. Assim, a intenção desta pesquisa é investigar como os protagonistas das obras indicadas foram construídos e como a herança cultural do povo cigano é descrita e transmitida por Stefan Kanfer e Colum McCann, respectivamente, com base em canções, poemas, tradições, memórias e relatos de sobreviventes que atestam a perseguição e o genocídio do povo Romá durante a Segunda Guerra.

Palavras-chave: Ciganos-Romá. Identidade-memória. Holocausto-*Porrajmos*.

[1] Fonte: http://romafacts.uni-graz.at/for-Rhistory/for-Rhist-50.htm

ABSTRACT

Throughout the ages, in different places, the Roma people (commonly known as gypsies) have been object of stereotyped views, either seen as thieves and masters in the art of deception; as conjurers, working in magical and mysterious ways; or as untamed free souls, leading a romantic life as nomads in colorful caravans outside the so-called "civilization". During the II World War it is estimated that over 250.000 Roma were murdered in concentration camps – a fact that is rarely touched upon. The *Porrajmos* (the "Devouring", denomination of the Holocaust in Romani) promoted by the Nazi has deeply marked the Roma history as one of the cruellest and saddest points in the history of hatred and persecution endured by this people. The novels *The Eighth Sin* and *Zoli* deal in different ways with this specific moment in world history, depicting a different image of the Roma. Therefore, it is our intention to investigate how the protagonists in both novels are constructed and how the Romani cultural heritage is portrayed and conveyed by Stefan Kanfer and Colum McCann, respectively, relying on songs, poems, traditions, memories and real life testimonies of the persecution the Roma people suffered during II World War.

Keywords: Gypsy-Roma. Identity-memory. Holocaust-*Porrajmos*.

SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The Gypsy Stereotype:

> Madonna was booed by thousands of fans at a concert in Romania after condemning discrimination against Gypsies.
> The pop star was accompanied on stage at the Bucharest park by Roma musicians and a dancer who were initially welcomed with enthusiastic applause. But the crowd turned on the singer when she paused during the two-hour show on Wednesday night to speak out against prejudice suffered by Roma people.
> "It has been brought to my attention...that there is a lot of discrimination against Romanies and Gypsies in general in Eastern Europe," she said. "It made me feel very sad."
> Boos and jeers resounded from the 60,000 strong crowd. Some applauded when she added: "We don't believe in discrimination … we believe in freedom and equal rights for everyone." But there were more boos when she mentioned discrimination against gay people.[1]

They are known as gypsies, ciganos, tsiganes, bohemians, athiganoi, among other names. Throughout the centuries, the Roma people[2] have been the object of fascination and fear to the Western civilization. Misunderstandings and misinterpretations worked both ways since the first encounter of the *gadjé*[3] with the "children of the wind" coming from the East, around the 14th century. The curiosity and strangeness of local populations coupled with the "uncommon" ways and habits of the Roma – a closed community based on habits of the caste system in India, with its own set of laws and language – opened a great field for constructions on the part of outsiders of what a gypsy is, does and looks like.

The stereotype of the gypsy was thus created and soon reinforced by arts in general and later on by mass media. In fact, the gypsy stereotype, once created, has never been abandoned. Either portraying an entirely positive or negative image, "gypsies" have been everywhere. In fiction, from Cervantes (*La Gitanilla*, 1613) to Jane Austen (*Emma*, 1815), from Sir Walter Scott (*Guy Mannering*, 1815) to D.H. Lawrence (*The Virgin and the Gypsy*, 1926), and so on, in virtually all cultures worldwide it is possible to pinpoint some example of the "gypsy". Basically the "gypsy" is seen either as a thief who deceives others and performs petty crimes in order to survive; or as a sorcerer capable of making potions and foreseeing the future, and able to cast spells and curses; or as a romantic character in close contact with nature, living a happy and carefree life in colorful caravans outside the oppressive civilization,

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[1] Source: http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2009/aug/28/madonna-booed-at-romania-concert.

[2] "Gypsy", "ciganos", "gitanos" and other terms are considered pejorative and were imposed on the Roma by outsiders, who believed they had come from Egypt. *Rom* (or *Rrom*) and the plural form *Roma* mean "man/ men", and *Romani* refers both to the adjective form and to the language of the Roma. Although such words do not cover all the groups which form the whole ethnic collectiveness, they have been used by several scholars and researchers with a view to standartization (cf. SORIÁ; WEYRAUCH). In order to facilitate the reading, we will employ solely the terms "Roma" and "Romani", except when otherwise noted in the consulted sources.

[3] "Non-Roma" in Romani. The word *gadjé* (or *gajé,* or *gadyé*) refers to the plural; the singular form can be *gadji* or *gadyi* (feminine) or *gadjó*, *gadyo* or even *gaujo* (masculine form). As there is no official orthographic vocabulary of the Romani language, in this work, we will adopt solely the form "*gadjé*", so as to facilitate the reading, except when otherwise noted in the consulted sources.

with no social obligations. Men are virile and seductive; women are voluptuous and lusftul with a fiery temperament.

Such constructions compose the "Gypsy image", a stereotype often far from the lives of the real Roma. As pointed out by Christopher James O'Brien in his doctoral dissertation "The Evolving Gypsy Image and the Romani People in Western Imagination":

> Nevertheless, the established fundamentals of the Gypsy figure have not been forgotten, and still exist as a standard characterization in Western mind; they are still used in the old ways by many. By now, most attributes of the image – both positive and negative – are cherished by Westerners. In this complex of traits live the villain we love to hate, the independent maverick we admire, the wily and playful trickster we long to emulate, and the penniless unfortunate we are pleased to pity and scorn. Above all, in this world of stress and worries, the Gypsy has come to stand as the epitome of untrammeled freedom, the embodiment of our fondest secret wishes. (O'BRIEN, 2007, p. 24)

As aforementioned, said stereotypes still live on nowadays, especially in the media. Films like *Chocolate* (2000, directed by Lasse Hallström) or *Drag me to Hell* (2009, directed by Sam Reimi) or books such as *Thinner* (1984, by Stephen King) reinforce the stereotypes. In the first film, Johnny Depp plays a romantic seductive gypsy character. In the other examples the white protagonists suffer the consequences of curses cast by revengeful gypsies. The image created by arts and mass media is applied without mercy to judge a whole Romani population and used as a justified reason to support persecutions, prejudices of all sorts and violence perpetrated by local populations and even by national authorities.

And why choosing the Roma? This choice is a very personal one: I have been studying and practicing Roma dance for about eight years or more. I have always been fascinated by the Romani dance, joy, colors and culture. A quite interesting fact is that Brazil is one of the only countries (if not the only country) in the world where non-Roma dress as Roma in festivities and celebrations (me included), besides performing other "gypsy traits", such as palm reading and preparing elixirs – or what people believe would be real Romani festivities, celebrations and rituals. Of course prejudice exists in this country, but there is also some kind of respect and admiration for the Roma. In Brazil, there is another aspect of the "gypsy stereotype" that, it seems, can only be found here: the "spiritual" one. There are Gypsy entities, such as Cigana Esmeralda or Cigano Vladmir in Brazilian Umbanda, a tradition that has no parallel in the Romani culture.

However, a part of me still feared "the gypsy". This work is also an attempt of leaving the prejudice against gypsies behind and beginning to see the Roma. Or at least to catch some glimpses of them.

The Novels:

During the II World War approximately 250,000 to 500,000 Roma were murdered in concentration camps – a fact that is rarely touched upon. The *Porrajmos*[4] promoted by the Nazi has deeply marked the Roma history as one of the saddest and cruelest points of hatred and persecution endured by this people.

The Eighth Sin (1978) and *Zoli* (2006) were chosen due to the fact that they are novels written by non-Roma that deal with the Roma culture without relying on the "Gypsy stereotype"; instead of portraying Roma as "gypsies", they are deep, well-built characters, with a whole set of traditions and culture. These two novels offer examples of a different and more respectful *gadjé* look on the Romani culture. Moreover, both novels, using the II World War period onwards as the historical background attempt to deal with the rewriting of history through fiction and memory in order to tell stories that had been overlooked, sometimes denied, and, why not to say, almost forgotten.

The Eighth Sin by Stefan Kanfer presents the story of Benoit, a Roma boy who experienced part of his childhood in the middle of the atrocities of a concentration camp and who lost almost his entire family during II World War. He is a Holocaust survivor and is later adopted by a Jewish English couple, living first in London and then moving to New York. While pursuing a painter career, Benoit tries to come to terms with his past, struggling to forget what he saw and endured during the war; however, everyday events often bring up traumas he believed to be buried forever. After a lifetime of inner battles and excesses, Benoit finally understands that "the life of seven sins was the avoidance of the eighth, the deadliest sin: the sin of forgetting" (KANFER, 1978, p. 288).

This was the first fiction novel in English (cf. GLAJAR, 2008) to touch upon the Holocaust subject related to the Romani people, presenting as main themes memory, guilt and revenge. *The Eighth Sin* in its portrayal of a less stereotyped Roma and in its approach to a rarely covered subject is indeed a special novel:

> While there now are more studies that document the Porrajmos, testimonial accounts by Holocaust survivors, and fictional novels based on real stories, Kanfer's pioneering novel opened new venues for regarding the complexity of Holocaust stories, and renders Romanies as a specific group of victims by focusing on the historical and cultural aspects of their persecution (GLAJAR; RADULESCU (eds.) 2008, p. 137).

Zoli is a biography loosely based on the life of Bronislawa Wajs, known as Papusza (1908-1987), a Polish Roma poet and one of the first Roma female writers who registered her

[4] Romani word meaning "the devouring".

poems in writing. Papusza was literate, something highly unusual for a Romani woman. She was a singer and later began writing down her songs and ballads based on traditional Romani art of storytelling. She was "discovered" by Jerry Ficowski (1924-2006), a Polish poet and translator who published her poems. However, her poetry was taken out of context and was used by the socialist government to support the forced halt of nomad peoples. Papusza was then considered a traitor by her community and was sentenced to pollution in life – meaning she was "unclean" and would be forever banished from the Roma world. Papusza spent eight months in a mental hospital and lived the rest of her life alone. In one of the interviews given by Colum McCann to promote the book he explains that

> I didn't want to write a nonfiction book, and there weren't enough facts there for me to hold onto. Also, I wanted the liberty of imagining things. And I didn't want Zoli to end up a spectacle of disintegration; I didn't want her to fall apart, which is largely what happened to Papusza. I wanted her to sing out at the end"[5].

In *Zoli*, we have another perspective on the war: of what happened to some of the Roma who remained in Eastern Europe during and after the war. The story begins with the murder of Zoli's family and other members of her caravan when she was six years old. The Hlinkas[6] forced the wagons of the *kumpania* (the caravan) to the middle of a frozen lake in Czechoslovakia's countryside and when the ice melted down, the whole company drowned. Only Zoli and her grandfather survived. In order to escape they flee to join another Roma camp, still facing the hatred of the *gadjé* along the way, who consider gypsies "less than humans" (McCANN, 2006, p. 242).

With the end of the war and the defeat of the facists, the Roma were considered citizens by the socialist government – as long as they paid the price of assimilation and forced halt. At this point, Papuzsa's and Zoli's lives converge: Zoli is banned for life from her community for being a traitor: her poems, which at first symbolized a new world of tolerance for both Roma and non-Roma, began to be used by the socialist government as a propaganda tool for assimilation and forced settlement. Zoli was sentenced by her peers to "pollution for life for betraying Romani affairs to the Outsiders", meaning she would expelled for life from her Roma community. Caught between two worlds and belonging to neither of them, Zoli has to start anew. The novel, thus, deals with themes such as exile, betrayal, memory and tradition.

In sum, in *The Eighth Sin* and *Zoli* the Roma characters display a uniqueness of experience, showing that the Roma culture and heritage cannot be considered a monolithic

[5] Source: http://www.powells.com/authors/mccann.html
[6] Militia maintained by the Slovak People's Party in the period from 1938 to 1945.

whole. Besides, the novels deal in different ways with the specific moment of II World War depicting a different image of the Roma and different approaches to the act of remembering/forgetting. As pointed out by Katie Trumpener in her essay "The Time of the Gypsies: A 'People without History' in the Narratives of the West":

> Idealization, objectification; sympathetic picture, denigrating caption; exemplary autonomy, feared alterity: what constitutes the mythology of Gypsy life is the tension between two simultaneous, mutually contradictory yet continually coexisting moments – memory and amnesia. […]
> Lifted up and out of history, the Gypsies themselves are reinstated only as a memory problem: the strength of forgetfulness, the struggle to remember (1992, p. 857, 859).

Therefore, the aim of the research is to investigate how the protagonists in both novels are constructed and how the Romani cultural heritage is portrayed and conveyed by Stefan Kanfer and Colum McCann, respectively, relying on songs, poems, traditions, memories and real life testimonies of the persecution the Roma people suffered during the war. Both novels offer a different view of the Roma as constructed by the *gadjé*, an important and highly necessary change of perspective. As Valentina Glajar sums up:

> Romani deportation, murder, sterilizations, and ghettoization after Auschwitz are not only barbaric, atrocious, and incomprehensible, they also signify how much more has to be done to influence the individual and collective consciousness of non-Roma, whether through literature, film, or other media, and to contribute to a critical normalization of the relationship between Roma and gadjé (GLAJAR; RADULESCU (eds.), 2008, p. 139).

The research:

The present work is divided into four chapters. In the first chapter, "Origins of the Romani diaspora", we will deal with the historical background of the diaspora. It is believed that the Roma have left (or have been taken out) of the northern part of India around 1000 A.D.. In this chapter, we will cover some of the routes the Roma have taken until they reached Europe and how they have been received. Some researchers and historians believe that the misunderstandings and the stereotypes against the Roma have sprung in the western mind during this time. Moreover, we will attempt to give a brief panorama of the Romani experience in Europe throughout the centuries, covering the prejudices, slavery years, and persecutions up to this day. We will also deal with the concept of the savage as explained by Hayden White (2001), applying it to the Roma encounter with the soon-to-be Europeans.

In the second chapter "History, oral tradition and memory", we will cover some of the views concerning the link between memory and history as related to the oral tradition. The Roma traditionally have been a non-writing culture, therefore relying on orality to maintain

the group's traditions and identity. In this sense, oral tradition also creates bonds that unite the members of a group, making it strong in its heritage. Moreover, in this chapter we will also analyse the process of remembering and forgetting, and the duties of memory based on the ideas of philosophers such as Paul Ricoeur (2004).

"The stranger and nation-states" is the title of the third chapter, in which we will discuss the building of nation-states and the figure of the stranger, and how such figure is important for the process of unifying the members of a future nation-state. To this end, we will analyse specifically the case of the Nazi Germany in its treatment of the stranger and how it is related to the Roma. As previously mentioned, we will discuss the Nazi regime in more detail once it is part of the historical background of the novels to be analysed.

The fourth chapter comprises the novels *The Eighth Sin* and *Zoli*. In order to guide our discussion on the novels, we have elected four themes for the development of the work: brief considerations on the authors and on the novels, in which we will give a brief profile of Stefen Kanfer and Colum McCann and the general plot of the novels; fiction in dialog with history, in which historical events and their relation to the novels will be covered; Romani identity, in which we will analyze how the Romani identity of the main characters are built; and memory: remembrance and forgetting, in which we will discuss how questions of remembering and forgetting affect the protagonists and the ways used by both authors to approach the subject.

Finally, we would like to clarify that the quotations selected for this research will appear in the language of the works and editions consulted, with no translations. Therefore, besides English, some quotes will be in Portuguese as well.

Why gypsies are scattered about the earth

This happened long ago.
A gypsy and his family were traveling along. His horse was skinny and none too steady on his legs, and as the gypsy's family grew he found it harder to pull the weighty wagon. Soon the wagon was so full of children tumbling over one another, the poor horse could barely stumble along the rutted track.
As the wagon rumbled on, veering first to the left, then rocking to the right, pots and pans would go tumbling out, and now and then a barefoot child pitched headlong upon the ground. It was not so bad in daylight, then you could pick up your pots and tiny tots; but you could not see them in the dark. In any case, who could keep count of such a tribe? And the nag plodded on its way.
The gypsy traveled right round the earth; and everywhere he went he left a child behind: more and more and more.
And that, you see, is how gypsies came to be scattered about the earth!
(Russian Gypsy tale)

1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: THE ORIGINS OF THE ROMANI DIASPORA

Diaspora, in brief, refers to the dispersion (either forced or voluntary) of a population from a particular settled territory to another, often far away from the first land of origin. Traditionally, according to Saffran, the concept of diaspora in a narrow sense referred to the historic dispersion of the Jewish, Greek and Armenian peoples from their original native homeland to be scattered throughout the world (In: CLIFFORD, 1997). However, in his essay "Diasporas", James Clifford points out that such diasporas cannot be taken as a "definitive model", but rather as "nonnormative starting points for a discourse that is traveling or hybridizing in new global conditions" (1997, p. 249). As such, the concept of diaspora involves primarily displacement and movement of peoples, and may be motivated by a number of reasons, such as political, economic or social issues. Therefore, according to this broader point of view, it is perfectly acceptable to employ the concept of diaspora to the constant movement of the Roma population (commonly known as 'Gypsies') since its first documented appearance in Western history.

Another point we would like to stress is that the Romani people, unlike the Jews, for instance, have no idea of returning to a promised land or to an original homeland. Said feature does not indicate a "failure" in the concept of diaspora applied to the Roma as we understand it. As Avtar Brah explains:

> Contrary to general belief, not all diasporas sustain an ideology of return. Moreover, the multi-placedness of home in the diasporic imaginary does not mean that the diasporian subjectivity is 'rootless'. I argue for a distinction between 'feeling at home' and declaring a place as home. […] In other words, the concept of diaspora refers to *multi-locationality* within and across territorial, cultural and psychic boundaries. (1996, p. 197)

It is not easy to determine the roots of the Roma people. Although there are no precise documents available to confirm so, anthropological studies made to date and linguistic research on the Romani language indicate that the Roma have left (or have been taken out) of the northern part of India around 1000 A.D. The reasons why they left are still unknown. According to Ronald Lee in his essay "Roma in Europe: "Gypsy" Myth and Romani Reality – New Evidence for Romani History", most of the works published in the 18th century on the subject indicate that the "Gypsies of Europe were simply *dom*, a low caste of Indian beggars, thieves, prostitutes, musicians and grave-diggers [...] who wandered out of India over centuries" (In: GLAJAR; RADULESCU (eds.), 2008, p. 1). However, still according to Lee:

> If scholars are looking for the mythical, nomadic Gypsy groups who left India and wandered west, this might seem to be a logical hypothesis, although without any written evidence. However, if one is looking for Indians who left, or were taken out of India, then there is a

> strong body of written evidence for this theory, which, until recently, has never been seriously investigated. Nobody seems to have considered the thousands of Indian ghulams or slave soldiers taken out of India by Mahmud Ghazni in the early eleventh century. These were utilized as ethnic units, along with their camp followers, wives and families, to form contingents of Indian troops to serve in the Ghaznavid Emirate in Khurasan as ghazis[7] and in the bodyguard of Mahmud and his successors. The existence of such troops is well documented in contemporary histories of the Ghaznavids, as is their participation in the battles in Khurasan. (Ibid, p. 2).

Therefore, according to this recent standpoint, the origin of the Roma is indeed based in India, however, descending not from a single ethnic Indian group, but rather from a mixture of Indians belonging to different military castes. It is possible to trace the routes of the Roma as indicated in the map in Annex A.

As such, one can see that the first documented indication of the arrival of the Roma in Europe dates back to a record made by a monk at Mount Athos, Greece, in 1100. Later, the Roma reached the Balkans around 1300. From this point on, they have broadly divided into two major groups: the Rom (or Roma), which have gone north, and the Calon (or Kale), which have gone south to the Iberian Peninsula (see Annex A). However, it is crucial to note that there are other major groups which do not wish to be called Rom or Calon, such as the Manouche and the Sinti, and that all major groups are subdivided into smaller groups, mostly named after the main trade of that specific group. For instance, there are the *Lovari* (involved in horse trading), the *Kalderash* (traditionally coppersmiths), the *Ursari* (bear trainers), the *Aurari* (goldwashers), and so on. The major groups are indicated as follows:

Figura.1: Map 1 Historical distribution of the Romani people
Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romani_people

[7] *Ghazi* – "Defender of the frontiers of the Islam".

The routes of this diaspora have been marked in the Romani language, of Sanskrit origin[8]:

> […] But linguists, turned detectives, could trace the Gypsy itinerary by the words the wanderers picked up along the way and added to their own language.
> Romany, as Dr. Sampson said, comes "… scented with an aroma from the East. Thus, in the Gypsies' speech heard here in England, their *rashai*, or parson, descends from *rishi*, the venerable tonsured anchorite of Sanskrit literature, the *Rai* and the *Rawnie* [meaning "gentleman" and "lady"] claim kinship with the Rajah and Ranee of India… Persia gave our Gypsies their words for silk and wool and wax, and in Iranian lands they first heard *dâriav* for 'sea' and 'ocean'. In Byzantine Greece they found their *drom*, or road, and their *foros*, or market, and learned their words for heaven and time, for lead and copper, horseshoe and kettle […]. Thus… you will find in the language of the Gypsies the true history of this people and of their wanderings" (MCDOWELL, 1970, p. 22).

Wherever they have passed through, in groups which formed a *kumpania*, that is a company or a caravan, with wagons and carts pulled by horses, the Roma have received specific denominations from the population already settled on these sites. This fact points out that if on the one hand the presence of the Roma never went unnoticed (due to the fact that they were completely different in their ways and clothing, at first fascinating the local populations), on the other it also reflects the beginning of the many misunderstandings that would be part of the Roma history. They were called "Athinggánoi" or "Atsingáni" in Greece, a denomination first used for Persian mystics, since such mystics were also nomadic and practiced occult arts; "Bohemians" in France; "Heathens" in the Netherlands and "Gypsies" in English-speaking countries, as it was believed that the Roma came from Egypt. Still according to Bart McDowell:

> Gradually, though, the English nicked the name to Gypsy, and in the Balkans and western Europe the names stabilized into words of a ring similar to that of *Athíngani*: *Atzigan, Cigani, Zingani, Tsygany, Zigeuner, Zingari, Zincali*. Yet the Gypsies of Europe have a single word for themselves – *Rom*. In their tongue it meant originally "a man of our own race". From it comes the word Romani […] (Ibid, p. 23).

The situation of Western Europe and more specifically of the Balkans from the 11th to 13th centuries is highly important for understanding the situation of the Roma and subsequent persecution and slavery. But first, it is worth noticing that even though the misunderstandings have started as early as the Roma presence established itself in Europe, the Roma have not been totally hostilized at first. In order to be well received at the local communities, the Roma made up stories about their past: they introduced themselves as kings, queens and dukes, landowners of far away lands; or as pilgrims and religious exiles, in a penance to wander around the world. They were even granted safe-conduct permits by the governments and Church. Moreover, their skills as metal workers, craftsman and even soldiers were useful, as Ian Hancock points out in his book *The Pariah Syndrome*:

[8] Being a diaspora language, Romani encompasses several dialects, such as Angloromani, spoken in English-speaking countries, or Hispanoromani, found in Spanish-speaking countries. However, the basis is the same: Romani.

> At first, the virtual absence of a working class made welcome the skills which Gypsies brought with them from Byzantium and beyond. Two of these skills were smelting and the manufacture of firearms and shot, probably learnt in Armenia and the Byzantine Empire: the words in Armenian for both 'furnace' and 'tin', and the Greek words for 'lead', 'copper', 'nails' and 'horseshoes' have become a part of Romani vocabulary everywhere throughout Europe. (1987, p. 16)

However, the good will of the local populations towards the Roma soon faded away. The Roma were linked to paganism, witchcraft and "uncivilized". Besides, due to a series of events of paramount relevance during the Middle Ages, namely the Crusades, the decline and fall of the Byzantine Empire in 1453 and successive invasions of Tartars in Europe, between 1241 and mid-1400, there was a strong anti-Islamic feeling in Europe as a whole. Such feeling influenced the way the Roma were seen and treated. If first their skills were useful, and their exoticism admired, now the Roma were considered to be enemies, and allies to the enemy. Quoting Hancock:

> Because of their strange language and appearance, and their dark skin, they were believed in Christian areas to be Tartars, intruders from the lands now occupied by the Muslims. This was especially true in areas remote from Islamic contact, where the local population had no first-hand idea of what actual Tatars looked like. Even today, two of the words for 'Gypsy' in the German language are Tatar and Heiden (i.e. 'Heathen', 'non-Christian'). There is indication that in Muslim-held areas, Gypsies were regarded as Christians, or at least as non-Muslims, and treated accordingly in terms of taxation and status. (Ibid, p. 16)

The persecution suffered by the Roma was spread throughout Europe, but it was crueler in the Balkans, more specifically in Wallachia and Moldavia (which form now, together with Transylvania, Romania). With the decline of the economy due to the closing off of the trade routes and the need for a cheap - and why not an unpaid - work force due to the change of scenario in Europe with the rise of the Ottoman Empire (15th and 16th centuries) and its subsequent move into the Balkans and parts of Central Europe in the 16th century, the Roma were gradually persecuted and enslaved. David M. Crowe remarks that:

> In Royal Hungary, Gypsies were increasingly seen as spies and something of a Turkish fifth column, which caused them to be increasingly subjected to restrictions on their lifestyle and trade. Though still valued for their smithing skills, particularly by the military, these efforts to regulate the Roma eventually forced them to adopt a nomadic way of life. In Bulgaria, which had come under Ottoman control somewhat earlier, the Turks relegated Gypsies to the lowest social ranking, and differentiated between the predominantly nomadic Muslim Roma and the settled Christian Gypsies. The Ottoman conquest of Wallachia and Moldavia, which took place somewhat earlier than the conquest of Hungary, resulted in a series of laws and regulations that governed Gypsy robi[9]. (1994, p. xi-xii)

It is interesting to note that as soon as the Roma began to be seen under a different perspective, they began to be considered as a savage, barbaric people. Here, we would like to draw a parallel to the concept of "savage" as developed by Hayden White (2001). In his discussion on the savage, the Noble Savage and its origins, White explains that the idea of

[9] *Robi* – slaves.

what is understood to be a savage (a concept which has been developed and changed throughout the years) derives from three major "heritages": the classical heritage, with ancient Greece; ancient Hebrew and Christian.

To the Hebrews, to be a savage was not to have God's blessings, i.e., to be under a curse; the nomadic life of the hunters was seen as a damned life in relation to the shepherds' settled way of living, the latter being a model of a blissful life. The savage was bad, violent and insane; it should be isolated and live in exile; it could even bear some kind of physical deformity – black skin, for instance, would be a sign of this. Besides, the mixture between species was not allowed, for this would be equal to corruption and disorder: the ideal natural order would be characterized by the purity of the species, once God created several species and each one of them would be perfect in itself. Therefore, mixture with the savage would be strictly forbidden.

In ancient Greek culture, the barbarian is the one who is mute or does not speak Greek, that is, someone who lacks the means (language) to achieve true humanity. The savage, besides not being able to speak, would also be someone who had no legal order, once in ancient Greece law equals order. The savage, according to this point of view, would live near the borders of the civilized society, stealing things in a very furtive way in order to survive. As Hayden White explains:

> […] quase completamos o nosso rol dos principais componentes do mito do Homem Selvagem quando passa da Bíblia para o pensamento medieval. O estado de maldição, ou selvagem, é identificado com a vida errante do caçador (em comparação com a vida estável do pastor e do agricultor), com o deserto (que é o habitat do Homem Selvagem), com a confusão linguística (que é o atributo principal tanto do Homem Selvagem quanto do bárbaro), com o pecado e a aberração física tanto na cor (a preta) quanto no tamanho. [...] A equação está quase completa: num mundo ordenado moralmente, ser selvagem é ser incoerente ou mudo; falaz, opressivo e destrutivo; pecador e amaldiçoado; e, por fim, monstro, alguém cujos atributos físicos são por si próprios uma prova de sua natureza maligna. (IDEM, p. 182)
>
> [...] Os pensadores medievais, a exemplo dos romanos antigos, concebiam que os bárbaros e os homens selvagens eram escravizados à natureza; eram, como os animais, escravos do desejo e incapazes de dominar as suas paixões; eram volúveis, inconsistentes, confusos, caóticos; eram incapazes de vida sedentária, de autodisciplina e de trabalho sistemático; eram passionais, perplexos e hostis à humanidade "normal" – tudo que é sugerido nas palavras latinas que designam "selvagem" e "selvageria". (IDEM, p. 186).

To Christians, on the other hand, every human being is capable of being saved, no matter how cursed he/she is provided that one is willing to convert to Christianity. The savage would be someone with an animal soul, something impossible to happen, once this would be God's mistake and God is perfect. Everybody is capable of being saved, it depends on one's will to accept and conform to the teachings and regulations of the Church.

The building of the "Gypsy stereotype" also relies on said heritages. "Gypsy" can either represent a utopian state, that is, as someone in close contact with nature, a romantic,

benign character; or it can be the dystopian state, a character to be avoided. It all depends on the point of view of who is reporting. As indicated by Michel Rolph-Troulliot:

> Just as the Savage is a metaphorical argument for or against utopia, so is utopia (and the Savage it encompasses) a metaphorical argument for or against order, conceived as and expression of legitimate universality. […] In defense of a particular vision of order, the Savage became evidence for a particular type of utopia. […]
> Just as utopia itself can be offered as a promise or as a dangerous illusion, the Savage can be noble, wise, barbaric, victim or aggressor, depending on the debate and on the aims of the interlocutors. (2003, p. 22-23)

Therefore, one can see how the Roma occupied the "savage slot". It was applied to the Roma populations at that time, with of course some adaptations. As Ronald Lee points out:

> […] These early Roma followed an exclusive culture, based on the Indian caste system, because of which they saw surrounding non-Roma as sources of pollution that must be kept away from their camps and settlements. The outsiders, mainly peasants, saw this as an attempt to hide something. They began to believe that the Roma were thieves, child-stealers, cannibals, and definitely outside the bosom of the church. Local priests told their flocks that the Gypsies had made the nails used to crucify Christ, and that they and the Jews had colluded to "murder the Son of God". Their alleged Christianity was also suspect in an age of religious intensity where life revolved around the church, the saints, avoidance of sin and Satan, and eventual salvation after death. Roma never attended mass or took the Holy Sacraments, nor appeared to follow the Christian virtues of hard work for long hours, poverty and misery on earth, leading to eternal rewards in Heaven. (In: GLAJAR; RADULESCU (eds.), 2008, p. 5)

This, in brief, was the economic and philosophical scenario in which the Roma were made slaves – an expected move, once they were considered savages – mainly in Central Europe through part of the 14th century and beyond, until approximately the second half of the 19th century, totalizing over 500 years of enslavement. It is important to point out that the Roma, much like African slaves in the Americas, were treated less than cattle. Men were used for the workforce in goldwashing and agriculture, while women attended domestic services and were also sexual objects of their masters. They were sold in markets and members of the same family would be sold separately, children would be taken away from the parents. The killing of a "gypsy" by a landlord was in theory a punishable crime; however, cruel murders and the practice of torture were common. For instance, Ian Hancock quotes the diary of a French journalist, Félix Colson, written in 1839, in which he describes a typical visit to the home of one of these landlords (a *boyar*):

> [At dinner table] Misery is so clearly painted on the faces of these slaves that, if you happened to glance at one, you'd lose your appetite. The Gypsy slaves are addressed by Christian names. Basil seems to be the most common, but they are also given house-names, such as Pharoah, Bronze, Dusky, Dopey or Toad, or for the women, Witch, Camel, Dishrag or Whore. Never does a group revolt. In the evening, the master makes his choice among the beautiful girls - maybe he will offer some of them to the guest - whence these light-skinned, blonde-haired Gypsies. The next morning at dawn, the Frenchman is awakened by piercing shrieks: it is punishment time. The current penalty is a hundred lashes for a broken plate or a badly-curled lock of hair ... it is at this time that the abominable falague is finally outlawed: this was when the slaves were hung up in the air and the soles of their feet were shredded with whips made of bull-sinews (Roleine, 1979:111, In: HANCOCK, 1987, p. 24).

Another description of slavery is given by Mihail Kogalniceanu, Wallachian journalist and reformer who wrote in 1837:

> On the streets of the Jassy of my youth, I saw human beings wearing chains on their arms and legs, others with iron clamps around their foreheads, and still others with metal collars about their necks. Cruel beatings, and other punishments such as starvation, being hung over smoking fires, solitary imprisonment and being thrown naked into the snow or the frozen rivers, such was the fate of the wretched Gypsy. The sacred institution of the family was likewise made a mockery: women were wrested from their men, and daughters from their parents. Children were torn from the breasts of those who brought them into this world, separated from their mothers and fathers and from each other, and sold to different buyers from the four corners of Rumania, like cattle. Neither humanity nor religious sentiment, nor even civil law, offered protection for these beings. It was a terrible sight, and one which cried out to Heaven […]
> The Europeans are organizing philanthropical societies for the abolition of slavery in America, yet in the bosom of their own continent of Europe, there are 400,000 Gypsies who are slaves, and 200,000 more equally victim to barbarousness (1837:*iv*) (1837:16-17, In: HANCOCK, 1987, p. 35-36).

There are also examples of laws against the Roma. Laws which, among other things, forbade the marriage of slaves without consent of the owners – the landlords would arrange the marriages in order to produce "better stock". Interracial marriages were strictly forbidden, so as not to corrupt white blood, nevertheless, the quantity of offspring from the intercourse between masters and female slaves were already high:

> A selection of statutes pertaining to Gypsies, taken from the Wallachian Penal Code of 1818,includes the following:
> Section 2 Gypsies are born slaves.
> Section 3 Anyone born of a mother who is a slave, is also a slave.
> Section 5 Any owner has the right to sell or give away his slaves.
> Section 6 Any Gypsy without an owner is the property of the Prince.
> Those from the Moldavian Penal Code of 1833 include:
> Section II:154 Legal unions cannot take place between free persons and slaves.
> Section II:162 Marriage between slaves cannot take place without their owner's consent.
> Section II: 174 The price of a slave must be fixed by the Tribunal, according to his age, condition and profession.
> Section II: 176 If anyone has taken a female slave as a concubine...she will become free after his death. If he has had children by her, they will also become free. (HANCOCK, 1987, p. 31).

The freedom of the Roma (the *Slobuzenja*) in Eastern Europe legally came in 1864. Such descriptions of the Roma situation in the Balkans echoed throughout Western Europe, and pressure towards abolition grew. With the end of slavery, however, little was made to improve the condition of the Roma. Again, much like what happened with the end of African enslavement in the Americas, the Roma were given no support to reestablish their lives after slavery. Many remained working for their landlords and for monasteries. However, many Roma left the Balkans, and as the situation was at the time, together with the development of industries which left virtually no room for their handcraft, the Roma had no other choice than to keep on moving from town to town in order to make a living. The world had changed and the Roma would have to adapt in order to survive in it. The ones who remained sedentary

engaged in agricultural activities, blacksmithing and manufacturing other items. The Roma who were nomads chose to work with entertainment activities (music, bear training and later on, circuses), horse trading, coppersmithing and in a lower Romani caste system there were collectors of rags, scavengers and beggars.

Apart from slavery, the same type of persecution happened in other countries of Europe. Germany, France, Spain, Portugal and others also had laws against Roma. They were not allowed to wander from town to town or to speak Romani. For example, in Valladolid, Spain, a document dated of 1538 stated that:

> Gypsies are not to move about these kingdoms, and those that may be there, are to leave them, or take trades, or live with their overlords under penalty of a hundred lashes for the first time, and for the second time that their ears be cut off, and that they be chained for sixty days, and that for the third time that *they remain captive forever to them who take them*. Decree of their Highnesses given in the year 1499, and Law No.104 in the Decrees; confirmed and ordered to be observed in the court which was celebrated in Toledo in the year 1525, Law No.58, in spite of any clause which may have been given to the contrary (de Celso, 1538, In: HANCOCK, 1987, p. 55).

Still in Spain there happened another terrible episode: the Great Gypsy Round-up. Enforced by Spanish monarchy, on August 30, 1749 a raid took place simultaneously all over Spain, arresting and imprisoning Spanish Roma to work in labor camps, factories, navy arsenals and depots. A figure between 9,000 to 12,000 Roma were arrested and the goods belonging to them were confiscated in order to fund the operation. During the great navigations period, the unwanted people in Portugal and Spain were deported to the new colonies in America. Among them there were some Roma. In Brazil, the first documented Roma to arrive was João Torres in 1574, with his wife and children. He was the head of a group of several other Romani families deported by Portugal.

In the 20th century nothing changed with regards to the situation of the Roma. Prejudice, even state-supported, remained the rule. However, one event marked deeply the world history and the history of the Roma. The II World War, with all its horrors, established a new level of persecution in human history never achieved before or since. The Holocaust promoted by German Nazis carried on the systematic massacre of millions of people in and outside concentration camps, mainly Jews. However, little is said about the killing of thousands of Roma. In Romani, there is even a specific word for it: *Porrajmos*, meaning “the devouring”, during which it is estimated that more than half a million Roma were killed. Among western European countries, Germany had historically offered the cruelest treatment of Roma. Besides the discriminatory laws, Gypsy hunt, for instance, was a common sport even during the 19th century: “In 1826, Freiherr von Lenchen displayed his trophies publicly: the severed heads of a Gypsy woman and her child. In 1835, a Rheinish aristocrat entered into

his list of kills "A Gypsy woman and her suckling babe" (HANCOCK, 1987, p. 61). The Holocaust will be dealt with in more detail during the analysis of the novels, as it is part of the historical background of both *Zoli* and *The Eighth Sin*.

In modern times, it can be said that the Romani diaspora came to a halt, for the majority of Roma is sedentary; it is estimated that only 2% of the whole Roma population in the world are still nomads. Nevertheless, we understand Romani culture as a diasporic one. According to Clifford:

> Some version of this utopic/dystopic tension is present in all diaspora cultures. They begin with uprooting and loss. They are familiar with exile, with the "outsider's" exposed terror – of police, lynch mob, and pogrom. At the same time, diaspora cultures work to maintain community, selectively preserving and recovering traditions, "customizing" and "versioning" them in novel, hybrid, and often antagonist situations. (1997, p. 263)

Roma settlements are often slums or ghettos, with no basic conditions for livelihood, leading some members of such settlements to alcoholism, drug addiction and petty crimes. Moreover, attacks and pogroms[10] on such settlements still happen nowadays, based on hatred and "ethnic cleansing". For instance, in May, 2008, in main cities of Italy, especially Naples, Roma camps were attacked and set fire to. The perpetrators were not punished[11]. In 2010, the French government ordered a clampdown on Roma immigrants, destroying Roma camps and returning to Romania and Bulgaria around 1,000 Roma. It was later discovered that there was a circular dated Aug. 5 from the French Interior Ministry to the local police prefects ordering "systematic steps for the dismantling of illicit camps, in priority those of the Roma", clearly targeting an entire ethinic group, rather than individuals[12].

In sum, the "solutions" found by governments to the "Gypsy problem" throughout the centuries have been persecutions, enslavement, deportation, massacre, sterilization or forced assimilation (especially true in relation to socialist countries) to the local cultures. The Gypsy stereotype constructed during the Middle Ages still operates on the Roma, leading to marginalization and self-marginalization, as it is hard for a people to maintain a high self-esteem with such a heavy load to carry of anti-zyganism. It is true that many sedentary Roma even try to conceal their origins, for fear of suffering prejudice from the society in which they live in.

It is important to point out, though, that now there is a greater level of awareness and mobilization of the Roma. There are scholars, such as Ian Hancock in the U.S., Delia Grigore in Romania and Ronald Lee in Canada who are prolific writers of Roma issues. Several

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[10] Form of riot directed against a particular group, whether ethnic, religious, or other, and characterized by killings and destruction of their homes, businesses, and religious centers.
[11] Source: Folha de São Paulo, July 11th, 2008.
[12] Source: Los Angeles Times, Sept. 14th , 2010.

Romani and non-Romani organizations and NGOs[13] have been assembled to fight for the rights of the Roma. The World Romani Congress in Germany, the Romani Union in Prague and the European Roma Rights Center are some examples. This mobilization was responsible, for instance, for the acceptance and obtainment of permanent consultative status of the Romani people in the UN in 1979 and for the acknowledgement in 1980 that the Roma were also victims of the Holocaust. The very use of the word "Roma" instead of "Gypsy" is a consequence of such initiatives. This is the beginning of a worldwide movement aiming at the organization of the Roma people to secure their rights, their voice, and most of all, their own history. The roads of the Roma towards recognition are still far from being over, but there is hope. Quoting Avtar Brah once more:

> The word diaspora often invokes the imagery of traumas of separation and dislocation, and this is certainly a very important aspect of the migratory experience. But diasporas are also potentially the sites of hope and new beginnings. They are contested cultural and political terrains where individual and collective memories collide, reassemble and reconfigure. (1996, p. 193)

[13] Non governmental organizations.

2 HISTORY, ORAL TRADITION AND MEMORY

2.1 The Roma – a people without history?

> The dream of historylessness, the longing for historical oblivion, takes historical forms and has historical ramifications, however, in its very attempt to banish history from a world it recreates as idyllic. Now far away and lost from sight, the Gypsies are remembered as insouciantly happy. Nomadic and illiterate, they wander down an endless road, without a social contract or country to bind them, carrying their home with them, crossing borders at will. (TRUMPENER, 1992, p. 853)

Often the Roma are referred to as "children of the wind", "followers of the stars" or "children of nature". Such epithets indicate a type of "amnesia" as far as the Roma are concerned. They show how the western imagination has frequently considered the Roma as a people without a real historical background, as if by some kind of magic the Roma appeared in the world. As pointed out in the introduction and in the first chapter of this work, the stereotypes play an important role in the way Roma are portrayed in western society. The construction of stereotypes, according to James O'Brien, in general comprises the combining of at least two very contrasting images for depicting the same person or group – a Janus-faced image featuring positive attributes on the one side and negative ones on the other. In Roma's case, "the Gypsy" is a carefree innocent wanderer *and* a deceitful scoundrel:

> In fact, it does not really appear possible to reconcile all these traits [the positive and negative aspects] in a logical way. How can one be essentially dishonest, and yet be one with nature? How can one have an innate cunning and ability to deceive others, and at the same time be naturally sincere and unfettered? When manipulating the popular image, artists of all kinds had to decide how to represent these figures in a suitably believable way, seldom drawing attention to the incongruity of these characteristics (2007, p. 20)

This process of stereotype building is of course closely linked to racism, especially if one decides to emphasize the negative attributes of the stereotype, as it provides a "justification" for racist and exclusionary practices. Allied to the somewhat blurred origins of the Roma and their reserved ways, such process is enhanced. As Bhopal and Myers note:

> Unlike other immigrant groups, Gypsies do not have a heritage that is well understood or available to the rest of society; very little of the cultural baggage of the Gypsy diaspora figures within insights into their culture or lifestyle. Instead, they are stigmatised with an imagined set of understandings summoned up within the fears of the dominant population. The ambiguity that surrounds their presence […] is unsurprisingly exaggerated and heightened. In many ways this happens for entirely specious reasons caused by the racist characterizations of the dominant society. As a result, society's experience of Gypsies becomes unintelligible because the false characterizations and their overtones of imaginary fears are not reflected in encounters with Gypsy communities. (2008, p. 222).

The misrecognitions and stereotypes are reinforced by the media in general and more specifically in literature. The narratives elaborated by westerners to try to encompass the

figure of "the gypsy" have been used for a number of purposes throughout the literary movements, for instance, as Kate Trumpener explains:

> It could be argued, indeed, that as the Gypsies become bearers, par excellence, of the European memory problem in its many manifestations, they simultaneously become a major epistemological testing ground for the European imaginary, black box, or limit case for successive literary styles, genres, and intellectual moments. Thus for neoclassicism they are there to symbolize a primitive democracy; for the late Enlightenment, an obstruction to the progress of civilization; for romanticism, resistance and the utopia of autonomy; for realism, a threat that throws the order and detail of every-day life into relief; for aestheticism and modernism, a primitive energy still left beneath the modern that drives art itself; and for socialist and postcolonial fiction, finally, a reactionary or resistant cultural force that lingers outside of the welfare state or the imperial order. (TRUMPENER, 1992, p. 874)

It is interesting to note, however, that stereotyping (in the case of the Roma) work both ways. Not only are the Roma suspicious of the white society – for fear of losing their cultural identity and freedom and, in some cases, for fear of being contaminated (the pollution[14]) and kidnapped (so much so that in some cases parents tell Roma children to avoid contact with the *gadjé*, for he/she may be taken away) - but also it is known that Romanies occasionally may play into this image of the "gypsy" to gather benefits when conforming to the whites'expectations of what a gypsy should do, dress or look like (cf. O'BRIEN, 2007), for instance, in cultural exhibitions. Besides, although there is this concern with a possible close contact with the *gadjé*, it is also true that Roma communities depend on the dominant culture to survive: if on the one hand self-employment and free enterprise are part of Roma identity, on the other, the Roma need the *gadjé* society to carry out trade activities so as to generate income. Nevertheless, the weight of the negative stereotypes, associating Romani people to dirtiness, laziness and crime take a tow on their self-esteem. It is not just a matter of exclusion and self-exclusion, but also of self-marginalization:

> The indoctrination and fixation of certain stereotypical constructions leads to marginalization and self-marginalization. Whether admired or denigrated, Romanies have been portrayed and perceived as omnious ousiders with a mysterious language and unfamiliar customs, supernatural abilities, **no history**, questionable character, and exceptional musical abilities (GLAJAR, 2008, p. 34 – bold added)

2.2 Memory and Oral Tradition

> (...) our ability to create a record of past experiences provides the foundations of human individuality. When, because of amnesia or dementia, memory disappears, a person's life dissolves into an immediate, purposeless present. Unable to grasp the organizing shapes of

[14] Pollution rules comprise a set of transgressions which generally involve lower body, sexuality and non-Roma. Breaking such rules can make one impure (*marime*), even leading to expulsion of the community depending on the gravity of the transgression. Some researchers indicate that the pollution system of cleanness/uncleanness is extremely similar and possibly related to the Hindu caste system. However, it should also be noted that such rules are less strict nowadays.

> her existence, this person will lead an increasingly centerless life, with fits of erratic activity giving way to inertia. For indeed our thoughts, emotions, pleasures, and intentions only acquire an existential relevance when our remembrance casts them in a narrative pattern and creates a self. (…) with every memory they [the rememberers] construct, they keep the biographical thread that defines their existence and assert their agency as subjects against the force of biological determinism. (ENDER, 2005, p. 3)

Memory has been an issue widely discussed and studied in several fields of knowledge, such as anthropology, psychology, history, literature, sociology and others. It is true that scholars in these areas have not reached a consensus on what the functions and processes of memory consist of; however, for the purposes of the analysis of the novels in question we will adopt the two types of memory to which Paul Ricoeur, based on the concepts developed first by Aristotle, refer as "simple evocation" (*mneme*) and "effort to recall" (*anamnesis*). As Ricoeur indicates "to remember is to have a memory or to set off in search of a memory" (2004, p. 4).

Another important differentiation, as far as the study of memory is concerned, has to do with the relation between individual and collective memory. Individual memory is closely linked to the collective memory of one's social group in a specific time and space. As explained by Michael Rossington in his introduction to *Theories of Memory: a Reader*, one's recollection is not an isolated and solitary act, for:

> […] ways of remembering and giving significance to what is remembered are […] seen to be fostered and shared by family, religion, class, the media and other sources of the creation of group identities, referred to by Pierre Bordieu as 'habitus' or 'systems of dispositions' (Bordieu, 1984:6). In these accounts, then, 'individual' turns out to be inseparable from 'collective' remembrance. Moreover, collective memory occupies an important function, distinct from history, in conceiving of a society's past (2007, p. 134).

There is no precise definition as to what collective memory is. Basically, however, it is a "form of memory that transcends individuals and is shared by the group" (In: BOYER; WERTSCH (eds.) 2009, p. 139). Maurice Halbwachs in his work *The Collective Memory* discusses, among other topics, the pervasive presence of the collective in the individual memory. One's recollection depends on others and on the social network one is inserted:

> Nossas lembranças permanecem coletivas e nos são lembradas por outros, ainda que se trate de eventos em que somente nós estivemos envolvidos e objetos que somente nós vimos. Isto acontece porque jamais estamos sós. Não é preciso que outros estejam presentes, materialmente distintos de nós, porque sempre levamos conosco e em nós certa quantidade de pessoas que não se confundem. (HALBWACHS, 2006, p. 30).

According to Halbwachs's point of view, the collective memory comes first and the individual memory derives therefrom. In sum, one does not remember alone and to consider the individual memory as totally independent from social influences would be an illusion.

The process of collective remembering is indeed a complex one. There is also no consensus on this matter; however, most researchers agree that it is a process based on the

shared narratives found in a collective body of some sort. As James V. Wertsch indicates, this understanting is based on the assumption that "a memory community is built around a shared set of textual means, especially narratives", which does not imply that the individuals that are part of this collectivity have "a single system of uniform knowledge and belief" (BOYER; WERTSCH (eds.) 2009, p. 132). Such individual differences are also part of the process; it is worth noting that collective remembering is often studied not in relation to accuracy of the facts that happened in the past (as individual memory often is), but rather as a site for the negotiation of group identity in social and political arenas.

The narratives mentioned above create a sense of "togetherness" in a specific collective body. This may be a religious group, an ethnic group or even a wider group, making way to nationalist feelings, for instance. The oral way of transmitting narratives is of fundamental importance:

> Talking forms the core of historical memories by generating the content, but it also serves to reinforce memory. On an individual level, objects or events are most likely to be consolidated in memory if they are verbally rehearsed. Furthermore, verbally rehearsing the details of an event influences how it is organized in memory and, perhaps, recalled in the future. This same process takes place at a social level as well. In fact, Shils (1981) claims that for a society to exist over time, its communication must be said, said again, and reenacted repeatedly. (Ibid, p. 174).

The oral mode of transmitting experience and group traditions lies at the beginning of most of societies. However, with the development of writing, especially in western societies, orality gradually began to lose ground. It started to be considered as minor and even as a backward basis for the development of a group. Indeed, societies which have not developed writing skills are now deemed as inferior, such as the Roma or some African ethnic groups. The art of transmitting experience orally is as important as writing, as Jeanne Marie Gagnebin notes:

> Desde Platão, o diálogo oral representa a vivacidade de uma busca em comum da verdade [...]. A escrita, por sua vez, deseja perpetuar o vivo, mantendo sua lembrança para as gerações futuras, mas só pode salvá-lo quando o codifica e o fixa, transformando sua plasticidade em rigidez, afirmando e confirmando sua ausência – quando pronuncia sua morte. […] a memória dos homens se constrói entre esses dois pólos: o da transmissão oral viva, mas frágil e efêmera, e o da conservação pela escrita, inscrição que talvez perdure por mais tempo, mas que desenha o vulto da ausência. Nem a presença viva nem a fixação pela escritura conseguem assegurar a imortalidade; ambas, aliás, nem mesmo garantem a certeza da duração, apenas testemunham o esplendor e a fragilidade da existência, e do esforço de dizê-la. (2006, p. 11).

The Roma, as mentioned before, fall into this oral-based category. Only recently there has been an effort to standartize Romani language. However, literacy, as a matter of fact (either in Romani or in the language of the host country) is not considered a necessary skill (cf. OKELY, 1983). The real necessary knowledge for living comes from "hands on" practices and from the experience from the elders. They are the keepers of Romani tradition

and culture and their role is to pass them onto future generations. The importance of the elders is thus explained by Eclea Bosi:

> Há um momento em que o homem maduro deixa de ser um membro ativo da sociedade, deixa de ser um propulsor da vida presente do seu grupo: neste momento de velhice social resta-lhe, no entanto, uma função própria: a de lembrar. A de ser a memória da família, do grupo, da instituição, da sociedade […] (2009, p. 63)

In this sense, storytelling plays an important part in this process. Walter Benjamin in his famous essay "The storyteller", written in 1936, affirms that the experience that once was passed on from mouth to mouth – the oral transmission of experience – began to gradually lose its value in western societies, specially after the I World War. People returned silent from the war, unable to verbalize experience; besides, according to his point of view, the rise of the novel (that is, when the focus shifted from the collective to the written, individual experience) also contributed to the decay of storytelling. In modern western societies, information is what counts; there is almost no room for oral narratives in which the symbolic and fantastic are present. Eclea Bosi affirms that:

> A narração exemplar foi substituída pela informação de imprensa […] A informação pretende ser diferente das narrações dos antigos: atribui-se foros de verdade quando é tão inverificável quanto a lenda. Ela não toca no maravilhoso, se quer plausível. A arte de narrar vai decaindo com o triunfo da informação. (2009, p. 86).

Notwithstanding, for Roma communities, the art of storytelling has never completely disappeared. Collective memory, conveyed through orality is the basis of their ethnic identity. The telling of *paramisi* or *paramiches* (fictional stories which include fairy tales, fables, parables and legends) and of non-fictional accounts is part of the culture, although not as strong as it was until the beginning of the 20th century. The foundation of Roma societies lies on family and respect to the elders (cf. LIÉGEOIS, 2008), and storytellers were usually older men with a great mastership of Romani language, and skilled in capturing the audience's attention.

For ethnic groups that do not rely on writing, orality is the tool for maintaining the group's identity and culture. Some reasons for the non development of writing on the part of the Roma may be pointed out, such as, for instance, the suspicion of the written word. The written word is seen as a "device" with which the *gadjé* may control and manipulate the Roma. Illiteracy would then mean protection or independence. The fixation of the word could also present danger to what some authors consider a strategy of invisibility adopted by the group in order to survive as Roma. If it is written down, the tradition of the Roma would be open to others, leaving the group exposed and contamination (pollution) could take place. Angela P. Harris in the foreword of *Gypsy Law* points out that

> […] the primary Romani tactic of survivance has historically been invisibility. […] Roma have been able to maintain an impressive degree of cultural integrity not only by absolutely excluding *gadje* [non-Gypsies] from their private lives, their law, their personal practices, and their values, but by excluding them even from the knowledge about Romani language and social institutions. […] the Roma have been able to remain a people apart, largely invisible both to the dominant culture and to other racialized minorities. (In: WEYRAUCH, 2001, p. ix)

Moreover, the nature of the oral word has much to do with musicality. According to Bosi, the oral expression of a life memory has more to do with music than with written discourse (2003, p. 45). It is worth noting that for the Roma the sense of collectiveness is stronger than private practices and individuality. For instance, the whole group, not just the parents or close relatives, is responsible for the upbringing of a child. Therefore, music, poetry, songs and storytelling play an important role in this society once they are collective enjoyments shared in moments of union and relaxation of the group. Culture is memory and collective memory in Roma's case is conveyed by the fluidity of sound, of the sung or spoken word, marked by deep respect for the spoken word.

2.3 Memory and Forgetting

> To say: you will remember, is also to say: you will not forget. (RICOEUR, 2004, p. 87)

Forgetting may be seen either as an enemy or as an aid to memory. We understand that forgetting is essential for the act of remembering, and especially collective remembering, to take place. Forgetting allows for some elements of the collective memory to be picked up instead of others in order to be recognized as part of a group's culture. Forgetting is a tool of editing: it makes possible to select what will be passed on as culture for the next generations and what will be left out. According to this idea, Roediger III, Zaromb and Butler state in the essay "The role of repeated retrieval in shaping collective memory":

> […] in collective remembering, the past is often tied to the present, so that a person's self identity and group identity are buoyed by the glorious past history of the people. In collective memory, negative aspects of the past may be omitted or suppressed in the service of representing what kind of people we are. (In: BOYER; WERTSCH, 2009, p. 140)

Nevertheless, there is another side of forgetting. Memory can also be a burden, and in order to help remembering, many devices have been invented by human beings, among them we may cite: museums, paintings, icons, books, monuments, and the internet. We have assigned the duty to remember to other places in order to be free to forget. Pierre Nora writes that "memory has been wholly absorbed by its meticulous reconstruction. Its new vocation is

to record: delegating to the *lieu de mémore* the responsibility of remembering" (In: ROSSINGTON; WHITEHEAD, 2007, p. 182). The memory-work then can be "outsourced":

> Under the illusion that our memorial edifices will always be there to remind us, we take leave of them and return only at our convenience. To the extent that we encourage monuments to do our memory-work for us, we become that much more forgetful. In effect, the initial impulse to memorialize events like the Holocaust may actually spring from an opposite and equal desire to forget them. (IBID, p. 181)

Forgetting is also present when one discusses the duties of memory. In this sense, we will adopt Paul Ricoeur's thoughts in his understanding of the issue. In his view, the duty of memory should be turned towards others as a duty to 1) do justice to another than the self; 2) be indebted to others that came before us, with respect to their heritage; and 3) to recognize that the moral priority belongs to the victims, not to oneself (cf. RICOEUR, 2004).This echoes the thought of Walter Benjamin when he calls our attention to not forget the dead, the defeated, nor to shut up once again their voices (cf. GAGNEBIN, 2006). The duty of memory towards others is not to let them and their struggles fall into oblivion, even though some kind of forgetting may take place in the process.

Ricoeur also dwells on the abuses of memory. Among the ones cited, we believe that the most relevant for the purposes of this work is the manipulation of memory through ideology. Someone in a position to manipulate memory (a collective memory) undoubtedly holds political power:

> However, it is on the level where ideology operates as a discourse justifying power, domination, that the resources of manipulation provided by narrative are mobilized. […] imposed memory is armed with a history that is itself "authorized", the official history, the history publicly learned and celebrated. A trained memory is, in fact, on the institutional plane an instructed memory; forced memorization is thus enlisted in the service of remembrance of those events belonging to the common history that are held to be remarkable, even founding, with respect to the common identity. The circumscription of the narrative is thus placed in the service of a circumscription of the identity defining the community. A history taught, a history learned, but also a history celebrated. To this forced memorization are added the customary commemorations. A formidable pact is concluded in this way between remembrance, memorization, and commemoration (RICOEUR, 2004, p. 85)

In this sense, the "official history" often is a site of manipulation of memory. Herbert Hirsch points out that "history is reconstructed memory, and states and individuals use and manipulate it to serve sometimes less than noble ends" (1995, p. 35). This is specially true in relation to the Roma and the stereotype building process pointed out in section 2.1, and more specifically with the *Porrajmos*/ Holocaust and the official discourse which allowed genocide to happen.

2.4 Memory, Forgetting and the Roma

> The Jews have responded to persecution and dispersal with a monumental industry of remembrance. The Gypsies – with their peculiar mixture of fatalism and the spirit, or wit, to seize the day – have made an art of forgetting. (FONSECA, 1995, p. 274)

"The Gypsy" has no history. As indicated before, the stereotype construction is based on the obliteration of actual history of the Roma. Besides, "the Gypsy" belongs to another time and space: as they do not fit the modern society, lagging behind in a world of technological progress, "the Gypsy" must belong elsewhere and, as such, cannot be part of the representative process of the dominant society. In sum, according to this line of thought "the Gypsy" has no homeland to return to, no country of its own to go to, no right to representation, no writing, and therefore, no history.

Some scholars defend that the Roma make a point at forgetting their history. It is interesting to see that the Roma, in some aspects, can be compared to the Jews: a people without territory, spread around the world. However, while the Jews preserve their memory in writing (with the Torah or memorial books, for instance), the memory of the Roma is not made known, and, therefore, the pervasive belief that the Roma have no history rises. For being a culture attached to recording events on writing, the Jews are more adapted to the modern demand for information, inventory and tracking of western societies. James E. Young reminds us that:

> In keeping with the bookish, iconoclastic side of Jewish tradition, the first 'memorials'to the Holocaust period came not in stone, glass, or steel – but in narrative. The Yizkor Bikher – memorial books – remembered both the lives and destruction of European Jewish communities according to the most ancient of Jewish memorial media: words on paper. For a murdered people without graves, without even corpses to inter, these memorial books often came to serve as symbolic tombstones […] (In: ROSSINGTON; WHITEHEAD, 2007, p. 182)

Besides, there is a vast literature on Jewish accounts of the atrocities suffered during the Holocaust. According to Ricoeur, testimonials are important because they are the "fundamental transitional structure between memory and history" (2004, p. 21). Moreover, testimonials present a human side of history, they communicate experience; their authors may be even considered the new storytellers. One is not moved by figures or maps, but the impact a testimonial narrative offers establishes a point of human connexion, empathy and identification.

Specifically in relation to *Porrajmos*, it is believed that this episode is not remembered or touched upon by the Roma for taboo issues (in concentration camps, several rules regarding purity and impurity, and the pollution of the body were broken), as an act of

defiance (as a meaningful response, different from the Jewish response to the Holocaust, due to the oral nature of Romani culture), or even for (a justified) distrust of the *gadjé*. However, we agree with Alaina Lemon when she points out that:

> (…) public Romani monuments are lacking not out of some cultural aversion to recollection or out of deficient religious motivation, but because Roma have only rare access to the media technologies that broadcast memory and mourning and do not control the architectural boards and educational systems that display and reproduce them, that perform them. Moreover, the socialist states of East Europe, where most Romani survivors lived on after the war, censured war memorials that singled out any ethnic category as having suffered in particular. The problem is not that Roma deny history, but that no infrastructure magnifies their memories as broadly collective, as constituting an "imagined community" (2000, p. 167)

The denial of history of the Roma on the part of the dominant cultures is clear when we consider, for instance, that it took decades for the Roma to be considered victims of the Holocaust. In Romania only after 1989 such issue began to be touched upon. In 1986, the United States Holocaust Memorial Council promoted the first Day of Remembrance in honor of the Roma victims of *Porrajmos* (cf. GLAJAR, 2008). Another example is that the Roma were recognized as an ethnic minority in North America in 1972 and by the United Nations in 1979 (cf. O'BRIEN, 2007). According to Stuart Woolf, this "lack of history" could be reversed as follows:

> The 'peoples without history' – subordinate ethnic groups like the Slovaks, Romanians or Baltic peoples – initially lacked the two essential forces to discover or create their own history and identity: the solidarity of their upper classes and the practical means of constructing and communicating their own ethnic culture. Their elites had been assimilated into the dominant ones. It was necessary for members of these elites to rediscover their own culture – usually in reaction to the insensitivity of the ruling groups – for the process of construction of an ethnic or national identity to be initiated, following the same pattern of that of earlier 'historic' nations: the elaboration of a standard language, a selective history, folkloric traditions, territory or ethnicity, sometimes a common religion (1996, p. 22).

For more on this specific discussion, please refer to the next chapter, section 3.6.

3 THE STRANGER AND NATION STATES

3.1 The Stranger

> The power of the *stranger* is his ability to disrupt the ordinariness of everyday life. He is unsettling because he is not understood and yet he remains: the *stranger* is not an exotic visitor passing briefly, who strays from the tourist map and brings a little colour into our lives; but, rather, an exotic visitor who moves into the house next door, walks our street, plies his trade and lives within a distinct and different cultural milieu. The *stranger* and the baggage that he brings with him becomes a source of anxiety for wider society. (BHOPAL; MYERS, 2008, p. 2)

German sociologist Georg Simmel in his essay "The Stranger" (1908) accurately indicates some of the major characteristics of the figure of the stranger. Basically the stranger is "the person who comes today and stays to morrow" (1950, p. 402). The stranger is someone who stays but at the same time someone who is also a potential wanderer, with the freedom to come and go as they please, showing no deep commitment to the "hosting" social group. Still according to Simmel, the stranger is "no owner of soil" as long as he is still considered a stranger in the eyes of the other. "Soil" here in both physical and metaphoric connotations, meaning a "life-substance which is fixed […] in an ideal point of the social environment" (Ibid, p. 402). Besides, distance plays a major role in identifying the stranger: the stranger is simultaneously far away and close to us.

In this sense "Gypsies" have always been major representatives of otherness. The strangeness of their ways and habits has always been taken note of since the early encounters with westerners, as previously indicated in the first chapter. According to Zygmunt Bauman, the stranger is a disruptive figure because he cannot be defined: he is not a friend, nor is he an enemy – two known and well determined entities – however, he has the possibility of being both. The stranger is feared because he brings indetermination to the equation:

> Undecidables are all *neither/nor,* which is to say that they militate against the *either/or*. Their underdetermination is their potency: because they are nothing, they may be all. They put paid to the ordering power of the opposition, and so to the ordering power of the narrators of the opposition. Oppositions enable knowledge and action; undecidables paralyse them. Undecidables brutally expose the artifice, the fragility, the sham of the most vital of separations. They bring the outside into the inside, and poison the comfort of order with suspicion of chaos. (1993, p. 56).

The stranger is also threatening because he disturbs the order of the world as we know it, for it does not stay confined to a far away land and refuses to leave our place. Besides, the arrival of the stranger is well "documented": the impact is so great that it is somehow marked in space and time of a given community:

> He [the stranger] did not belong into the life-world 'initially', 'originally', 'from the very start', 'since time immemorial', and so he questions the extemporality of the life-world, brings into relief the 'mere historicality' of existence. The memory of the *event* of his coming makes of his very presence an event, rather than a fact of nature (Ibid, p. 59)

The stranger is a figure that has no past. He comes from somewhere else and refuses to leave, although he is free to go whenever he pleases (at least theoretically). If on the one hand this last characteristic gives the stranger the ability to observe and assess local conditions better than the local inhabitants of the place, on the other it makes the stranger not trustworthy in the eyes of the locals, as he may leave at any time: "the commitment the stranger declares, the loyalty he promises, the dedication he demonstrates cannot be trusted: they come complete with a safety valve of easy escape which most natives often envy but seldom possess." (Ibid, p. 60).

In sum, the mere presence of the stranger and the lack of certainty it brings question the known world order, which can be very dangerous to the established powers and governments as well. The stranger exposes the comfortable fictions in which we live and which we are made to believe as absolute truths, such as stability and perfect order. Applying such notions to the Roma populations, it is plain to see that the Roma are strangers *par excellence*. However, according to Bhopal and Myers, the Roma are a different kind of strangers; they are exaggerated strangers. The mystery their figure brings is even greater:

> The figure of the Gypsy is that of an exaggerated stranger. Not only does the Gypsy arrive from elsewhere, the 'elsewhere' in question is hugely confusing. There is little clear sense of where the point of departure for Gypsies might be. The idea of a Gypsy homeland or a recognizable state to which they belong is not well-defined in popular thought. Within different constructions of Gypsy identity there is a mythical 'Egypt', possibly or a fabled India. […] One aspect of the role of the stranger is the sense of connection to somewhere else, that is to the place from which the stranger originally came. The Gypsy seemingly retains his connection, therefore, to a strange and unknown land. […] This somewhat nebulous and misunderstood relationship to a homeland acts in an unsettling manner; it disrupts some fixed notions of how subordinate groups come into existence. This acts to exaggerate the strangeness of Gypsies and makes their relationship with dominant society more troubling. (2008, p. 101-102)

3.2 The Building of Nation-States

The formation of modern nation-states is a rather recent phenomenon heavily based on arbitrariness. Although nation-states would like to convince populations they have their origins in an immemorial past, the truth is that the invention of modern nationalism and nation-states dates back to late 18th century and strongly to 19th century with independence movements around the world. In 1882 Ernest Renan in his essay "What is a Nation?" already pointed out that the concept of "nation" was new in history:

> Nations […] are something fairly new in history. Antiquity was unfamiliar with them; Egypt, China, and ancient Chaldea were in no way nations. They were flocks led by a Son of the Sun or by a Son of Heaven. […] Classical antiquity had republics, municipal kingdoms, confederations of local republics and empires, yet it can hardly be said to have had nations in our understanding of the term. (In: WOOLF (ed.), 1996, p. 48-49)

As such, nations are not "natural" entities as nationalist movements claim modern nations to be. They are social constructs or, as Benedict Anderson has coined, "imagined communities" which rely on the fall of three cultural conceptions: first the idea that a particular language granted privileged access to the truth (a "sacred script"); second the belief that societies were naturally formed around a figure appointed by divine design; and third that the origins of both world and men were the same. As Anderson explains:

> The slow, uneven decline of these interlinked certainties, first in Western Europe, later elsewhere, under the impact of economic change, 'discoveries' (social and scientific), and the development of increasingly rapid communications, drove a harsh wedge between cosmology and history. No surprise then that the search was on, so to speak, for a new way of linking fraternity, power and time meaningfully together. Nothing perhaps more precipitated this search, nor made it more fruitful, than print-capitalism, which made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profound new ways. (2006, p. 36).

Therefore, the "imagined communities" are imagined because the communion of the people who form a certain nation is only in these people's minds. There is no real bond linking people that in fact do not know each other. And it is a community because "the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (Ibid, p. 7), despite the discrepancies found in its bosom.

To the specific end of constructing a nation-state the myth of a nation tradition is often developed and employed to justify a constructed homogeneous history and culture. The power of the myth is such that it unites the fellow-members of a nation, giving them a sense of shared identity. Stephen Barbour indicates that nations are considered to be "those units with which individuals identify most strongly beyond their families; they are, for example, generally the only units in whose defense the exercise of violence is legitimate" (2000, p. 4).

The nation fulfills a need of belonging: belonging to a community. Preferably to a glorious nation or to a nation whose past was glorious. Such construction of the past is often made from top to bottom. Still according to Woolf:

> From the earliest expressions of modern nationalism, historians, antiquarians and *savants* played a significant part in articulating a sense of national identity through their researches aimed at discovering (or inventing) the distant origins and ancient glories of their people. History, language, folklore, territory, culture or religion could all be used to demonstrate the past traditions of a nation, symbolic evidence of its historic continuity and hence its authenticity. (WOOLF, 1996, p. 2).

The myth is strong enough to also justify the use of state-power tools of repression, such as military agencies, police force and justice systems and so on to legitimize their role as necessary nation-state defenders.

Stephen Barbour defines two types of nation-states based on their formation: the ones based on ethnic groups and the ones based on a diverse population. The ones that have developed from ethnic groups are based on the idea that nationality is a heritage received only when one is born in a certain land. Nationality is a matter of inherited identity. A name often associated with this line of thought is of Johann Gottfried Herder. He believed that nations were a continuity of families and as such, nations would develop as naturally as a family would do. As examples of nations that have developed based on ethnic groups we have Germany and some nation-states located in the Balkans.

The second type of nation-states are the ones that have derived from a previously diverse population. Nationalism here is a question of choice: one chooses to acquire a citizenship of a certain nation. People choose to remain together sharing the same citizenship under the same government in spite of all differences, whether they be religious, linguistic or racial. This concept of nationality was clearly defended by Ernest Renan in his essay "What is a Nation" of 1882. This is the case of France and the United States, and in general, ethnic tolerance in such nations is a degree higher than in the previous type. This differentiation will be extremely important for understanding policies of assimilation and/or exclusion adopted by governments in order to achieve (or attempt to achieve) homogeneity within a certain nation.

3.3 Nation-States, Ethnic Groups and the Stranger

> What is an ethnic group? […] Unlike a nation, an ethnic group need not occupy a territory. Also, unlike a nation, its common myths and historical memories' may be much more plausible; since ethnic groups may be much smaller than modern nations, the often quite implausible myths of common descent that nations espouse […] can have much more credible equivalents in the case of ethnic groups. And, rather than a 'mass, public culture' uniting very disparate elements, there may be a high level of shared cultural norms; and there is usually a shared language. But ethnic groups are enormously diverse in size and character. (BARBOUR, 2000, p. 7).

The Roma can be considered an ethnic group according to this definition in view of the lack of a fixed territory. Also, many ethnic groups live in more than one nation-state, as the Roma do. Besides, ethnic groups achieve an internal cohesion mainly through language and cultural traits. In the case of the Roma, the set of traditions or "rites" is mainly what makes the ethnicity of this very heterogeneous community formed by the Roma. However, as Okely explains, such cultural traits are not immutable, and may vary from time to time:

> Concerning ethnic groups, Barth suggests: 'Socially relevant factors alone become diagnostic for membership, not the overt "objective" differences' (1969:15). Some cultural traits may also change over time and new ones take their place. Aspects of Gypsy culture may resemble aspects of the wider society. But cultural similarity with any non-Gypsy persons does not necessarily weaken the permanent feature in the Gypsies' identity; namely their conception of themselves as a distinct group. […]

> The Gypsies use the principle of descent as a self-ascriptive mechanism for continuity. It restricts entry into the group and offers the means for its survival. (1983, p. 66-67)

Although nowadays there is a kind of pressure (either internal or external) for ethnic groups to become nations, the fact is that for the majority of ethnic groups this is far from happening – if there is a will of becoming a nation at all. Nevertheless, what is clear is that nation-states – either in the making or already established ones – seek hegemony within their borders. In relation to minorities, nation-states operate mainly in two ways: assimilation or eradication of difference with a view to achieving uniformity, as Bauman indicates:

> Like all other self-perpetuating groups, past and future, territorial or non territorial, the modern nation states collectivize friends and enemies. In addition to this common function, however, they also perform a new function specific of them alone: they eliminate the strangers, or at least they attempt to. [...]
> They [the nation-states] laud and enforce the ethnic, religious, linguistic, cultural *homogeneity*. They are engaged in incessant propaganda of *shared* attitudes. They construct *joint* historical memories and do their best to discredit or suppress such stubborn memories as cannot be squeezed into shared tradition [...]. In other words, national states promote *uniformity*. (1993, p. 63-64)

On the other hand, policies of inclusion and exclusion are also important for the building and maintenance of nation-states. Stuart Woolf points out that:

> National identity depends on exclusion as much as on inclusion: the 'foreigner' whose expulsion is a precondition of national independence, or the ethnic minority whose pretensions threaten the national unity, are the functional counterpart to the symbolic and material mechanisms of forging national cohesion, present in most historical processes of nation-building. But the definitions of who should be included and who excluded are fundamentally arbitrary, dependent on the very myths that underpin nationalist ideology (history, language, race, religion, territory…), expressed and sometimes imposed ruthlessly by elites in control of the state. (1996, p. 32)

Therefore, the stranger, in this case personified by an ethnic group, is important for the nation-state: the stranger, while he must be either eliminated (either by being cast out by ghettoization or more radically by ethnic cleansing) or absorbed by the dominant culture, is also used as a tool for unifying the members of a nation-state: we unite for fighting a threat to our stable way of living. In the case of the Roma, their communities are fluid, as Bhopal and Myers point out, and fluidity does not fit the nation-state agenda:

> […] Gypsy communities exhibit a fluidity that does not place itself easily within the idea of community as a feature of the nation state. Such fluidity is a strength that binds individuals, families and wider networks together in the face of hostility and within a context in which the response to such hostility may involve movement, dispersal or the concealment of identity. […] Gypsy community does not meet the expectations of the nation state, even though it exhibits the strengths ascribed to community. (2008, p. 114)

3.4 Building of Nation-States and Nomadism

> The First World War brought the age of high dynasticism to an end. By 1922, Habsburgs, Hohenzollerns, Romanovs and Ottomans were gone. In place of the Congress of Berlin came the League of *Nations*, from which non-Europeans were not excluded. From this time on, the legitimate international norm was the nation-state, so that in the League even the surviving imperial powers came dressed in national costume rather than imperial uniform. After the

> cataclysm of World War II the nation-state tide reached full flood. (ANDERSON, 2006, p. 113)

The building of nation-states according to liberal policies is generally based on expansion: in order to be economically viable, until 1945 it was believed that a nation-state should be big (cf. HOBSBAWM, 1990). A small nation-state was not considered to be a viable option. Such philosophy justified the expansion and unification/annexation procedures (as indicated in the former section) adopted by governments in the formation of the majority of nation-states, regardless of the fact whether their building was grounded on an ethnic basis or on citizenship choice.

However, for nation-states based on an ethnic diversity, the search for national homogeneity led to some exaggerations. The discourse of unification of the nation and the pursuit for homogeneity (in spite of the heterogeneity of a given population) in order to strengthen the nation legitimized the absorption of cultures considered "inferior" by groups in power in specific nation-states. Therefore, small nations and minorities – deemed as "backward peoples"- would profit from being annexed to bigger nations, for they would gain access to a world of progress. Such was the promise of modernity, to which Troulliot refers as a "North-Atlantic universal". North-Atlantic universals are a set of seductive words, such as progress, democracy, modernity and nation-state that "are always prescriptive inasmuch as they always suggest, even if implicitly, a correct state of affairs: what is good, what is just, what is sublime or desirable – not only what it is, but what should be."(2003, p. 35).

Nevertheless, this situation led to a paradox: smaller nations and minorities wished to be part of bigger nations for economic reasons; however, they also wished to maintain their traditions and cultures in order to affirm their cultural identity. It is interesting to note, though, that this was not a problem for the dominant nation-state: the right to maintain culture and traditions by minorities was granted as long as the authority of the macro nation-state was acknowledged, respected and never defied. As historian Eric Hobsbawm indicates:

> It did not imply any hostility to the languages and culture of such collective victims to the laws of progress (as they would certainly have been called then). On the contrary, where the supremacy of the state-nationality and the state-language were not at issue, the major nation could cherish and foster the dialects and lesser languages within it, the historic and folkloric traditions of the lesser communities it contained, if only as proof of the range of colours on its macro-national palette. Moreover, small nationalities or even nation-states which accepted their integration into the larger nation as something positive – or, if one prefers, which accepted the laws of progress – did not recognize any irreconciliable differences between micro-culture and macro-culture either, or were even reconciled to the loss of what could not be adapted to the modern age. (1992, p. 35)

The macro nation-state aims at controlling minorities and micro nation-states. If such control is not accepted, the "rebels" are persecuted and, in some cases, even exterminated.

The Roma in general have always been considered to be on the wrong side of the track as far as progress is concerned. In an age of modern nation-states, the Romani people since the Industrial Revolution have been deemed as backward due to their way of living and to their jobs as artisans, entertainers, horse traders, blacksmithing and other self-employment occupations suitable for nomads. Said features, namely nomadism and self-employment, could well have been considered as acts of defiance to established governments. Therefore, empires, proto-nations and modern nation states all have attempted to control at any cost the movements of the Roma. It is interesting to note that nomadism is one of the first characteristics promptly remembered when the Romani people are mentioned. Nomadism, in the Roma case, is deeply linked to diaspora, whether it is considered a strategy of survival (a result of the constant persecutions suffered by this people) or as trait later adopted by the Roma themselves as a marker of Romani culture and identity – and the emblem of the "Gypsy problem" as coined by Eastern European authorities.

In a totalizing state, the nomad is a threat because it is independent, whether as a group or as an individual. Nomadism is feared because it can destabilize the state: the nomad is dangerous because it is uncontrollable – a body that cannot be tamed, just like the savage, as discussed in Chapter 1. Besides, the nomad demonstrates that there can be another kind of life outside the panopticon. As pointed out by Deleuze & Guattari:

> History is always written from a sedentary point of view and in the name of a unitary State apparatus, at least a possible one, even when the topic is nomads. [...]. The nomads invented a war machine in opposition to the State appparatus. History has never comprehended nomadism, the book has never comprehended the outside.[…]The State's pretension to be a world order, and to root man. (1988, p. 24)

As a concrete example of the notions discussed in this chapter so far, we would like to highlight some issues related to the Nazi Germany and the Third Reich in relation to the Roma populations. Nazi Germany was chosen due to the fact that it is part of the historical background of the novels under consideration and because it is a clear example of extremist nationalism and extreme treatment given to the stranger.

3.5 The case of Nazi Germany and the Roma

> Obviously for the hierarchically structured Nazi nation-state, the stateless Roma presented a deeper intimidation than a simple social irritant. Essentially, this racist government feared the anarchist spirit of the Romani race. […] In fact, under the blanket of inferior race origin and asocial conduct, the Nazis aimed at destroying the threat of the anarchist traits embodied in the Romani character and lifestyle. (In: GLAJAR; RADULESCU (eds.), 2008, p. 147).

The rise of Nazi Germany can be understood as a direct result of the feelings of resentment, humiliation and shame the German population endured in relation to the aftermath of the I World War. The Treaty of Versailles, signed in 1919, sealed the end of the war and established harsh penalties to the defeated parties. One of the main penalties was that Germany was considered the sole responsible for causing the war and, in order to account for the damages, it was obliged to pay for reparations to certain countries and to make territorial concessions. Some considered that the penalties imposed by the Allies under the terms of the treaty were excessive and they left Germany totally weakened and devastated.

This situation gave way to the desire for a new nation; a rebirth of Germany with a strong nationalist movement. This scenario, allied with the crash of Wall Street and the Great Depression in 1929-1930, which left Germany immersed in poverty and political instability, enabled Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party to rise. In his speeches, the main topics were the restoration of the glorious days for Germany, the non compliance with the Treaty of Versailles, and the hatred of the enemies of Germany, mainly Jews and communists. In 1933/34 Hitler succeeded in smashing German democracy and installed dictatorship and the Third Reich. The state was far more important than the individual and the *Führer*[15] was the unquestionable leader. With the Third Reich power consolidated in Germany, the drive for expanding territory was just a matter of time, and with the invasion of Poland by Germany in 1939 the II World War (1939-1945) was declared.

The case of Nazi Germany was of an over-nationalism which aimed at uniting the nation by destroying the figure of the stranger. The myth used in this case to base the nation was the Aryan myth of purity of the white race. As Herbert Hirsch notes, all states manipulate memory in order to establish themselves, and, as such,

> Nation states in particular use, create or respond to myths about themselves that they wish to perpetuate, and, in turn, the myths are used to justify or rationalize policies that the leadership of the state wishes to pursue. National self-image is enhanced by memory – in particular, memory about how the state responded to a crisis situation. These myths allow the nation to avoid confronting reality and to forget or suppress certain memories. (HIRSCH., 1995, p. 26)

Corroborating such link between myth and the building of the nation in the Germany case, as soon as the Reich was established, a whole system of education was set into motion. The Nazi model of education praised unquestionable obedience to authority and racial hatred, and such principles were repeated exhaustively as they were a fundamental part of the ideology of the Nazi party. As of an early age, boys and girls considered purely Aryan took part in the Nazi institutions of education: "The socialization of children was part of the overall

[15] The "conductor".

totalitarian concept that included controlling all aspects of life – from conception, through childhood, and into adulthood. Institutions were an essential element in maintaining this control" (Ibid, p. 112).

At the same time, the Reich propagated the gradual dehumanization of the stranger – a very important step if the state wants to proceed with the extermination of some populations. If the stranger is not seen as human, it makes it easier to carry out the extermination. Still according to Hirsch, in Nazi Germany Jews were massively portrayed as parasite or vermin, in a process of using language to promote dehumanization: "After all, killing vermin is legitimate and viewed as self-defense, because you are protecting yourself, your family, your people, your nation from contamination" (Ibid, p. 102). Here, the stranger was personified first in the Jewish population and in the non-Aryan peoples – the Roma included – then the mentally and physically disabled and in individuals considered enemies of the Reich, such as communists and homosexuals. Laws and decrees were passed to ensure the purity of the Aryan people in an attempt to homogenize Germany. On July 14, 1934, the German government passed the law for the Prevention of Genetically Diseased Offspring (a.k.a. Sterilization Law) according to which someone considered mentally or physically ill should be sterilized. Another example of a law of this sort was the decree of 1933 that defined a non-Aryan as "anyone descended from non-Aryan, especially Jewish, parents or grandparents. One parent or grandparent classifies the descendant as non-Aryan [...] especially if one parent or grandparent was of the Jewish faith."[16]. There was also the November 24, 1933 law against Habitual and Dangerous Criminals, which "allowed beggars, the homeless, alcoholics and the unemployed to be sent to concentration camps"[17] and the Nuremberg Laws (1935), which established, based on genetic rules, who was and was not a Jew and which also forbade Aryans to marry Jews and non-Aryans in general.

Benedict Anderson points out, though, that such extrapolations may not be considered nationalisms, but rather sheer racisms:

> The fact of the matter is that nationalism thinks in terms of historical destinies, while racism dreams of eternal contaminations, transmitted from the origins of time through an endless sequence of loathsome copulations: outside history. Niggers are, thanks to the invisible tar-brush, forever niggers; Jews, the seed of Abraham, forever Jews, no matter what passports they carry or what languages they speak and read. (Thus for the Nazi, the *Jewish* German was always an impostor.)
> The dreams of racism actually have their origin in ideologies of *class* rather than in those of nation […] racism and anti-semitism manifest themselves, not across national boundaries, but within them. In other words, they justify not so much foreign wars as domestic repression and domination (2006, p. 149-150)

[16] Source: http://www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/holocaust/timeline.html
[17] Source: http://www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/holocaust/timeline.html.

In view of its plan of racial purity, Nazi Germany assimilation of minorities was not an option. The fear of miscegenation leading to contamination, however, is an old concept already found in Hebrew culture, for instance (cf. WHITE, 2001, as previously discussed in the first chapter of this work concerning the origins of the concept of the savage). Also as pointed out by Ian Hancock:

> The notion that "race mixing" was dangerous both genetically and socially became, to an ever-increasing degree, the focus of such studies […] because it was already believed that the product of "race mixing" resulted in the worst traits of both parents emerging in their offspring […]. That non-European blood would contaminate the gene pool of Hitler's envisioned Aryan "master race" was the underlying rationale for the intended extermination of Romanies and Jews during the Holocaust. (In: GLAJAR; RADULESCU (eds.), 2008, p. 183).

This extrapolation of the concept of national homogeneity achieved its peak with the "final solution": the genocide of thousands of people in gas chambers in concentration camps during the II World War. This was the ultimate attempt to exterminate the strangers who were considered menaces to the State. Over six million Jews were killed during the Third Reich. In relation to Roma populations, it is estimated that 250,000 to 500,000 Romanies were killed during II World War. Although it was radically exaggerated in Nazi Germany, it is possible to note that the steps of the State for handling the stranger are very much the same: first the stranger is picked out as "non-definable" and, as such, impossible to be ignored; then it is attempted to exclude him from society, for example in a ghetto; if this step is not enough, then the stranger should be eradicated:

> To cope with the stranger the state may attempt various strategies to remove his anomalous nature, the most extreme being genocide, in which the state attempts to physically cut out the aberrant or strange parts of society. Different forms of ghettoization, restricting either within a physical location or a limited sphere of communication, may also be employed. All of these can be found within the history of the Gypsy diaspora […] (BHOPAL; MYERS, 2008, p. 179-180)

As for the Roma, it is interesting to notice that the seeds of the specific persecution by the Nazis can be found earlier in 1905 in Bavaria. A census conducted there with all Roma, both sedentary and nomadic, led to a report in which they were labeled as a scourge: the "gypsy scourge", which should be kept under close surveillance in order to grant protection to Bavarian citizens (cf. LIÉGEOIS, 2008). In 1908, German deputy Karl Iro believed that the main problem would be how to identify a gypsy, and one of the solutions suggested to address this problem was to tattoo a number on the person's forearm, a measure extremely similar to that which would be later found in concentration camps in order to identify the prisoners.

Besides the fear of miscegenation, one may affirm that the Roma resistance to fully engage to the system of nation-states and pledge allegiance to governments were reasons for their attempted annihilation. As Ferda Asya points out, for refusing to yield to the nation-state

system "their [Roma's] free spirit and independent lifestyle were deemed a threat to society. Consequently, their existence was considered unnacceptable" (In: GLAJAR; RADULESCU (eds.), 2008, p. 148). According to Jean-Pierre Liégeois, in Germany, during the Third Reich:

> Gypsies were initially confined to their place of residence; then in 1939 and 1940 they began to be deported to Poland. Their plight worsened from 1941 onwards as they were liable to be murdered in those parts of Eastern Europe occupied by German troops. In 1942 and 1943, Gypsies and "cross-breeds" were arrested and interned, notably in the camps at Auschwitz-Birkenau, Dachau and Buchenwald, among others. The huge round-ups that took place in many countries affected all Gypsies: only a few nomadic families had a chance of slipping through the net. As in the great Gypsy round-up in Spain in 1749 and similar incidents in Gypsy history, those who had tried to 'integrate' by settling or had been forced to do so, were the first victims because they had addresses and were accessible.
> Virtually all those interned were exterminated: there was scarcely a Gypsy family in Central Europe that was not wholly or partly destroyed (2008, p. 115)

Undoubtedly intolerance has been the common scenario for the Roma, a situation which achieved its top in the 20th century. The stereotypes of the Gypsy as backward, dirty or wild were applied to the Roma, justifying the persecution of the stranger they represented: "Gypsies are marked as 'dirty' and their culture is blackened to conform to the stereotyping of the white gaze" (BHOPAL; MYERS, 2008, p. 97). And nationalist movements, mainly in East Europe, turned out to be extremely intransigent, paving the way to radical actions, such as ethnic cleansing. According to Stuart Woolf, after the II World War:

> The spiral of ethnic hatred was irrepressible, as the newly-dominant nations applied the same uniformizing policies towards their minorities against which they had earlier protested so vocally. Nationalism which, before the war, had often extended its social base by its incorporation of social demands (in Poland, Finland, Georgia, the Jewish Bund) became authoritarian and virulently patriotic, easily associated with fascism as, a century before, it had been associated with liberalism. (1996, p. 25).

3.6 A Nation without a State?

> By adapting its response to changing conditions rather than adapting its culture, the identity of individuals, families and communities gains a degree of security. The conditions are produced in which Gypsy culture can be reproduced and can survive within a fairly hostile environment. (BHOPAL; MYERS, 2008, p. 85).

The *Romanipen*[18] indeed constitutes a very resilient culture. However, it is worth noting that throughout its history there has been no real concentrated effort on the part of the Roma to build their own nation state, nor to claim a specific homeland or territory. It is a fact that there has been no unique leadership up to the present capable of bringing together the different groups of Roma in this sense; there are no specific political leaders who are entitled to speak on behalf of an entire population.

[18] Romani way of life.

Nevertheless, in the last decades some Roma organizations and NGO's have arisen and World Romani Congresses have taken place. Romani grammar books and dictionaries have been written in an attempt to standardize the language. In 1971, the International Roma Union (IRU) established Roma's anthem and flag (see Annex D), possibly aiming at starting to build a Roma nation. However, said initiatives promoted by Roma activists and scholars are still incipient and have not yet achieved the majority of the Roma population.

Such awareness, though, plays a major role in fighting prejudice and granting recognition to Romanies. Actually, prejudice against the Roma is not only tolerated but also more acceptable than that suffered by other minorities. Ian Hancock in his book *The Pariah Syndrome* lists in the appendix several instances of prejudice found in books, films, children's books, newspapers and others against the Roma. In his words "Gypsies remain the only American ethnic minority against whom laws still operate, and who are specifically named in those laws" (1985, p. 125), and:

> Lacking access to lawyers, and other establishment means of seeking redress, Gypsies have not, until recently, been able even to take the first step towards challenging media misrepresentation. A situation exists today in which those who write for the popular press feel quite at liberty to say the most outrageous things about Gypsies, while they would be aghast if they were ever expected to put their names to the same kind of article about, say, Italians or Jews or Afro-Americans.(Ibid, p. 142)

Some scholars, such as Slawomir Kapralski, suggest that this historical persecution could well be a departing point for the creation of a modern Romani national identity, as it is a "tradition to which all Romanies alike were exposed and which corresponds with the Roma versus *gadze* opposition around which ethnic identity has been established, thus making it acceptable for all Romanies […]" (In: SAUL; TEBBUTT (eds.), 2005, p. 210), and which bears a huge emotional appeal. As such, the Holocaust would be its milestone, dividing Romani history into "before" and "after". It is interesting to note that the Holocaust does not constitute a "clear history" for the Roma: Romani survivors were mostly illiterate; the ones who were literate were reluctant to remember and testify the atrocities experienced during II World War. However, these gaps in history could give way to the narration of a nation – a Romani nation - as Benedict Anderson points out in relation to this process of forgetting and remembering: "All profound changes in consciousness, by their very nature, bring with them characteristic amnesias. Out of such oblivions, in specific historical circumstances, spring narratives" (2006, p. 204). Of course the creation of a tradition is not an easy task to perform; however, it could be a start for the construction of the *Romanestan*[19]. According to Kapralski

[19] Roma state, a national homeland.

“The narrative of the Holocaust bears huge potential to serve as a cornerstone for Romani national identity” (In: SAUL; TEBBUTT (eds.), 2005, p. 211).

On the other hand, there is also a great deal of criticism as far as Roma nationalism is concerned. The major critic is that this incipient movement and its organizations are top-down representations with no real political power, nor legitimacy and that they do not take into consideration that “the Roma” is a mere replacement of the word “Gypsy” and it is a term that in fact hides “diverse communities with different political needs, aspirations, capabilities and interests, living in a wide variety of economic, political, social and cultural environments” (KOVATS, M., 2003, p. 5) Besides, the desire for a given homeland would be a highly appreciated solution to governments that do not know how to deal with the Roma population, as they would be relieved from the problem. As Kovats indicates “Roma nationalism not only asserts the legitimacy of the ethnic policy, but provides the basis for the ideological, political and institutional dislocation of ‘Roma’ minorities from ‘majority’ nations, thus freeing their governments from a costly and unproductive section of their current citizenry” (Ibid, p. 6). In any case, even within the Roma elite, activists and NGO’s there is no consensus as to how a Roma state should be conceived: whether as an unified single nation or whether it should be an open structure, as an “alliance of different communities bound together by common problems, caused by the attitudes of surrounding populations” (MARUSHIAKOVA, E.; POPOV, V., 2005, p. 19). Or even if the Roma should really be considered as a nation without a state or if their state is actually the home countries which they live in.

Therefore, in view of these lines of thought, we believe that a Roma nation established in a specific territory, in an independent state is something difficult to happen. However, the political awareness of the Roma is achievable and should be implemented as soon as possible within the home countries in order to grant participation and political accountability, while, of course, maintaining Romani traditions and culture; however, such project demands a great deal of articulation, effort and desire of the populations involved.

4 THE NOVELS

4.1 *The Eighth Sin* (1978)

4.1.1 Brief considerations on Stefan Kanfer and *The Eighth Sin*.

> I remember. I recall everything. My memory, my curse. (KANFER, 1978, p. 158)

Stefan Kanfer is a North American writer, journalist and screenwriter of Rumanian descent. A prolific author, Kanfer was a writer and editor at *Time* for more that twenty years and has written several books to this day, dealing with the most different subjects, ranging from the witchhunt years in America (*A Journal of the Plague Years*, 1973), Yiddish theater (*Stardust lost: The Triumph, Tragedy, and Meshugas of the Yiddish Theater in America*, 2007) to biographies of Hollywood artists (*Somebody: The Reckless life and Remarkable Career of Marlon Brando*, 2009; *Ball of Fire: The Tumultuous Life and Comic Art of Lucille Ball*, 2005). Besides, he has served in Intelligence in the U.S. Army and has long been involved with the investigation and rehabilitation of Nazi victims.

The Eighth Sin, his second novel, is important because it is considered to be the first fictional novel written in English which deals with the *Porrajmos* issue [20], calling attention to the fact that the Roma were also victims of the Holocaust. The novel was rather successful at the time (it became a Book-of-the-month Club selection) and initiated a discussion in America on the forgotten victims of the II World War. With this book, and due to his involvement with the Nazi victims, Kanfer was appointed to the President's Commision on the Holocaust[21].

The novel covers the story of Benoit Kaufman, a Roma boy from Bucharest who lost his parents and almost entire family during II World War in concentration camps. Benoit is a survivor of the Holocaust and is rescued by the British army from a Nazi camp. Later he is adopted by a Jewish English couple and lives in London until his new family decides to start anew in New York. Benoit becomes an urban angry young man, trying to find his place in the world and to come to terms with his past. After having experienced the seven deadly sins during his life as a successful painter – avarice, pride, envy, gluttony, sloth, lust and, most of all, wrath -, Benoit discovers that there is an eighth sin and it is indeed the most terrible of them: the sin of forgetting. Forgetting his past also meant forgetting his family, his heritage

[20] According to Valentina Glajar, the first fictional account of the *Porrajmos* was Menyhért Lakatos's *Füstos Képek* (*Smoky Pictures*), a Hungarian novel of 1975.

[21] On November 1st, 1978, U.S. President Carter established the President's Commission on the Holocaust and charged it with the responsibility of deciding what might constitute and appropriate national memorial to all who had perished in the Holocaust.

and above all, his history, something Benoit is not allowed to do, once he feels he must avenge the death of his beloved ones by killing the Roma collaborator with the Germans in the concentration camp: Eleazar Jassy, killer of his own people and Benoit's own brother.

There are three levels of the narrative in the novel: the narrative of Benoit's life, written by himself as an autobiography to his adopted son, Daniel; the inner narrative that comes to his mind in flashes, written in italics, through which Benoit remembers events and conversations which had taken place in the concentration camp; and the real survivors' testimonials of life and atrocities perpetrated by the Nazi against the Roma during the war (identified as "items"), marked by smaller font.

By the end of the novel, when his revenge is finally completed, Benoit goes back to Europe to live as a wanderer on the streets of Paris. As he writes down: "I wander now, a solitary, pointed out by nannies as a madman, the last of the caravan. […] Americans, they knew how to adjust, accommodate. I never did, I never could" (KANFER, 1978, p. 285).

4.1.2 Fiction in dialog with history in *The Eighth Sin*

History and literature are fields of knowledge that one may say that have sprung together since the invention of writing. In Ancient Greece and Rome both were considered as rhethorical arts and have been so until the 19th century. If originally literature and history were seen as allies, the only difference between them being history dealt with real events while literature covered possible events (whether real or imagined ones). In the 19th century, with the rise of the scientific discourse, history and literature were separated and seen almost as enemies: history was transformed into an equivalent of truth, of "what really happened in the past" and its discourse aimed to be objective, unbiased, solely based on facts and documentation in an attempt to be as impartial as science. Literature, on the other hand, was the field of fiction, which would be the opposite of truth.

However, during the seventies, with the work of Hayden White (for instance with *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* of 1973 and *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* of 1978) and other scholars, the chasm between literature and history was questioned. White made clear that such separation was absolutely artificial. The historical discourse is an interpretation of past events, records and documentation conveyed by means of narration. And the techniques of narration and its linguistic resources are the same in history and in literature. Therefore, history will never

achieve the impartial scientific discourse it aspires to, once it is based on interpretation and the use of language – highly subjective acts. In this sense, Paul Veyne states that:

> Like the novel, history shorts, simplifies, organizes, fits a century into a page. This synthesis of the account is not less spontaneous than that of our memory when we call to mind the last ten years through which we have lived. […] In essence, history is knowledge through documents. Thus, historical narration goes beyond all documents, since none of them can be the event; it is not a documentary photomontage, and does not show the past "live, as if you were there." […] it is *diegesis* and not *mimesis*. (1998, p. 4-5)

Scholars such as White and Veyne have pointed out that history is not and will never be science. History is a narrative employed to weave together the gaps found when one looks to the past and tries to analyse it. In this sense, history and storytelling are very much alike, once they depend on memory, which is itself flawed, to render a subjective narrative. Karlheinz Stierle indicates that "Just as the memory has to transform the matters that come to it in a memorable form, so too, must storytelling transform the matter into a form that makes the matter narratable" (In: KORHONEN (ed.), 2006, p.74). This process of "filling in the gaps" is what Veyne calls retrodiction "[…] the historian has direct access to only a tiny proportion of the concrete, the one given him by documents at his disposal; for all the rest, he has to fill in the gaps. […] Historical synthesis is nothing but this operation of filing in; we shall call it 'retrodiction'" (1998, p. 144).

History and literature complete each other in the retrieval of the past, either by casting new lights on known past events or by giving voice to the ones on the margins of official history. As Hayden White remarks:

> It has to be said, however, that, in general, literature – in the modern period – has regarded history not so much as its other as, rather, its complement in the work of identifying and mapping a shared object of interest, a real world which presents itself to reflection under so many different aspects that all of the resources of language – rhetorical, poetical, and symbolic – must be utilized to do it justice. (In: KORHONEN (ed.), 2006, p. 25)

The Eighth Sin is a novel which, in our understanding, aims at blurring this boundary between literature and history. Kanfer's idea was to make public the often forgotten history of the *Porrajmos*. However, in order to back up his story, he inserts testimonials in the novel which are called "items". These pieces of information are true accounts of survivors and of Nazi commanders and soldiers extracted from real books, reports and trials, the sources duly indicated, such as *Ravensbruck* (1973) or *The Theory of Practice of Hell* (1950). There are thirty-eight of these items in the novel, and they often appear when Benoit remembers a traumatic experience in the concentration camp. In this blending of documents and fiction, one supporting the other, the history of the *Porrajmos* is reconstructed. In order to render those experiences as real to the readers – and some of the atrocities described by Benoit are

indeed hard to believe – Kanfer uses these items in order to demonstrate that the real devastation promoted during the Holocaust/*Porrajmos* was even worse than those described in fiction. Valentina Glajar points out that *The Eighth Sin* is a docu-novel, or documentary fiction:

> Kanfer's novel can be considered docu-fiction in that it documents the Holocaust story of the fictional character Benoit, and focuses on the memories of this character and his post-Auschwitz life, written from the perspective of the 1970's. […] Kanfer's narrator backs up the fictional story with excerpts from authentic documents. He intersperses these "items", which entail factual accounts that refer specifically to the treatment of Romanies in the concentration camps and their lack of recognition after the end of World War II. These factual "items" provide links to actual events, and while they validate Benoit's story they also anchor the narrative to the history of the Romani Holocaust. (GLAJAR; RADULESCU (eds.), 2008, p. 130-131).

For instance, when Benoit recalls when he was forced to pull a rope to hang a Roma man by a Nazi commander – and Benoit was only a child – the item related to this memory is inserted into the narrative in the following way:

> Dangling black puppet twisted against the white clouds. Gypsy like me. Death, we are only your orderlies […]
> **Item:** First the [Gypsy] girl was forced to dig a ditch, while her mother, seven months pregnant, was left tied to a tree. With a knife they opened the belly of the mother, took out the baby and threw it in the ditch. Then they threw in the mother and the girl, after raping her. They covered them with earth while they were still alive. – R. Bubenicková, *Tabory utrepní a smrti* (Prague: Svoboda, 1969) (KANFER, 1978, p. 72-73)

Or when later in his life Benoit's wife, Inger, suffers her first miscarriage, the following item is shown:

> **Item:** Professor Clauberg sterilized between 120 and 140 Gypsy girls who had been brought to the camp from Auschwitz. This was probably done by an injection into the uterus. The mothers of the girls signed forms of consent after being promised release. Several died and the survivors were not freed but transported to another camp. One twelve-year-old girl operated upon did not even have her abdominal wound sewn up after surgery. She died after several days of agony. – E. Buchmann, *Die Frauen von Ravensbrück* (Berlin: Kongress, 1959) (IBID, p. 216).

One may consider that Benoit is highly aware of the sources which document the history of the *Porrajmos*: he uses such documents in order to reconstruct his memories so as to recover his past. Benoit even indicates that when he bursts out to himself "Item item item item. Item, for Christ's sake, item! Death, atrocity, what difference can it possibly make now? You in the back. Yes you. Behind the mind. Stop whispering. Close the books, shut the doors, bar the memory before it bars you" (IBID, p. 150). However, it is not totally clear whether Benoit is aware of the items in the narrative or if all of these items are only known by the reader.

Besides backing up the narrative, such items shock the reader. This may be one of Kanfer's goals: after all, by shocking the reader with factual accounts of witnesses, the message against forgetting could be better "engraved" into people's minds. Moreover, the use

of such testimonials also adds a human component, a "face", with which the readers may identify. Herbert Hirsch notes that "People are moved not by definitions and sociological accounts, although these are valuable, but by writings of survivors and witnesses. Scientific method and rigorous analysis may be able to count bodies, but they cannot communicate experience, cannot establish in one human being an identification with another" (1995, p.79).

Nevertheless, some scholars and researchers on the subject of the Holocaust believe that such experience is impossible to translate into words. According to Hannah Arendt in *Part Three of the Origins of Totalitarianism*, for instance, the horror of the life in a concentration camp is so overwhelming that it often cannot be conveyed to outsiders; people who have not experienced that amount of pain question the veracity of such testimonials given their absurdity; it is as if the survivor had comfounded nightmares with reality; the victim is isolated and its experience cannot be expressed fully:

> There are no parallels to the life in the concentration camps. Its horror can never be fully embraced by imagination for the very reason that it stands outside of life and death. It can never be fully reported for the very reason that the survivor returns to the world of the living, which makes it impossible for him to believe fully in his own past experiences. It is as though he had a story to tell of another planet, for the status of the inmates in the world of the living, where nobody is supposed to know if they are alive or dead, is such that it is as though they had never been born. (1976, p. 142)

If witnesses and survivors have difficulties in narrating their experience, specially in writing, how could fiction deal with the Holocaust/*Porrajmos*? In the case of *The Eighth Sin,* Stefan Kanfer chose to employ real survivors's accounts together with the fictional narrative – the docu-novel format. However, it is interesting to see that they are clearly separated, as if the total fusion between fact and fiction could/would not be possible back at 1978. In this sense, David Schwarz in *Imagining the Holocaust* (1999) notes that the ficctionalization of the Holocaust gradually changes as time passes: in a first moment it is mainly composed of first person narratives; then it involves realistic fictions; finally, as one moves further away from the event, such narratives emcompass fantasy, parables and myths.

This impossibility of understanding what survivors had gone through in the camps and during the war is part of Benoit's life. For other people, survivors of concentration camps are often considered mad. A police officer in New York, for example, told Benoit "There are a lot of crazy people came out of those concentration camps. […] I apprehended a woman the other day with a number on her arm. Walking down Lexington and setting fire to every garbage can. Said Hitler was garbage, so garbage was Hitler. So she was burning Hitler." (KANFER, 1978, p. 165). Benoit frequently feels inadequate in his surrondings, as if apart from the rest of the humankind. He thinks of himself: "I would always be in the trajectory of somenone else's fury. The loony bin is where I belonged, the nut house" (IBID, p. 162). The

impossibility of conveying his experience was so great that Benoit spent three months mute after being released from the concentration camp.

Benoit's experience thus reflects experiences survivors had during and after the end of the war. The orphans found in camps were often adopted by British and North American families, as Benoit was. Benoit's real family, however, perished: The *kumpania* he belonged to as a child was destroyed, his parents murdered, his family of seven members dispersed; he saw his sister Anna being repeatedly abused by SS officers. His childhood, as Benoit remembers, was a swamp. By the description he gives, we understand that Benoit and his family were taken to Auschwitz: there is the sign at the entrance of the camp *Arbeit macht frei*[22] (KANFER, 1978, p. 113). Moreover, it is known that in concentration camps the inmates were identified by a system of colored triangles made of fabric and sewn on the prisioners' uniforms. Each color represented the "reason" why the person was there. For example, homosexuals wore a pink inverted triangle; criminals, a green inverted triangle; red inverted triangle for political prisioners, and so on (see Annex C). In the novel, this badge system is also described: prisioners were marked according to their "category": "*Your attention. Criminals will wear a green triangle; Jehovah's Witnesses purple; shiftless elements such as Gypsies, black. Feeble-minded will wear an armband with the word Blöde*[23]." (IBID, p. 116). In his poignant description of the camp we see what he had to endure as a child:

> But I looked down at the cracks in the floor and saw flames. A forge of hair and gold rings. The plain, stained garments of the dead. Straps against the soul. Spikes and wires […]. Oh the chimneys! Children who never saw butterflies. Or flowers. Or the primary colors of belief. My mouth dry and white against my sandpaper tongue. […] Uniforms and boots bringing severance; motive hunters: What is the reason for this boy? Send him to the punishment block. No, don't send the boy! He means no harm. The scrapes of pain. […] This senile child begs bread. (IBID, p. 46-47)

Throughout the novel we see that Benoit is aware of and overwhelmed by history. For him, Holocaust is "A nothing category; a eunuch of a word. A Jewish term, anyway. To them it has significance. To the rest of this numb world it means fire. To the Gypsies, even less" (IBID, p. 4). The Roma are not recognized as part of this history; at the same time, they do not recognize themselves in the official history written not only by the winners of the war but also by its most emphazised victims, the Jews. However, the Roma were there and Benoit knows that: "Maybe history was the nightmare from which we were trying to waken, but for me nightmares were the history from which *I* was trying to awaken. And I could not seem to do it" (IBID, p. 112). Only in this sense it is possible to say that the Roma have no history. In

[22] "Work brings freedom".
[23] "Stupid".

Benoit's analysis, history (or the lack of it) is what makes Roma's and Jews's fates so opposite:

> […] the "Holocaust". Yet the people survive, a nation rises from the flames and bones and screams, even if the rest of the world would prefer it dead, the salt run in its soil, its citizens gone, vanished, assimilated, made over in somebody else's image, preferably somewhere else – Madagascar, maybe. If we are moved by that history, what are we to say to a people totally annihilated or scattered, with no testament or psalms to calibrate the deep well of the past, no compensatory country, no telethons, no bond rallies, no touring orchestras, no Einstein, no Bernstein, no Jessel, no Anti-Defamation League, no suburban pledges, no stand-up comics, no mysterious alphabet, no Moses, no Joshua, no prophets except the ones in the store windows who tell fortunes for a dollar. A people whose number was up in this century when the cities seized the land around them and forbade the caravan, when wanderers without jobs were locked outside the social contract. People who did not even have the privilege of starving when there were Germans and their friends to hasten history on its way. (IBID, p. 284)

This brings us to the discussion regarding victims, perpetrators and winners of the war, a theme often present in history books. In *The Eighth Sin* the guilty ones were mainly Germans. However, Benoit knows that things are not so black and white. In the camp, for instance, his own brother, Eleazar, became a *kapo*, that is, a prisioner obliged to cooperate with the Nazi in exchange for having a possibility of having his life spared. Arendt explains the role of a *kapo* in the camps:

> The SS implicated concentration-camp inmates – criminals, politicals, Jews – in their crimes by making them responsible for a large part of the administration, thus confronting them with the hopeless dilemma whether to send their friends to death, or to help murder other men who happened to be strangers, and forcing them, in any event, to behave like murderers. The point is not only that hatred is diverted from those who are guilty (the *capôs* were more hated than the SS), but that the distinguishing line between persecutor and persecuted, between the murderer and his victim, is constantly blurred. (1976, p. 150-151)

Eleazar was a *kapo* and was actively involved in the killing of several prisioners in the camp. In that atmosphere, he embraced the madness around him and fulfilled his role to the Nazi's content. As Benoit indicates, Eleazar "[…] killed Gypsies like me. Younger even. He hanged them, shot them. He liked to hurt. […] He was a Gypsy himself." (KANFER, 1978, p. 121). Eleazar was determined to live at any cost, as Benoit remembers the following dialog back in the camp:

> - *But these are our own people!*
> - *Our own people? You think they wouldn't do the same to you if they could? There are no more people. Only prisioners.*
> - *We can't let them be butchered, Eleazar.*
> - *We can't prevent it.* […]
> - *We have to try something*
> - *We have to cooperate. Tell them where to find the Andis family. The Tzawous.*
> - *No!*
> - *They will find sooner or later. This way we get the credit. We live.*
> - *And they die.*
> - *And we live.* (IBID, p. 236)

Likewise, not all Germans were bad. During a stay at Germany due to a mission for the U.S. Army (he was drafted to serve in the Korean War), Benoit became acquainted with Germans – a younger generation – who were not Nazis and did not support them, and was introduced to some German authors who kept diaries during the war and who were not in line with the Nazi conduct: Friedrich Percyval Reck-Malleczewen (1884-1945) (*The Diary of a Man in Dispair*, written between 1936-1944, published in English in 1970) and Theodor Haecker (1879-1945) (*Journal in the Night*, written between 1939-1945, and recently republished in English in 2007), both diarists and both killed by Nazis. It is interesting to note that within his novel, Kanfer offers the reader several suggestions of readings in relation to the Holocaust theme.

In search for reparation the victims of the Holocaust often had two paths to follow: one of the common systems of justice – the Nuremberg trials[24] cited in the novel are an example of this – and the other was to take justice into one's own hands, and to this end there were several "Nazi hunters"[25], people who devoted their lives to chase down former Nazi commanders and soldiers in order either to bring them to court or to eliminate them in a matter of personal vengeance. In the novel, Benoit does not believe in the former method. According to him, "the Nuremberg trials had punished no one I had heard of. The common citizens who tortured us were free." (IBID, p. 29). In relation to this issue of punishment of the Nazi, Isabel Fonseca points out that:

> In war-crimes trials, Nazis attempted to justify – or differentiate – the killing of Gypsies by stating that they had been punished as criminals, not as Gypsies *per se*. And they succeeded: although sufficient documents were available immediately after the war, the mass murder of Roma and Sinti was not addressed at the Nuremberg trials, and no Gypsy witnesses were called. To this day, just one Nazi, Ernst-August Konig, has received a sentence specifically for crimes against Gypsies. (1995, p.268)

On the other hand, even though he was at first reluctant to do so, Benoit uses the services of a Nazi hunter, former nun Eleanor Clair, in order to locate his brother and to do justice at last. Eleanor Clair and her sister Jacqueline were ex-nuns who were prisioners in camps as well and who make a living at selling information and dossiers related to Nazis. Their mission is "The finding of people, the uniting of families. The punishment of the guilty" (IBID, p. 152). As Eleanor points out, her work is of a major importance, because:

[24] The Nuremberg trials were a series of military tribunals assembled by the Allies in order to prosecute political and military leaders of Nazi Germany between 1945-1946 in Nuremberg, Germany. The penalties varied from 10 years of imprisionment to death. However, many former Nazi leaders managed to flee and live anonymously in several countries of South America, including Brazil.

[25] During the 60's/70's, the Nazi hunters managed to track down and bring to court war criminals such as Adolf Eichmann (a key figure for the implementation of the "final solution"), Klaus Barbie (known as "the butcher of Lyon") and many others. Such activity declined by the end of the 20th century, once the hunters (who were in their majority former inmates of concentration camps) either reached an old age or died. Some of the most famous Nazi hunters include Simon Wiesenthal, Tuviah Friedman, Yaron Svoray, Beate Klarsfeld and Efraim Zuroff.

> Governments are not interested in truth. Governments are interested in governments. We give information to Israel, to Poland, even to the Soviet Union and the United States when it suits us. But when the information gets too embarrassing – if the Nazi is still in office, if the ex-Kapo is highly placed, if the data is too embarrassing – it often disappears. We prefer when possible to deal with private clients. Or government agencies willing to make a contribution. (IBID, p. 152)

With the information provided by the Clair sisters, Benoit managed to track down the whereabouts of Eleazar – who was living a comfortable life in the Caribbean as the owner of an air freight company: Eleazar Jassy had darkened his skin with melanin, enhanced his lips with tattoo and curled his hair so as to pass as a black man. Finally, with the help of the Clair sisters, Benoit can take justice into his own hands by killing Eleazar, his brother.

If the boundary between assassins and victims is fluid – assassins can be Roma, innocents may be Germans, victims become murderers, ex-nuns sell information on both victims and culpable – how is it possible to write a single History? How is it possible to achieve justice? According to Eleazar, the Nazi won:

> The Germans won the war. You hear? *The Germans won the war*. The men who operated the gas chambers, the guards who commanded us, who made us kill, they're all walking around, old men or middle-aged, safe, warm, forgetful, happy. The doctors who worked the X-ray machines still practice. The bureaucrats still function. Every now and then they arrest someone. Applause. Meantime Dr. Mengele, who stole the eyes of the Gypsy corpses, is loose. […]
> Who lost the war, then? […]
> You did. […] The dead too. They lost. And the torn, the wounded. The powerless. (IBID, p. 283)

The novel ends in a disillusioned note. Even though the Germans did not win the war (officially the Allies did), the general feeling of impunity led many people to believe that the war ended without a proper closure, with the punishment of the guilty. In *The Eighth Sin*, Kanfer was able to capture this sad feeling that was raised with the movements of re-writing of history, and specifically with the re-writing of the II World War history during the seventies. With regards to this relation between history and literature Valentina Glajar states that:

> The ambivalent relationship between history and literature in the case of the Holocaust docu-fiction does not allow readers to ignore the facts, while at the same time reminding them the story is fictional, although probable. Kanfer makes a sincere effort to present a story of a Romani Holocaust survivor, though a fictional one, and his novel remains one, of only a few, that calls attention to *Porrajmos* and exposes the indifference of Germany toward Romani survivors for decades after World War II. (GLAJAR; RADULESCU (eds.), 2008, p. 131-132)

4.1.3 Romani Identity

In *The Eighth Sin*, Stefan Kanfer built Benoit Kaufman as a Roma character different from the stereotyped gypsy image commonly found in media in general and in literature in particular. To this end, it is possible to see that some of the Romani traits employed in the novel were extracted from books and documents, such as Clebért's *The Gypsies*. Valentina Glajar notes that Benoit might as well be an "imaginary Gypsy", once his earlier Roma life is mostly forgotten and he has not come into contact with any Roma person during the course of his life:

> Benoit's constructed "Gypsy"identity has its flaws and, at times, is historically inaccurate. Benoit, despite having a French name, is supposed to be a Romani boy from Bucharest. His grandfather is French, and Benoit remembers stories he used to recount in French. Benoit's last name is Jassy, which is the German name of a city in the northeast of Romania. The novel never elucidates how Benoit and his family end up in a Nazi concentration camp, since a large segment of the Romanian Roma, including ones from Bucharest, were deported to the river Bug in Transnistria during Antoniescu's regime. Historians estimate that 25,000 to 36,000 Romanian Roma were deported to Transnistria, where thousands died as a result of starvation, typhus, or execution (Ioanid 225-37). Benoit and his family, however, share the fate of Romanies from German-occupied parts of Europe who were deported to Auschwitz and, namely, to the "Gypsy camp" in Birkenau. (GLAJAR; RADULESCU (eds.), 2008, p. 132)

The first question of identity found in the novel is related to Benoit's name. Benoit makes a point at stressing that his name is "Benoit", not Ben, Benny, Benjamin or anything else teachers, doctors and directors insist in calling him after he was released from the camp. His name is the only "concrete" aspect that remained of his former life and of his Roma family and identity, things he was not willing to trade in order to be assimilated. On being adopted by an English Jewish couple, his last name becomes Kaufman. However, he never forgets his original last name, Jassy – but this last piece of information will only be available to the reader at the end of the novel.

Benoit has a few "flashes" of his childhood prior to the concentration camp. His Roma identity is linked to his past and to some of the "items" inserted in the narrative when related to the Roma. Benoit's foster parents knew nothing about Romani culture and Benoit himself remembers little about this part of his life: it is as if he is also looking for the lost "Romaniness" inside him, as he remembers his caravan times and his sister Anna, who was severely abused and murdered in the concentration camp:

> There is a connection I cannot make between contempt and sex. Women are virgins or cunts. But what women can they know besides the ones in the caravan? And there is no promiscuity in the caravan. How can there be? Even a dancer is protected by her musicians. Flirtation implies betrothal. Violation is punished by banishment. My father remembered a woman screaming when they cut part of her ear off for sleeping with a man not her husband. Was the caravan a lie? Am I dreaming now, looking out the window at my sister's shadow moving in the fan of light? (KANFER, 1978, p. 109)

When later in his life Benoit meets Inger, his future wife, he instantly falls in love with her. Inger is a singer, musician and a maniac depressive, a condition that would later destroy their marriage. Inger is important because she is the first person to whom Benoit opens up his childhood remembrances. Not even his step parents, Max and Risa, would be allowed into his Romani childhood world. When he hears Inger sing for the first time: "Not a bad voice; I imagined it as a gold thread, an extension of her hair. She suggested the metal rings on the sides of immemorial caravans; the earrings of the girls, the necklaces worked by my uncle, the ornaments and sequins on the dresses of my aunts" (IBID, p. 196). The difference is that before Inger, the remembrances of his Roma heritage were mainly painful ones, linked to the camps, that would come to him in flashes. With Inger, Benoit willingly recalls happier times; she makes him feel at ease. He even remembers some Romani tales to tell her:

> It took a while before I was willing to speak of my origins […]. But I told Inger more than I had told anyone else about the early days in Rumania. They were not unhappy at all […] Why had I never told the story of the Gypsy Adam and Eve, for instance, who before sinning gave off their own light? After the Fall they lost their luminosity and two bright bodies were created, the sun and the moon. […]
> I recalled a story often told on the caravan. A young Gypsy presented himself at court and asked for the hand of the king's daughter. This so outraged the king that he threw me (I always assumed the heroic role in this tale) in jail. There I languished until the appearance of Mautya, Queen of the Fairies, protector of the poor and disinherited. Mautya showed me a box and a long stick. "Pull out some of my hairs", she said, "and stretch them on the box. Now pull out more and stretch them on the stick." This is how I made the first violin and bow. I begged the jailer for one more audience with His Imperial Majesty. My new music made the guard wonder, and he brought me before the king, who wept – a thing he had never done before. So I obtained the hand of the girl, dwelt in a castle, and composed all Gypsy airs. The people in the story are gone, but the violin and his children still live, and still make people cry as if they were kings. (IBID, p. 211)

Inger awakens in him the Romani life long forgotten – and somewhat imagined – and a part of Benoit's life which was truly happy – happiness which he felt guilty and ashamed to recall after his experience in the camp, and which was truly impossible for him to find in anything new after the war. Benoit's Romani heritage was in fact stolen from him during his childhood. He longs for this background and tries to reconstruct it in his memory using the few elements left in his mind of his early life.

Besides these tales, the novel also features some songs and proverbs in Romani (with translation into English). His Roma heritage is also portrayed in the novel when Benoit recalls some of the songs he heard in the caravan and in the camp with his family. For example, when Benoit is playing a balalaika for fun, he remembers:

> *Na janav ko dad m'ro has,*
> *Niko mallen mange has;*
> *Miro gule dai merdyas,*
> *Pirani man pregelyas;*
> *Uva tu, oh hegedive*

Tut sal minding pash man.

I no longer know my father,
And I lack friends;
My mother is long dead,
And my loved one departed angry;
I play a song on my violin,
To silence hunger and grief. (IBID, p. 186)

Or when the camp memories assault him:

Andr oda taboris,
Ay, phares buti keren,
Mak mariben chuden…

In that camp
O they work hard,
They work hard and they get beaten (IBID, p. 21)

These are traditional songs. The first one is a Transylvanian Roma song that was originally collected by Charles G. Leeland in the book *The Gypsies* in 1882. The second is a Czech Roma song collected first by Jerzy Ficowski in 1964 and which appeared more recently in the book *Gypsies under Swastika* by Donald Kenrick and Grattan Puxon of 2008. Romani, the language, therefore, comes to Benoit only in songs and proverbs. However, it is not part of his present life; it lives only in his memory. Other sources of Roma heritage in the novel are related to some traditions, and we have selected three of them: the *mulo*, Melalo the demon and the *patrin*. Besides his biological parents, Benoit has two brothers and one sister: Eleazar, Emil and Anna. Eleazar, as already mentioned, becomes a *kapo* in the concentration camp, and Emil, noticing the evil inclination of their brother, tries to warn Benoit, the youngest sibling, about Eleazar:

- *Benoit, I thought you had escaped. They told me you had.*
- *No, they caught us ten kilometers from Bucharest.*
- *All of you?*
- *I don't know. Eleazar is the only one with me now in E Block.*
- *Stay away from him, Benoit.*
- *He said he would protect me.*
- *Eleazar is Mulo, a walking curse – death's double.*
- *He says he can help all Romanies.*
- *Listen to me, Benoit. He has a bad character.* (IBID, p. 163)

Mulo is the soul of the dead who comes back to earth to haunt the living – especially the living whom it knew while alive. Some researchers, such as Clebért, indicate that the *mulo* may be considered a sort of vampire: its point of attachment (its "base") is a dead body. However, when it releases itself from the body, it may assume the shape it previously had before dying in the form of his/her double to torment the living – even inducing their victims to suicide. No wonder Eleazar is considered *mulo*. In fact, he even is proud of such epithet; so much so that when he chooses another name to disguise his real identity after the war, he

picks up “Jonas Melalo”. Melalo is a demon who, according to the legend, was generated by a forced sexual intercourse between a monster king and Ana, a good fairy:

> The queen duly gave birth to a demon, *Melalo*, who had the appearance of a bird with two heads and whose plumage was a dirty green colour. [*Melalo* is the most dreaded demon of the Gypsies]. With sharp claws he tears out hearts and lacerates bodies; with a blow of his wing he stuns his victim and, when the latter recovers from his swoon, he has lost his reason. He stirs up rage and frenzy, murder and rape. (CLÉBERT, 1967, p. 184)

In his new identity, Eleazar is Jonas Melalo and owns a small freight company in the Bahamas, flying things “other people were afraid to fly” (KANFER, 1978, p. 278). In their final confrontation, when Benoit inquires him about his new name, Eleazar replies: “It suits me. I have a bad character. […] It helped me get through the world” (IBID, p. 280). Clébert’s book was a strong influence for the construction of the Roma character in the novel. He is the major source as far as Roma traditions are concerned. This is also true with regards to the signs (the *patrin*) Benoit draws for Inger after a fight in order to make amends with her:

> For my part, I would paint her charts of old signs that I would have to pull up from the buried past, marks I recalled with enormous difficulty, transfigured by memory, symbols painted on Rumanian walls and doors:
>
> + Here they give nothing
> ⊙ Generous people, friendly to Gypsies
> ⊜ Here Gypsies are regarded as thieves
> /// We have already robbed this place
> △ You can tell fortunes with cards
> ⊖ Mistress is dissolute
> ≠ Master likes women
> ⚹ Marriage is in the air

Patrin were signs and symbols that a nomad Roma caravan would leave behind in order to guide and/or inform another *kumpania* that happened to pass through the same way. Such signs could be bent flower stems, which indicated the way the caravan followed, or markings in outer walls of farms or in trees. Interesting enough, the same list of signs can be found in Clébert’s *The Gypsies* (cf. p. 244-245), indicating that Kanfer made an effort to research his subject in order to present a less stereotyped Roma character.

Romani identity and heritage, thus, are conveyed by flashes of memory of Benoit’s childhood prior to the camp and through proverb, songs and some traditions of Romani origin. However, these belong to Benoit’s past. In relation to his present, we believe that the bearers of Romani identity in the novel are Benoit’s identification with the suffering of his people during the war (already discussed in 4.2.2) and his dark skin.

To have dark skin in an Anglo-Saxon world is something determinant in Benoit’s “Romaniness”: he feels and knows that this marks him as a “Gypsy”. He is not white as his foster Jewish parents; nor is he black as his friend Otis. As he tells Benoit: “You’re not a

black man. And you're not precisely white, either. You're the only creature I ever met I feel sorrier for than me" (KANFER, 1978, p. 76). One of the most interesting passages in the novel in relation to the "Romaniness" versus "Gypsyness" is when Benoit, in his teens, goes out with Laura, one of his first love interests. In their dialog, the gap between the gypsy stereotype versus the Roma is explicit. Laura asks Benoit if he is "a part Negro":

> I wondered how I could use this to my advantage. […] I told Laura that I was a Gypsy. I thought that this might intrigue her. Dark flashing eyes, tales of romantic caravans, Carmen and Don José…
> "You mean like those people in storefronts?" she asked me.
> "Sort of."
> "I thought they were dark because they didn't wash."
> "Maybe they don't. Or maybe they descend from tribes back in India. Anyway, there's all kinds of Gypsies. The English ones are fairer than Van Johnson." […]
> […]Then she asked, "What language do you speak?"
> "English. What language do you speak?" […]
> "Don't be facile. Your father doesn't look so dark. Judging from the picture in the *Times*"
> "He's not my real father. I'm adopted"
> "That's a switch." Laura liked that. "I thought the Gypsies always snatched other people's babies." (KANFER, 1978, p. 103)

The west knows nothing about the Roma. There is only the stereotype. The misunderstandings that help create prejudice remind Benoit (in a painful way) that he is a Roma – and a very isolated one, the "last of the caravan". However, there is also some degree of self prejudice in Benoit. He explains why he decided to marry Inger, even knowing the relationship was bound to sink: "She was an invention, a production, as elaborate and bogus as a television special. I needed a woman who was nothing of myself, no sadness, no shadow, nothing dark, not even the pudenda […]" (IBID, p. 212). Likewise, Eleazar is also aware of this relation between skin color and being a Roma. He tells Benoit "[…] don't give me Gypsy talk. You don't even *look* like a Gypsy anymore. Only the skin" (IBID, p. 281).

What is it then to be a Roma in the novel? Romani language and traditions belong to the past; all that links him in the present to the Roma is his skin color and the psychological scars of the war. We believe that Benoit's Roma identity is a solitaire work in progress between memory and stereotypes. After completing his revenge by killing Eleazar, Benoit goes back to Europe and lives as a wanderer. As Glajar notices "Ironically, hiding from the police, dressed in rags, dark-skinned, and homeless, Benoit returns to the most stereotypical image of "Gypsies" – that of an outsider and beggar, living at the outskirts of European society." (GLAJAR; RADULESCU (eds.), 2008, p. 137)

4.1.4 Memory: remembrance and forgetting

In *The Eighth Sin*, memory is a crucial issue in the construction of the novel, as it aims at recording a version of the history of the *Porrajmos*, which is not often talked about. The past is recovered mainly by documentation and memory (cf. VEYNE, 1984). In Kanfer's novel, we have both: the documentation provided by the items (factual documentation) and by the Clair sisters (fictional keepers of records and dossiers) and memory conveyed by Benoit.

Moreover, memory is also a key point to understand the development of Benoit's character. As previously indicated, his "Romaniness" depends heavily on the fragments of memory he has of the life in his Roma community – something he wishes to recover while he tries to prevent himself from remembering the years spent in the camp. Survival for him means the ability to forget this part of his life. As a result of this trauma, Benoit shows a series of symptoms: he does not speak for three months after being released from the camp; he blocks his feelings to the closest ones, including his adoptive parents and friends, and never opens himself up; there are current nightmares: "Forgetting became, instead of a career, a bodily process. Only the dreams persisted, and these diminished through my own will. I forced myself to dream of prismatic colors, hues, tints. And of money" (KANFER, 1978, p. 13).

Sometimes Benoit enters a state of numbness, totally detached from the world around him; he even becomes addicted to food, liquor and drugs during a certain part of his adult life. Even his choice for being a painter reflects this willingness to forget the trauma words cannot express: "This is why I became a painter. In my denial I thought: suppose God had decreed that words were insufficient. That from now on we were to paint our prayers. In my denial I did not speak for three months after the English liberated the camp" (IBID, 1978, p. 4). Marcio Seligmann-Silva in his essay "Literatura e trauma: um novo paradigma" discusses the survivor syndrome:

> Em 1967 foi realizado em Copenhague o primeiro simpósio sobre os problemas psíquicos de sobreviventes (BOHLEBER 2000: 212). W.G. Niederland cunhou então o conceito de "síndrome do sobrevivente". Para ele, o sobrevivente é caracterizado por uma situação crônica de angústia e depressão, marcada por distúrbios de sono, pesadelos recorrentes, apatia, problemas somáticos, anestesia afetiva, "automatização do ego", incapacidade de verbalizar a experiência traumática, culpa por ter sobrevivido e um trabalho de trauma que não é concluído. (SELIGMANN-SILVA, 2005, p. 68)

Benoit fits exactly this description. Even as a child, he chooses to forget. When a doctor inquires him about the camp:

> - *You must try. A boy does not forget. He has not had enough time to forget. He has not lived long enough. He only pretends to forget.*

> - *I am not pretending. I am trying. (To destroy my memory, you souless quacks, to erase the years)* (KANFER, 1978, p. 7)

For him, memory is a burden, a curse. He at first does not want to be the sole repository of memory of his people. In his rebellion, Benoit decides not to talk:

> Guilt. *What* guilt? I had no guilt. The Germans did not feel guilty; why should I?
> I had come out of it because… I did not know. A roll of the cosmic dice? Because God had chosen me as Ishmael; I alone have come back to tell thee? Lies. Theological shadow play. Bullshit. I would tell *no one*. I would never say what I had seen. I would not assume the burden for my people. I would not sell my memoirs or conceal my contempt for a planet that could permit what I had seen. (IBID, p. 28)

Remembering the dead meant for Benoit remembering the murderers as well. Therefore, he does not want to remember. When Benoit learns that Eleazar is still alive, he starts considering the possibility of fulfilling his revenge plan:

> *You want to see him again? Get reunited?*
> For what purpose? To prove that it had all really happened? To loose all the rage that I had so carefully buried? To satisfy a lady? To avenge the dead, who could not care, and the living, who could not remember? It was decades now; what difference would it make? Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord – with a little help from the screwballs. Was I some nut like the Clair sisters to imagine myself an instrument of avenging heaven? (Ibid, 165-166)

However, as time goes by, Benoit slowly changes his mind. Memory is still a burden, but he understands the role he has in leaving his story to future generations; his writing is in fact an autobiography he offers his adoptive son, Daniel. As discussed in Chapter 2, one of the duties of memory, as indicated by Paul Ricoeur (2004), is to do justice to the victims and to the dead, and not to let their struggles be forgotten. Besides, as Daniel Schwartz (1999) points out, narratives of the Holocaust also aim at restoring dignity to the victims who were deprived of humanity in the camps. In the concentration camps the inmates are stripped off of their identity, individuality and even of their existence, as if they have never lived; it is not mere murder: all traces of that life are anihilated. Hirsch points out that "[…] survivors function as prophets, warning a seemingly unconscious humanity of what it does not wish to hear and forcing confrontation with what it may not wish to see" (HIRSCH, 1995, p. 41). Benoit is a survivor, and he finally feels the need of telling his story, a story he once did not want to remember. By the end of the novel, Benoit, after killing Eleazar, is aware of this role of being the voice of his people; nevertheless, he still has some doubts:

> I write in my head a history of the unborn, destroyed by X-rays, scattered in smoke over the slate roofs and forests, burned and hacked and buried in the black earth. My own unborn sons and daughters chorus in the nights of the cities. […]
> And what was accomplished by his [Eleazar] murder? Did I truly extinguish the evil that is supposed to reside in my own skin? Or I have fed it? Or merely reduced the dwindling lives of my people? Or avenged a whole line of martyrs? Or kept wounds open too long after the fact? How long can a Gypsy bleed? (IBID, p. 287)

Benoit's writing is a painful process, but it is also a way of liberating himself from the past, of dealing with his traumas and of constructing his identity again. Forgetting and remembering weave the narrative, and this narrative serves both for individual and for collective purposes, as it gives voice to the *Porrajmos*.

Finally there is the issue of the eighth sin. Kanfer divided the novel into eight parts. The first one (covering Benoit's life right after being released from the concentration camp) is "survival". The other chapters are named after the seven deadly sins: avarice, pride, envy, gluttony, sloth, lust and wrath. Only at the end of the last chapter (wrath) the reader discovers what is the eighth sin:

> At night, when sleep is elusive, I sometimes think that the looking was the finding, that the life of the seven sins was the avoidance of the eighth, the deadliest sin: the sin of forgetting. And then, Daniel, I think that this thing, this notebook, this reminiscence, this bloody, dog-eared letter of avarice and sloth and pride and lust and envy and gluttony, and most of all of wrath – that this is the song. (KANFER, 1978, p. 288)

The song Benoit leaves to his son is the story of his life. He cannot forget it: this would mean losing his heritage. Benoit finally understands that his old life cannot be erased to start anew. However, as he cannot overcome his trauma either, he is caught in a kind of a limbo; Benoit feels he has no past and no future: "Eleazar […] My children died as infants, I don't know what they did to us there. They ate our past, they burned our future" (Ibid, p. 282) "Gypsies, how can we ever call our shattered selves whole again?" (Ibid, p. 284). As related to this question of memory and identity, Valentina Glajar affirms that:

> On the one hand, Benoit's memories are his only link to his parents, and a way of identifying with his family and the Romani victims, but on the other hand, his memories fuel his urge to avenge their deaths according to the Romani law. Revenge and the hunt for Eleazar Jassy become an obsession, and all other sins seem digressions from his main, self-assigned purpose in life. (GLAJAR; RADULESCU (eds.), 2008, p. 136-137)

The choice for the seven deadly sins also points out to a certain religious feeling in the novel. If there is an obsession with revenge, there is also on Benoit's part a search for the reasons why the Holocaust happened. In several instances of the novel, Benoit questions God and why such atrocities beyond belief happened to him, to his family and to the Roma in general:

> When will this stop, this ceaseless revolution of the cerebrum, always backward, backward to the recesses of obscenity? The future is something that everyone reaches… well, let me reach it then, let me go from this swamp of my childhood. Let me go, God, release me, give me a passport from these sins. (KANFER, 1978, p. 116)

> There is a phrase, "Why me?," that cancer patients are said to utter upon first hearing the bad news. But fathers and brothers, there are other ways to die, and the same question occurs to the mental patient, to the child in the ditch, to the hollow eyes of the near-corpse, to all of the century's witnesses. (Ibid, p. 150)

Benoit cannot forgive, nor forget. Besides, he wants to know where the justice of the world and of God is that let events like the Holocaust to happen. The use of the sins is not aleatory; it reinforces the innocence of the victims. The concept of sin involves some degree of justice: one will be punished by God if one sins, that is, if one goes against certain established religious rules and, with this act, makes room for evil to take place. Evil is (or should be) the natural outcome of the punishment of the guilty. However, in concentration camps one cannot establish the link between punishment and the guilty, as the majority of the inmates there were guilty of nothing. Hannah Arendt comments on the difference between hell and concentration camps mentioning that:

> The one thing that cannot be reproduced is what made the traditional conceptions of Hell tolerable to man: the Last Judgment, the Idea of an absolute standard of justice combined with the infinite possibility of grace. For in the human estimation there is no crime and no sin commensurable with the everlasting torments of Hell. Hence the discomfiture of common sense, which asks: What crime must these people have committed in order to suffer so inhumanly? Hence also the absolute innocence of the victims: no man ever deserved this. Hence finally the grotesque haphazardness with which concentration-camp victims were chosen in the perfected terror state: such "punishment" can, with equal justice and injustice, be inflicted on anyone. (ARENDT, 1976, p. 145)

Benoit cannot find justice anywhere, so he takes it into his own hands. Forgiveness, in Benoit's case, is not possible: his peace of mind depends on the fulfillment of his mission to eliminate evil. It is interesting to see that, according to the site Rombase (a site dedicated to offering information on the socio-cultural and socio-historical situation of the Roma, developed with the support of the European Community and in cooperation with the Phonogrammarchiv, Austrian Academy of Sciences) in its section "Literature/ Paramisi", forgiveness is an important ethical value which is manifested in Roma tales and stories:

> The ethical value of forgiveness is expressed in the proverb, "*Sar dživaha, te na džanaha te odmukel*" – literally: "How are we going to live if we are incapable of forgiving?" This value is manifested in different contexts we do not find in the tales of other nations: At the end of the story, the hero forgives his treacherous brothers who had wanted to ruin him because of their jealousy; the miraculously resurrected woman forgives her husband who killed her because of his lover – and at the end everyone lives happily ever after.[26]

However, monsters are not forgiven – and in *The Eighth Sin* the monster is embodied in Eleazar Jassy/Jonas Melalo. Melalo, as previously explained, is a demon, a monster, and monsters should be killed, so that: "'*phujipen/zrada te na avel buter pr'ada svetos'* – 'there be no more evil/betrayal in this world'".[27]

[26] http://romani.uni-graz.at/rombase/
[27] Ibid.

4.2 *Zoli* (2006)

4.2.1 Brief considerations on Colum McCann and *Zoli*

She is a voice from the dust. (McCANN, 2006, p. 83)

Colum McCann is a contemporary Irish writer whose novels deal with different subjects such as contemporary Ireland (*Songdogs,* 1996), homeless people living underground (*This Side of Brightness,* 2003) or the life of Rudolf Nureyev (*Dancer,* 2009). In all of these books, McCann has always made a point in deeply researching the themes of his choice, sometimes even living in site with the "object(s)" of his study. For *Zoli*, his fourth novel, such care was not forgotten: he admitted in an interview he knew nothing about the Roma and had to start from scratch. To this end, he has not only researched in libraries about the Romani people but also travelled to Slovakia and visited Roma camps, in an attempt to grasp and later convey a portion of the Romani experience. This alone shows the difference in the approach to the Roma: Romani culture was treated with care and respect. In McCann's own words:

> I didn't set out to write a social history of the Gypsies because I felt that they had been persecuted and kicked around for hundreds of years, which they have been. I simply found this photograph of this woman. And she haunted me. They are simple beginnings that turn toward complicated endings […]
> […] the interesting thing about my readings over here in particular is that Romany people are coming along and they are actually standing up and saying, in Romany, "Thank you for writing this book," because these stories, in general, have not been told. One guy in New York told me he said it was the first time he had ever stood up in front of an audience and admitted—he used the word "admitted" – to the fact that he was a Rom. It's a really hard thing to do for him. Because you say it, it means (to other people) that you are a liar and a cheat, you steal—all that baggage.[28]

Zoli encompasses a timespan of seventy-three years, from 1930 up to 2003, covering the Nazi period through communism up to our modern globalized world. As mentioned in the introduction of this work, the novel is loosely based on the life of Bronislawa Wajs, known as Papusza (meaning "doll"), a Polish Roma singer and poet who was part of a travelling *kumpania*. Isabel Fonseca in the first chapter of her book *Bury me Standing* provides a small biography of Papusza, highlighting the main events of her life – which can also be found in Zoli's life: she was a singer and a poet, wrote down her songs, and suffered persecutions by both the fascists and the Nazi in Poland. Finally, with the end of II World War, the Roma were forced to assimilation by the socialist regime. But most important of all, Fonseca explains how Papusza's poems were used by the socialist government in Poland (1949-1952) as a propaganda tool for the compulsory settlement of the nomad people (known as the Big Halt in socialist countries such as Czechoslovakia and Bulgary (1958) and Romania (1962)).

[28] http://www.themorningnews.org/archives/birnbaum_v/colum_mccann.php

With the publication of her poems, Papusza became a sort of a "poster girl" for the Polish policy of sedentarization: education would be the only hope for the people who lived "ouside history", and only a proper settlement would allow a proper education to take place. Due to this use of her image and poems, Papusza was considered a traitor by her people. Worse than the publication was the fact that she had collaborated with non-Roma people, which made her impure:

> After the publication of the poems Papusza was put on trial. She was called before the highest authority among the Polish Roma, the Baro Shero, Big Head, or Elder. After little deliberation, she was proclaimed *mahrime* (or *magherdi* among Polish Roma), unclean: the punishment was irreversible exclusion from the group. She spent eight months in a Silesian psychiatric hospital; then, for the next thirty-four years until her death in 1987, she lived alone and in isolation […]. She was shunned by her own generation and unknown to the next. She became her name: a doll, mute and discarded. […]. Papusza never sang again. (FONSECA, 1995, p. 9)

4.2.2 Fiction in dialog with history in *Zoli*

Zoli is a novel in constant dialog with history. Colum McCann uses historical events to build up his fictional narrative. The story of the main character, Zoli, begins during the 1930's in Slovakia. By that time, the facist-Nazi paranoia was already installed in most of Eastern Europe countries. David Crowe explains that:

> As the Nazi threat of war loomed larger on the horizon in the late 1930s, most of the countries of Eastern Europe found that unless they wanted to suffer the fate of Czechoslovakia, which was carved up out of existence in a six month period in 1938-1939, or Yugoslavia, which suffered the same fate two years later, they had to enter the Nazi camp as allies. Once war came in the fall of 1939, pressure was gradually brought to bear on each nation in Eastern Europe not under direct German control to implement growingly harsh policies against the Gypsies. (1994, p. xiv)

The Hlinka guard mentioned in the novel, and mostly responsible for the constant atmosphere of fear and persecution, was a facist entity, a Slovakian paramilitary group modeled after the German SA. The Hlinka guard destroyed Zoli's little Roma community by forcing the caravans to the middle of a frozen lake and, when the ice cracked:

> the wheels sank, and the rest followed, harps and wheels and horses. I did not see any of it happen, daughter, but I could hear it in my mind and, although there was great music to come along later, sweet sounding moments when our people were raised up and strong and valued, that will always be a time of looking backwards, listening and waiting for my dead family to catch up (McCANN, 2006, p. 15)

The laws against the Roma during this period involved at first travelling restrictions and registrations. In *Zoli,* the Roma were obliged to register with authorities: "[…] all Romani children had to be examined by the age of five" (Ibid, p. 25). When Zoli's grandfather inquires the government official if other children had to be registered every three months as Romani children did, the response was that "all the Gypsy children have to do it" (Ibid, p. 27)

and the others, do not. With regards to nomadism, in the novel the nomadic way of life is seen as a positive cultural marker for the Roma. The Roma do not wish to stop travelling, as it is part of their culture, and a trait to be proud of: it gives them a sense of superiority and freedom in relation to the non-Roma world. However, the government policy during and after the war aimed at settling (either by law or by force) the Roma population. As discussed in Chapter 3, the enemies of the State were clearly picked out:

> New laws came upon us, even harsher than before. We were no longer allowed to travel at all. We stole back to Trnava and lay camouflaged in the forest, eight kilometers out. […] We were joined by some of the settled Roma who left the town when their husbands were hung from the lampposts by way of reprisal: the law was ten villagers for every one of theirs. The mayor of the city gave the fascists the cheapest lives and what was cheaper to them than their Gypsies and, of course, Jews? On one steel pole eight were hung and left for the birds. For years afterwards no man or woman would ever take that street again, it was known as the Place of the Bent Lamppost. (McCANN, 2006, p. 54-55).

If at first government laws were targeted at nomadism and registration, by 1942 genocidal policies and racial laws were underway. The levels of persecution and killing of the Roma varied from country to country. In some countries, such as Hungary and Slovakia, the losses were not that high. In other countries, such as Romania and Croatia, one could say that a genocide of the Roma population was indeed carried out. However, with the German invasion in 1944 the situation got much worse for all countries involved and for all the Roma in Eastern Europe. In Slovakia, massacres of all sorts took place in several cities, such as Ilija and Slatina, some of them with the continuing help of the Hlinka guard. In the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, concentration camps in Hodonin and Lety were constructed for "Gypsy families". According to Crowe, 7,980 Roma were sent to Lety and 7,329 to Hodonin between August 1942 and April 1943. By the same time, but in small numbers, the Roma began to be sent also to Auschwitz. The function of such camps was:

> To exclude from society Gypsies, Gypsy half-breeds (*Zigeneuermischlinge*) and persons leading a wandering way of life in Gypsy fashion, and to educate them for work, order and discipline. All men who were not engaged in regular and useful work were to be placed in these concentration camps together with their wives and children. (In: CROWE, 1994, p. 49).

In the novel, politics is also a historical indicator. Zoli's grandfather, Stanislaus, was a communist. He had a portrait of Lenin (cleverly disguised behind a painting of the Virgin Mary) in his caravan, wore a Marx pin on the hat, and carried with him the book *Das Kapital*, on which he stitched another cover of a cathecism so as to "fool anyone who questioned him" (McCANN, 2006, p. 23). Although the Roma community in the novel try to stay apart from political issues (sometimes even frowning upon Stanislaus's political preferences), he believed that communism was the only way for the Roma to live with dignity. He hoped for a better future with "the good ones, the Communists" (Ibid, p. 34). It is known that some Roma

in Eastern Europe were involved in the war and in the resistence to fight the Nazi, joining partisan units. In Slovakia there was the Slovak National Insurrection (Aug. 29-Oct. 27, 1944), during which several Roma were active in the uprising. In *Zoli*, some of the men of the community left for fighting in the hills against the Nazi:

> Vashengo joined the partisans who were making noise in the hills. Stanislaus [Zoli's grandfather] would have gone too, but he was older and his body was giving way. Still he gave shelter to anyone who came in our direction: fighters from the Czech lands, refugees from the workcamps, even two priests who strayed our way. There were rumors of American fighters in the hills. We hid the caravans, yet twice they were spotted and shot at with bullets by passing Luftwaffe planes. [...]
> When Vashengo came back down from the hills, we were not too surprised to hear him singing "The Internationale". [...] The songs we sang became more and more red, and in truth who could blame us – it was what Grandfather had predicted for many years. The only thing that seemed right was change, and the only thing that would bring change was good and right red, we had suffered so long at the foot of the fascists. (McCANN, 2006, 55-56).

With the liberation of Eastern European countries by the Soviet forces in 1945, most of these nations became socialist countries. And with socialism, the situation for the Roma changed completely: they were at first respected and recognized as comrades, as equals – something quite new, as Zoli remembers:

> The churches were used for food stations, and sometimes we were allowed to stand first in line, we had never seen that before, it seemed a miracle. We were given identity cards […] We burned our old armbands. […] The soldiers called us Citizens […]
> […] The farmers no longer called us a pestilence. They addressed us by our formal names. […] We sang new songs […] and hundreds of people came down the roadways to listen. Photographers with movie cameras pulled up in jeeps and motorcars. We waved the red flag, looked down the road into the future. (Ibid, p. 59-60).

In the spirit of the new times, Romani culture started to be "discovered" by the communist government. Communists and the Roma had fought together; this could only be a sign of a new era. As pointed out in the introduction of *A False Dawn: My life as a Gypsy woman in Slovakia*, the memories of Illona Lacková:

> This historical experience, encoded in collective memory, led Ilona Lacková to give ear to the Communist call: "Citizens of Gypsy origin, come join us!" In the 1950s many Communists meant this call sincerely. By then, they had struggled together with Roma in the Slovak National Uprising against the Nazis and hidden together with Romani partisans in the forests. Together with Roma they had endured the slights and the hardships caused by the Hlinka Guards […]. For Roma these calls were like a salve on the awful suffering they had lived through under Facism: concentration camps where a half million European Roma had perished, the hunger, poverty, and beatings in the forced labor camps, the forced resettlements from towns, the humiliation and mockery. Their faith in Communism was also reinforced by the fact that the soldiers of the Red Army […] did not hesitate to enter the "Gypsy camps", to embrace and rejoice with Roma and to let them eat their fill from their rations. This was an unheard-of act from the *gadze*. (LACKOVÁ, 1999, p. 5).

As such, Zoli and her poems were also discovered and praised as an expression of the "deep roots of the Roma brothers" (Ibid, p. 60). Zoli became famous and her poetry was read in theaters for the *gadjé* and in Romani settlements, where people wanted to hear her voice and her songs. Both the *gadjé* and the Roma liked Zoli. However, Zoli's problems started to

arise when the ones who first discovered her, Martin Stránský, a poet, and Stephen Swann, an Irish expatriate, translator and frustrated writer, decide to publish her poems. Stránský and Swann really admired Zoli's work. Stránský's intention, however, had a political side to it, as Swann indicates:

> He was sure that having a Gypsy poet would be a coup for him […] and that the Gypsies, as a revolutionary class, if properly guided, could claim and use the written word. "Look", he said, "everywhere else they're the joke of the week. Thieves. Conmen. Just imagine if we could raise them up. A literate proletariat. People Reading Gypsy literature. We – you, me, her – we can make a whole new art form, get those songs written down. (McCANN, 2006, p. 83)

However, due to their artistic idealism and even to some degree of naivety on their part, Zoli's poems ended up being used by the socialist government to support its plan of assimilation of minorities. As Swann recalls, Zoli became so famous that "politicians wanted to be seen with her" (McCANN, 2006, p. 98). On the one hand, as Zoli goes through the country showing her poems, living a new life and becoming acquainted with *gadjé* people and their ways, her own people started to distrust her. She was becoming "too *gadzo* for them" (Ibid, p. 99). For the *gadjé*, on the other hand, Zoli was the new Czechoslovakian woman under socialism – a Gypsy intellectual, as Stránský would call her.

Meanwhile, socialism began to show its ugly face. People distrusted one another, and a pervasive sense of fear was in the air. Repression of free thinking started out, and professors, philosophers and artists were persecuted and obliged to do forced labor, such as to dig canals or ditches. Besides, the authorities' answer to the "Gypsy problem" involved the assimilation of the Roma. Therefore, the process of sedentarization of nomadic populations gradually took place. Law 74 in Czechoslovakia, followed by similar laws in other countries of Eastern Europe, were known by the Roma there as "the Big Halt". Crowe points out that:

> Czechoslovakia's Gypsies were now divided into three categories – nomads, semi-nomads, and completely sedentary – in anticipation of Law No. 74, of October 17, 1958, Act on Permanent Settlement of Nomadic People. The law instructed local officials to work with any nomads, whom it defined as an individual who "in groups or individually, wanders from place to place, shuns honest work or obtains his livelihood by iniquitous means even though he may be registered in some community as its permanent resident." If this person continued this lifestyle despite the offer of help, he would "be punished by deprivation of liberty from six months to three years." (1994, p. 56)

The tone of the law is extremely biased against nomadism; the nomad is seen as a criminal. Law no. 74 is present in the novel, and it is worth noting the irony of the line of thought that guided such forced assimilation: to force halt in order for the Roma to be free:

> Now there was talk in government circles of allowing the Gypsies to halt, of settling them in government housing, giving them absolute power over their own lives. The idea of them living out in the forest had become bizarre and old-fashioned, almost bourgeois to the pure-minded. Why should they be forced to live out on the roads? The papers said they should be cut free from the troubles of primitivism. There would be no more Gypsy fires, only in theater. (McCANN, p. 106).

Such forced settlement is a kind of death for the Roma: with settlement comes assimilation and, with assimilation within the dominant society, Romani traditions are doomed to disappear. And with the disappearance of traditions, Romani identity is endangered. This planned ethnocide promoted by socialist/communist governments aimed at destroying Roma heritage, once "[…] Stalinistic attitudes discouraged strong ethnic identity and sentiments" (CROWE, 1994, p. xv). As an example, Alaina Lemon points out that "Soviet programs for 'bringing Gypsies to literacy' centered around 'political literacy' aimed to convert them to a world of civilized, hygienic, and efficient Soviet laws. Having mastered letters, sensible Roma would give up 'unwritten laws'." (LEMON, 2000, p. 175)

And Zoli, such as Papusza, who once was praised by both Roma and *gadjé*, was now considered a traitor by her people. Her face was in pamphlets all over the country with the words *Citizens of Gypsy Origin, Come Join Us*. Zoli tried to avoid the halt, but there was nothing she could do. During this time, a book with her poems was due to be published by Swann. Zoli tried to prevent this book from coming out "If you print this book, they'll blame me. […] They'll have a trial […] The blame will come down on me" (Ibid, p. 127). Nevertheless, Swann published the book, and indirectly condemned Zoli.

The story moves in place, time and point of view, as there are several narrators in *Zoli*: Zoli herself, who writes down the story of her life as a legacy to her daughter; Swann, who writes his side of the story when he remembers how he met Zoli, fell in love with her and how she disappeared without a trace from his life; and a journalist who in 2003 wants to find out what happened to Zoli and, to this end, goes to a Roma camp in Slovakia to investigate the story. Here, we see that nothing has changed for the Roma; or better saying, that there has been a change for the worse in this particular case: the camp is miserable, people beg for money to buy food, the Roma are not allowed in some places, such as markets. The dignity found in Zoli's *kumpania* in the past cannot be found nowadays:

> As he drove along the winding road towards the highway, looking back down on the settlement, the journalist felt what he thought was a sadness, or an ache, or a desire, and these thoughts heartened him, warmed him with their misery, and he pretended that a part of himself wanted to slide down the bank, wade through a filthy river, give them all that he owned, and walk home, penniless, decent, healed, return their ancient dignity by leaving, by the riverbank, his own. (McCANN, 2006, p. 213)

The situation the journalist describes is much similar to the Roma camps found in Eastern Europe now. After centuries of being at the margins of the dominant society, and with the fall of the communism/socialism in Eastern Europe and Russia, the Roma at that particular place have been left to their own devices, with no government help, no skills and little adapted to

live in the globalized, capitalist world. Some Roma communities even miss communist times, when housing, health care and jobs were granted by the government, and this feeling is shown in *Zoli*. Unemployed and with housing problems, the Roma get involved in smuggling, prostitution and petty crimes in order to survive, which only worsen the stereotypes according to which the Roma are judged.

4.2.3 Romani Identity

In the novel, elements from Romani culture are used in the construction of the profile of Romani identity. *Zoli* covers several aspects of the Romani life of that particular group, such as the role of women in the community; the instances of prejudice (both great and small) the Roma are forced to face on a daily basis; songs, poems and legends; the ways the community developed to protect its culture; nomadism, cultural taboos and institutions such as marriage and the Romani system of justice. Romani identity is based on tradition and family relations. It is worth noting, however, that McCann never makes clear to which specific Roma group Zoli and her community belong. Nevertheless, according to the descriptions in the novel of multicolored skirts, braids "embroidered" with coins, customs and strict pollution rules, we believe that Zoli and her group belonged to the Vlax Romani ethnic group, Kelderara[29]. As Alaina Lemon explains about the Vlax in Russia:

> […] they are the most widely distributed Roma in the world. […] Kelderara were among the first Vlax to appear in Russia in the nineteenth century, stirring a sensation by their Carpathian dress, the men with big, wide-brimmed black hats and large, silver jacket buttons, and the women with long, coin-woven braids and multicolored skirts. It is they who, with their full, pleated, patterned skirts, scarves and braids, are the most visible and exotic to Russians as "real Gypsies" (2000, p. 111)

Zoli starts telling her story by remembering her childhood in Czechoslovakia. The protagonist of the novel is called Marienka Novotna, however, as she informs the reader "From my earliest days Grandfather had called me Zoli, a boy's name, after his first son" (McCANN, 2006, p. 19). In *Zoli*, we see that the change of name does not affect the main character; in fact, as her grandfather says "the most important thing about names were the namers […] We are full of names, he said, we will always be, that's our way" (Ibid, p. 20). Zoli knows who she is and who gave her her names – her mother and her grandfather. When she changes her name in different moments in her life, she changes it according to her convenience, either as a disguise for comfounding the *gadjé* or as a means of protecting

[29] Vlax (or Vlach) Roma is an umbrella term referring to Roma groups that have lived within the territories of Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic.Other ethnic groups falling within this category are the *Lovari*, the *Churari* and the *Machavaya* (cf. WEYRAUCH (ed.), p. 89).

herself and the others of the Roma world. In fact, the Roma have at least three different names throughout their lives: a secret name whispered in the child's ear by its mother at birth, which is intended to deceive demons who, not knowing the true identity of the child, will not be able to harm it; a name which is used only among the Roma, and a third one, which is used in the *gadjé* world, intended to be declared to civil authorities (cf. CLÉBERT, 1970). Therefore, the name is not important, rather who names the child.

The first event Zoli recalls is the killing of her parents and of her small community by the Hlinka guard (as mentioned in 4.1.2), Zoli and her grandfather being the sole survivors of this attack. This was one of the several episodes related to prejudice described in the novel. However, Zoli's memories are not only based in suffering; there are happy moments as well, intimate moments with her family and friends. Her childhood, as she recalls, was a happy one, in spite of all difficulties. As Zoli remembers one night with her best friend Conka: "In the nighttime, we tried to fall asleep by the fire, but our favorite stories kept us up late and when a story was really good we had no legs to hold up. […] Grandfather carried me and put me beneath the eiderdown where my mother had once stenciled a harp using thread that came from cottonwood trees" (Ibid, p. 32). Zoli was part of a caring group in which children were extremely important. In Roma communities, all adults are responsible for the bringing up of a child, who is free to explore its surroundings and who learns from watching adults'experiences. Children in Roma encampments are part of the labor force, and this is fully encouraged by adults, as this is considered the main source of useful knowledge one has to acquire in order to live "on the road" (cf. OKELY, 1983). The "hands on" learning is far more important for the Roma than formal education and literacy.

From the early stages of her life, Zoli is clearly a different type of Roma girl. Romani women are the perpetuators of Roma lineage, once the Roma employ the principle of descent for determining who is part of the group or not. Therefore, women's sexuality is of a paramount importance for the continuity of the Roma: "a Gypsy's status is ascribed at birth" (OKELY, 1983, p. 67). Marriages between Roma and non-Roma in general are not approved of by the community, once they involve mixing with the *gadjé*, a contamination of the group. Women are supposed to marry as virgins, remain faithful to her husbands and to be subordinated to them. Still according to Okely:

> […] her deportment and dress are dictated by certain restrictions. Far from being a flighty seductress, the Traveller woman is burdened with many domestic rules. A wife is expected to give birth to numerous children and has the main responsibility of their care. Food purchase, cooking, and cleaning are also the woman's domain. The Gypsy woman […] is expected to work outside the camp for earning a living. She is greatly valued for her ability to obtain goods and cash from the Gorgio […]

> There is a paradox embedded in the Gypsy woman's role. Within her own society she is hedged in by restrictions, expected to be subservient to her husband and cautious with other men. Yet nearly every day she is expected to go out to 'enemy'territory, knock on doors of unknown people and establish contact with new customers, some of whom will be men. Success in obtaining money or goods will depend on her ability to be outgoing and persistent, and her readiness to take the initiative. She must be aggressive – quite the opposite to some of the behaviour required of her in the camp. (p. 204-205)

Even though Zoli mostly tries to follow the Roma traditions of her group – she dressed appropriately for a Roma girl, she took part on group activities, singing in group occasions, she even got married to a man her grandfather had chosen for her – she is treated in a different way: she was given a male nickname; she learns to read and write – something unthinkable for a Roma girl at the time; she even went for some time to school, even though her community was against it and the *gadjé* there – the other pupils – rejected her, as we may observe when Zoli describes one of her days at school: "across the room, the older gadzo boys were able to spit silently through the gaps in the front of their teeth. Soon one side of my hair was soaking wet with spittle, but I did not turn. I think they expected me to shout, but I did not (McCANN, 2006, p. 37).

Defining Roma identity is a complex matter, since it is not a homogeneous, monolithical group. Although tradition is an important identity marker to all Roma groups, it is a fact that customs are not exactly the same in these several groups which compose what we call the Roma. For example, pollution rules may vary from community to community. In a single paragraph, Colum McCann accurately summarizes the question of tradition and Roma identity:

> The Gypsies were, it seemed, as fractured as anyone else, their own small Europe, but they were lumped together in one easy census box. Most had already settled down in shanty towns all over Slovakia. They were as apt to fight among themselves as they were to pitch battle against outsiders. Zoli and her people were the aristocracy, if such a word could be used; they still traveled in their ornate caravans. No dancing bears, or begging, or fortune-telling, but they did wear gold coins in their hair and kept some of the older customs alive. Modesty laws. Whispered names. Runic signs. There were thousand of them in Slovakia. They were linked with extended groups of tinsmiths and horse-thieves, but some, like Zoli's kumpanija, moved in a group of about seventy or eighty and made a living almost entirely from music […] (Ibid, p. 82)

With the II World War, things got worse to the Roma in Slovakia and in other countries of Eastern Europe. According to Zoli's grandfather, although the Germans did not take over in Slovakia as they did in Czech lands, "the Hlinkas were just like Gestapo, except they wore different badges" (Ibid, p. 41). Persecution was something common for Zoli and her company: "[…] although the fascists sometimes hunted us to give us another dose of their hatred – we were no more than wild animals to them – we settled as far away from them as possible, kept to our own ways, and made music where we could" (Ibid, p. 31).

Zoli already sensed what would come next to her people: when playing with the words of a song which sings *"Don't break bread with the baker, he has a dark oven, it opens wide, it opens wide"*, Zoli, changing the original names of the professions for the word "Hlinka", comes up with:

> *Don't break bread with the Hlinka, he has a dark oven, it opens wide, it opens wide* […] *Don't chop meat with the Hlinka, he has a sharp knife, it slices deep, it slices deep* […] *Don't shoe horses with the Hlinka, he has long nails, they'll make you lame, they'll make you lame.* I was too young to know what I had done, but few years later, when we found out what the Hlinkas and the Nazis had done with ovens and nails and knives, the song changed for me again. (Ibid, p. 24)

The use of songs, sayings and poems are also markers of Romani identity in the novel. They can be considered as historical documents, once they register historical events, keeping them in the memory of the people, and helping to maintain Roma traditions alive. Through songs, communities based on oral tradition are able to pass on their culture to future generations. Besides, for the Roma, a song is "sacred and untouchable" (LACKOVÁ, 1999, p. 71), that is, if there is something one wishes to say, but is reticent to say it publicly, he or she will say it in a song. Besides, it is also possible to see in the novel the use of some words and expressions in Romani, such as *chonorroeja* ("little moon", as she calls her daughter), or *ach Devlesa, dza Devlesa* (meaning "stay with God, go with God"); however, all the songs present in *Zoli* are written in English. According to Isabel Fonseca, the main topics of Roma poetry are generally the lament for the departed ones, the lack of roots and the *lungo drom*, i.e., the long road. Fonseca explains that:

> Nostalgia is the essence of Gypsy song, and seems always to have been. But nostalgia for what? *Nostos* is the Greek for "a return home"; the Gypsies have no home, and, perhaps uniquely among peoples, they have no dream of a homeland. Utopia – *ou topos* – means "no place". Nostalgia for utopia: a return home to no place. O *lungo drom*. The long road. (1995, p. 5).

The longest poem in *Zoli* is "Since by the bones they broke we can tell new weather: what we saw under the Hlinkas in the years '42 and '43", which was written by Zoli echoing Papusza's style, after her long poem "*Ratfale jasfa – so pal sasendyr pšegijam upre Volyň 43 a 44 berša*" ("Bloody tears – what we endured from German soldiers in Volyň in '43 and '44"). In the author's note at the end of the book, McCann points out that "Zoli's poem in this novel is original, though it takes some of its form from the poetry of Papusza and others" (2006, p. 332). Both poems deal not only with the persecution suffered by the Roma but also with the Jewish Holocaust:

> What sorrow and terrible wailing were heard
> In all your lonely downcast corners,
> Auschwitz, Majdanek, Thieresenstadt, Lódz,
> Who gave them such places, O Lord,

> Right on the edge of black forests? [...]
> Look at our fallen homes
> And all the Jews and Gypsies broken! (Ibid, p. 281)
>
> Once, at home, the moon stood in the window,
> didn't let me sleep. Someone looked inside.
> I asked -- who is there?
> -- Open the door, my dark Gypsy.
> I saw a beautiful young Jewish girl,
> shivering from cold,
> asking for food.
> You poor thing, my little one.
> I gave her bread, whatever I had, a shirt.
> We both forgot that not far away
> were the police.
> But they didn't come that night. (Papusza's "Tears of Blood"[30])

Another important point we would like to cover refers to pollution rules. The concepts of pure (*vujo*) and impure (*marime*) are of a crucial importance to the Romani people and for the development of the novel. They regulate the relationship between Roma and non-Roma, contributing to the survival of the group: "Gypsy pollution taboos evolved in part to prevent dissension and disease among people living in deprived and unstable conditions" (WEYRAUCH, ed., 2001, p. 30). Such taboos may vary from group to group, but, in general, they refer to rules of cleaness. People, things and events may be classified as pure or impure, according to these rules. In relation to the human body, from waist up the body is generally considered pure. The lower part of the body, on the other hand, is impure. According to Weyrauch, children are *marime* for six weeks after birth because childbirth is an impure situation for both mother and child, since it involves blood. After this time, children are pure until puberty, when pollution taboos are observed again. Blood is impure, and any contact with it is polluting. Even talking about blood, sexuality or body functions is a taboo. Women are latently impure and may contaminate men in several occasions until menopause, when they no longer menstruate or may give birth. This is clearly seen when Zoli menstruates for the first time:

> I soon reached womanhood and had to burn the red rags. […]. I was careful now where I stepped, the touch of my skirt could dirty a man. […]. Nine days later, Grandfather said that I had to learn to call him Stanislaus now; he did not want to be grandfather to a grown woman. I blushed and knew that soon it would be time to walk under the linden blossoms with a husband (McCANN, 2006, p. 45).

The dead are *marime* too. A dead body is polluting; therefore, when one dies, his or her assets should be disposed of as soon as possible. This includes the place in which death took place (either wagon or trailer), personal belongings, and even more valuable objects. They should be either destroyed or sold to someone else outside that specific Roma

[30] http://www.thehypertexts.com/Bronislawa%20Wajs%20Papusza%20Poet%20Poetry%20Bio%20Picture%20Gypsy%20Poet%20Romani%20Poetry.htm

community. When Zoli's parents were killed, she insisted on talking about them with her grandfather, and he prohibited her from going further in her questionings: "Grandfather said no more questions, they [Zoli's parents] would be *mule* soon, spirit, they did not want to be disturbed" (Ibid, p. 18). When her grandfather died, Zoli and her husband burned the dead's possessions: "[…] we burned most of everything he owned to warm him for his journey. The flames shot up and the ground outside began to steam. […] No singing was done for three days […]" (Ibid, p. 57). When, after her condemnation, Zoli tries to destroy her poems and tapes recorded with her voice at the printing mill, she tries to burn them – as she and life as she knew it were "dead", burning the "belongings" of a past life was the right thing to do. The disposal of the dead's belongings is also necessary in order for the *mulo* not to return to haunt the living or to bring bad luck. It is interesting to note that the *mulo* only haunts the ones he or she knew while alive.

Marime also refers to the sentence one may receive when exhibiting a socially disruptive behaviour. Still according to Weyrauch:

> Gypsies consider crimes of violence and noncommercial association with *gaje* as crimes against Romani society as a whole and therefore *marime*. […]
> In all cases of *marime*, enforcement depends primarily on a superstitious fear of the consequences of violating the *marime* rules. The individual who violates a *marime* prohibition has succumbed to powers of evil and destruction that are so frightening that even his own family shuns him from fear of contamination. (Ibid, p. 39).

One of the systems of Romani justice involves the assembly of a tribunal, a *kris*. A *kris* is a Romani court, mostly composed of the male elders of the community. As indicated in *Zoli*, the *kris* is adjucated to deal with issues of moral or religion or with matters of honor or property according to the *Romaniya* (Romani law). It functions as a "guard" of the customs of the Roma and it is also based on oral tradition and on the memory and interpretation of Romani laws by the elders of the group. A sentence of permanent banishment is the most severe penalty applied to a defendant, and it is equivalent to social death: "At the judgement […] they sentenced her to Pollution for Life in the Category of Infamy for the Betrayal of Romani Affairs to the Outsiders. She [Zoli] had betrayed her people, he said, she had told of their affairs, brought unrest down upon them" (McCANN, 2006, p. 137). For letting the *gadjé* world come so dangerously close to her and to her community, Zoli became impure and is no longer allowed to live among the Roma.

Zoli was judged by her own people, in a *kris*. This moment is depicted in the novel as follows:

> Nobody would ever eat with her now. Nobody would walk with her. If she touched any Romani thing it would be destroyed, no matter what value: horse, table, dish. When she died, nobody would bury her. She would not have a funeral. She could not come back, even as a

> spirit. She could not haunt them. They would not talk of her, they could not even mention her: she had betrayed the life and she was beyond dead, not Gypsy, not gadzi, nothing at all. (Ibid, p. 139).

It is interesting to see that a very similar description can be found in the work of Mateo Maximoff (1907-1999, born in Spain), one of the first Roma authors to publish novels, stories, and tales, and who also described the penalty of banishment from the community:

> Nobody in the world, neither his wife, nor his mother, nor his children will speak to him anymore. Nobody will have him at their table. If he touches an object, even one of great value, the sacred law insists that this object be destroyed or burned. For everybody, the person is worse than if he were leper. Nobody will even have the courage to kill him in order to cut short his misfortune, for merely to go near him would risk making *marimé* [polluted, defiled] whoever has tried to do so. When he has ceased living, nobody will have anything to do with his funeral or burial, nobody will accompany him to his resting place. Gypsies will be quick to forget the accursed individual. (In: CLÉBERT, 1970, p. 161)

At 29 years old Zoli is expelled from the Roma world and forced to wander. In her journey towards the West, she left Slovakia, passed through Hungary, Austria until she reached the mountains of Italy. During her journey, Zoli finds both kindness and humiliation along the way; people who try to help her and who try to kill her; cold, hunger, and physical pain. In order to survive, she betrays herself by performing the role of the gypsy the *gadjé* expected her to do: she engages in fortune telling, which, for her, is like acting and storytelling: Zoli tells the story her "clients" wish to hear in order to make money. She grabs her listeners by the ears, seduces them with words and puts on a show using stones, fake incantations and ridiculous charms for protection and for avoiding bad luck. As Zoli says "I was a traitor to everything, even myself. […]. I knew that in my shame I had lost every shred of dignity that I had ever worked to own" (McCANN, 2006, p. 244, 248).

Finally in Italy, during a hitchhike she meets Enrico, the man who would later be her husband and father of her daughter, Francesca. For love Zoli decides to stop walking and settles to start anew, no questions asked. As Zoli writes to her daughter "I have loved your father, pure and simple; his and yours are the only lives I have never betrayed." (Ibid, p. 250). We can see, though, that there is no revolt or rage in Zoli's life: she accepts whatever fate brings her way. As McCann himself explains in another interview, Zoli "fights through, not back"[31]. This kind of fatalism echoes the Romani *baxt*: it can be translated as "luck", "fate" or "karma". As Fonseca points out, one's *baxt* is influenced by one's respect for Romani traditions and by reverence to the ancestral spirits (the *mule*). A good or a bad *baxt* is a consequence of one's acts and nothing can be done to change that. Zoli accepts her fate, pure and simple.

[31] Source: http://www.colummccann.com/interviews/hayes.htm

As a matter of fact, Zoli tells her story through her rebirths: she dies in a way or another (the trauma of losing her parents; the expulsion from her group; her attempt to suffocate her heritage when she settled down) and manages to be reborn, proving to be as resilient as Roma culture is. By the end of the novel, there is another rebirth of Zoli. As we readers learn later, Francesca grows up and lives in France, where she becomes an activist for Roma rights. She invites Zoli to participate in a conference she is organizing: "From Wheel to Parliament: Romani Memory and Imagination". While Zoli is at her daughter's house, she gets in touch with a group of Scottish musicians who will also take part in the conference. Through their music and joy in the middle of the night Zoli rediscovers herself; she sings again:

> "Go on", she says, "Play."
> The curly-haired one strikes a note on the mandolin, a bad note, too high, though he rinses it out with the next, and the guitarist joins in, slowly at first, and a wave moves across the gathering, like wind over grass, and the room feels as if it is opening, one window, then another, then the walls themselves. The tall musician strikes a high chord and nods at Zoli – she smiles, lifts her head, and begins.
> She begins. (McCANN, 2006, p. 328)

Zoli rescues herself at this moment and she sings – no wonder the novel ends with Zoli's long poem. This signals, in our opinion, that Zoli manages to recover her dignity and her heritage; the novel, thus, ends in a somewhat optimistic tone with a song of triumph through adversities.

4.2.4 Memory: remembrance and forgetting

Zoli is a story mainly told through the eyes of a female character. While she writes down her story to enlighten her daughter, she also gives voice to the story of the defeated ones - her people - who were almost wiped out during II World War. In this sense, Zoli, while reconstructing her past through her narrative, also offers another point of view of the historical event, reconstructing the *Porrajmos* and inserting the Romani people in the bigger picture. During the war, Zoli was about 10 years old, and she recalls this specific time. The personal recalling that time is intermingled with the knowledge of the facts that were discovered only after the end of the war. As discussed in Chapter 2, 2.2, Zoli's individual memory is connected with collective memory and the social network she lives in. Memory of the *Porrajmos* is thus constructed, giving voice to those who were silenced before, and challenging the "official history":

> There are things you can see and hear, nowadays, long after: the way the ditches were dug, and the way the ground trembled, and the way birds don't fly anymore over Belsen, about

> what happened to all our Czech brothers, our Polish sisters, our Hungarian cousins, how we in Slovakia were spared, though they beat us and tortured us and jailed us and took our music, how they forced us into workcamps, Hodonin and Lety and Petic, how they placed a hard curfew and even that curfew had curfews upon it, how they spat at us in the streets. You can hear stories about the badges that were sewn on the sleeves, and the Z that split the length of our people's arms, the red and white armbands, and the way there were no lean dogs near the camps, the way Zyklon-B turned all the hair of the dead brown, and how the barbed wire flew little flags of skin, the slippers that were made of our hair. You can hear all this and more. What happened to the least of us, happened to us all […] (McCANN, 2006, p. 47-48)

The acts of remembering/recalling are indeed the driving forces of the novel. Even though Zoli faced several hardships and traumatic events throughout her life, she does not want to forget. On the contrary, she wishes to make her version of the story known, if not to the whole world, at least to her daughter. Forgetting is something Zoli cannot afford to do; she was expelled from her community, the only thing she has had for a long time in her life was her story. Remembering, thus, was a way of protecting herself and her mental health. Zoli recalls that while in exile:

> [...] it was more my childhood that kept coming back to me, the touch of Grandfather's shirt, nine drops of water in the ashes, looking from the back of the wagon while the caravan bounced, and I think now that these thoughts were there to protect me and to make sure that I kept myself intact, although at the time they almost drove me to an edge I did not recognize. You can die of madness, daughter, but you can also die of silence. (Ibid, p. 233)

Only with old age – when she becomes a keeper of her own story – Zoli managed to come to terms with writing. For her Roma community, the written word was something to be distrusted: it represented the cultural asset and tool of oppression of the dominant society. If on the one hand Zoli was constantly encouraged to sing by her peers, writing was something else. When Zoli asked her grandfather to teach her how to read and write, Stanislaus remarked that he could teach her as long as it was a secret, for "it would cause a fuss among those who did not trust books" (Ibid, p. 23). As an oral tradition based group, her community believed that the right way of passing on tradition and keeping it enclosed and protected inside the group was through oral expression only. The memory of the group and the integrity of its members would thus be protected; besides, it is also a strong cultural marker: writing is the field of the *gadjé*. This distrust can be seen for instance when Stanislaus is supposed to sign a document and writes XXX as his signature, even though he knows how to write. When Zoli asks him why he did that, he says "he would not let them make an idiot of him with their rules" (Ibid, p. 28).

Such behavior is closely related to the invisibility strategy commonly adopted by the Roma. Invisibility has been the primary tactic of survival of the Roma, and this invisibility both to the eyes of the dominant society and to other racialized minorities is also partially responsible for the myth of lack of a Romani history, as indicated in section 2.4. If the Roma

became too visible, they would risk their cultural integrity. Therefore, a Roma should never tell the true story to the *gadjé*, for it could be used against them. Thus, deception is considered protection for the Roma, while for the westerners it is seen as sheer lying. According to Calum Carmichael in his essay "Gypsy law and Jewish law", this behavior also points out to a feeling of superiority in relation to the society outside the community:

> […] the way in which Gypsies choose not to reveal themselves to outsiders is in fact what is noteworthy. It is commonly reported that a Gypsy, when granting an interview to a non-Gypsy, uses the occasion to disseminate wrong information about Gypsy culture. Gypsy names and rituals lose their magical effectiveness if uttered to non-Gypsies. There are in fact prohibitions against members of the Roma informing outsiders about their laws. […]
> Rules often serve not just to cement an attachment to one's group but to promote a sense of superiority to the outsider. […] As David Daube has so well shown, they are the rules of a group claiming superior status: "What endows the factual description of a custom with regulatory effect is the addressee's desire to belong to the nobility singled out by this bearing" (In: WEYRAUCH (ed.), 2001, p. 124-125)

In the novel, there is a passage that clearly illustrates this point: when Zoli, as a child, tells authorities about the killing of her family. When the officers inquire her grandfather about what happened, Stanislaus makes up stories about it, never telling what actually happened. The officers gave up questioning him, and when they were alone, Stanislaus said to Zoli: "Never tell them that story, never. Do you hear me? [...] They'll make it twice as bad [...] And then they'll just shove us under again" (Ibid, p. 27-28). Another passage is when Zoli, during her wandering, arrives in Austria and is taken to a displaced persons camp. This is her first contact with the West; the doctor of the camp asks Zoli who she is and how did she end up there, but Zoli does not answer. At last, after several months, Zoli decides to talk, however, she makes up a totally new story, avoiding telling the truth. As Zoli remembers "I began to like this person I was creating […] You can make them swallow any lie with enough sugar and tears. They will lick the tears and sugar and make of them a paste called sympathy" (McCANN, 2006, p. 237). The use of stories to cover up the facts is both a kind of protection and a way of feeling superior to the oppressor.

The telling of fictional stories in order to cover a real story can also be considered a type of memory manipulation. Domination of memory is a question of power: not only of the dominant society in relation to the Roma (for example, the denial of the persecution against Romani people during the Holocaust years), but also of the Roma against Roma inside the group. In *Zoli* we see that the *kris*' sentence of pollution for life manipulates the memory of the group; the judges have the power to determine what will be remembered and what will be forgotten forever; as LeGoff indicates, the power granted by memory corresponds to the destruction of memory (cf. LEGOFF, 2005). Zoli is forgotten forever – here forgetting and banishment equal death, as Zoli is considered dead. Of course this system of justice is based

on oral tradition and memory – memory, experience and interpretation of the elders, the guardians of Roma traditions. Nothing is written down.

After a lifetime denying her writing skills, Zoli attempts to write down her story. We readers learn that Zoli lives now alone in the mountains in Italy, her husband has passed away and her daughter is living in France. Zoli says that she never tried to write anything down again:

> I could never have known what would become of the pencil in my fingers. For a good while, in that previous life, I was celebrated. They seemed like the best of years, but they did not last – maybe they were not meant to – and then came the time when I was banished. In my new life, I could not bear the thought of my old poems. […] I promised myself that I would never write again, nor would I try to remember the old poems. […] If they returned to me at all, they returned as song. (McCANN, 2006, p. 220)

It is plain to see that the trauma was strong. Zoli has not written for forty-two years, she was scared of doing it: "I feared that if I tried to give written meaning to my life that I would once again lose what I had gained" (Ibid, p. 221). One of the functions of a narrative is to give meaning to things and events, that is, to attempt to shape human experience – this is the consoling function of the narrative, as Umberto Eco puts it (cf. ECO, 2009). For Zoli, this consoling function is frightening: her past experience with written narratives ended up in losing all she had; the trauma still lives on.

However, the need to remember and tell her story to future generations was stronger. The habit to tell stories and to maintain memory Zoli once experienced with her Roma group is still present within her, being a part of her self. Nevertheless, as she is not Roma anymore, Zoli employs a *gadjé* strategy to perpetuate her story: she *writes* to preserve her memory. And she writes to make sense out of her story and of the Romani history too; Zoli's personal memory is also the collective memory. Through her writing, she attempts to heal the pain of the past, to reconstruct and give meaning to her story, to pass it on to future generations and to empower those at the margins of the official history – Zoli fulfills the duties of memory pointed out by Ricoeur:

> I cannot explain why so many of them have hated us so much over so many years, and even if I could, it would make it too easy for them. They cut our tongues and make us speechless and then try to get an answer from us. They do not wish to think for themselves and they dislike those who do. They are comfortable only with the whip above their heads, yet so many of us have spent our lives armed with little more dangerous than song. **I am filled with the memory of those who have lived and died.** […] Show me a single patch of land we did not leave, or would not leave, a single place we have not turned from. And while I have cursed so many of my own, our sleght of hand, our twin tongues, my own vain stupidities, even the worst of us has never been amongst the worst of them. They make enemies of us so that they do not have to look at themselves […] They turn justice into revenge and still call it by its old name. They expect us to see the future or at least to rob its pockets. They shave our heads and say: You are thieves, you are liars, you are filthy, why can't you just be like us? (McCANN, 2006, p. 237, bold added)

This is also an adaptation to modern times. Writing is a way of conveying memory to future generations better adapted to modern times and to the western way of life – Francesca, Zoli's daughter is a modern western girl, an activist for Romani rights in Paris. In a way, Zoli managed to adapt herself to the new times in her new life – a semi-*gadjé* life. As indicated before, banishment equals death and in death the Roma become non-Roma. Okely points out that for some Roma communities the written word is only accepted in death:

> In some discussions, the Travellers consciously associate banishment or assimilation with death. When a Traveller is banished from the group, the father and family pronounce the Traveller dead. His or her name is never mentioned again and is seen as polluting. […]
> For the travellers, their children are their regeneration; the continuous thread of existence. Their dead ancestors are not the focus of continuity. As a revengeful and unpredictable *mulo*, the dead individual loses Gypsy or Traveller identity and his or her name is written in a Gorgio medium on the gravestone. The dead Traveller is no longer classified as a member of the Gypsy group which continues elsewhere, in another place. […]
> The Gypsy dead have crossed the ethnic boundary. (OKELY, 1983, p. 228-230)

Zoli, on being "transformed" into a non-Roma appropriates the *gadjé* tool to both perpetuate and subvert Romani traditions and memory. Being a disruptive figure, Zoli is too *gadjé* for the Roma and too gypsy for the white society. A black-skinned Romani woman, a poet who knew how to read and write; simultaneously a *marime* collaborator with the *gadjé* and a defender of her people, who stands misunderstood halfway between East and West.

CONCLUSION

> The practice of scapegoating is evidenced in many different cultures: most human cultures have deployed myths of sacrifice to scapegoat strangers. It means holding certain aliens or strangers responsible for the ills of society – finding the one or ones who can be identified with evil or wrong-doing, blamed for it, and isolated or cast out (or in the extreme cases, to wage war against) from the community in order to leave the remaining members with a feeling of guiltlessness, atoned (at-one) with the collective standards of behaviour. Scapegoating both allocates blame and serves to "inoculate against future misery and failure" by evicting or hunting down the presumed cause of misfortune. (FIDYK, 2008, p.6)

The Roma have always been *par excellence* the scapegoats of the world. Centuries of prejudice have worsened the situation of poverty and marginalization of the Roma, which is still a reality nowadays. Stereotypes, such as the child-stealing gypsy, the sorcerer, the dirty, lazy or carefree wanderer have been reinforced by the media in general and specifically by literary representations, and are still part of the negative public image according to which the Roma are labeled. Besides, brutal attempts of forced assimilation (with the destruction of native heritage) or explicit elimination programs promoted by governments in different times and places have done little to diminish the atmosphere of suspicion that plagues the relationship between Roma and non-Roma and vice versa.

For a resilient culture based on orality and on the family institution (the main keeper of tradition), the Roma have developed survival strategies, such as invisibility and the closing of community to outsiders in order to preserve the group's identity and heritage. Preventing non-Roma from interfering in the group's affairs undoubtedly helps to protect culture; however, it also opens space for misunderstandings to happen – a fertile soil for the development of stereotypes. On becoming invisible to the eyes of the dominant society, the Roma are free to be who they are as a group and as individuals; on the other hand, they have no representation, and, therefore, no way of standing up for Roma rights. Besides, with such strategy, the Romani ethnic identity can be fully exercised mainly (and sometimes solely) inside the group, and rarely outside it.

The orality present in Roma culture is an important trait of identity. The oral mode is heavily based on memory, and memory is an essential element of identity – either individual or collective. The adoption of the written word would mean endangering their heritage, once their culture would be exposed (and therefore vulnerable) to *gadjé* eyes. Orality imposes a barrier against assimilation; having no written documents ensures invisibility; the written word, thus, would lead to death of Romani identity and culture. This defense of Roma identity, however, also implies an inadequacy to establish a dialog with the modern world of

the dominant societies, which, in turn, consider the Roma as a monolithic whole of illiterate, backward, historyless people.

The retrieval of the past is made through documentation and memory. Both use narrative devices in order to give meaning to a particular set of events or remembrances. History is also built up through narratives that select and weave past events together in a coherent discourse. In this sense, the Roma do have a history, although it is not mainly a written one. Besides, in view of lack of written documentation, and sometimes due to lack of interest on the part of old historians and researchers, Romani history has been hard to be tracked down. However, in view of the new efforts to register the plight of minorities and to recover the histories of common people (as opposed to the old view of a single, all-inclusive official historic discourse) the panorama is gradually changing. In relation to the history/memory relationship, Hirsch points out that:

> Robertson suggests that history may be described as the memory or memories of the lives, actions, and beliefs of the human beings who lived in particular spaces and that memory is contained or found in things such as the names of people, places, events, and institutions. […]. It is embodied in stories, poems, histories, speeches, films, jokes, rituals, games, and social groupings and in political, economic, and religious institutions. These are the conduits and holders of memory, and they are the concretization of the stories, whether true or not, that have been remembered and transmitted. (HIRSCH, 1995, p. 25)

Therefore, with this change of perspective, histories that were once forgotten are now slowly emerging to the surface. This is true, for instance, with the history of the *Porrajmos*. If the Jewish Holocaust during the II World War (the *Shoah*) has been the object of several studies around the globe, the Romani Holocaust is still being discovered. It is difficult to find testimonies of Roma survivors due to the distrust of *gadjé* and for fear of further persecutions (the invisibility strategy); besides, the Romanies who were literate had no interest in writing down their stories of what they have experienced in concentration camps (cf. GLAJAR, 2008). As such, we believe that artistic narratives are important, specially in this case: fiction recovers this history and avoid their oblivion. Literature complements history, as pointed out by Hayden White (2001). David Schwarz indicates that fiction is important because it keeps the Holocaust alive in our imagination, when memoirists have died:

> The imaginative energy of Holocaust fictional narratives, transmutting facts in the crucible of art, has become more and more prominent a part of how the collective memory of the Holocaust is shaped and survives. As the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., shows us, it is when Holocaust history is personalized and dramatized, when abstractions and numbers give way to human drama, that the distance between us and the victims closes. (1999, p. 32-33)

The Eighth Sin and *Zoli* are novels which play this role of registering the stories of the *Porrajmos*, and whose main characters portray individuals, not types. Both novels are written

as autobiographies to be passed on to future generations – to Benoit's stepson and to Zoli's daughter – as a way of mastering and reconstructing their own stories, using a *gadjé* tool to preserve Roma culture and to have their own say at the end. Moreover, both novels deal with issues such as memory, identity and trauma.

Even though both protagonists are outsiders, the way they deal with the hardships of their lives are completely different: in *The Eighth Sin*, Benoit is an outsider: he was ripped off from his old life with his Roma family, became the only survivor of his caravan and was not able to adjust fully to his new *gadjé* life in the United States. Benoit's identity is painfully fragmented: he tries to cling on to the few traces of his Roma life left in his memory of his early childhood to construct his Romaniness, while trying to forget/overcome the traumas of having lived in a concentration camp. Benoit is a bitter person, a straightforward rebel, and shows a great degree of revolt until he fulfils his revenge; Benoit learns that the eighth sin is the sin of forgetting, for forgetting his story would mean forgetting his heritage and part of his self. After his revenge, Benoit lives as if nothing matters as a wanderer in Europe, once the main purpose of his life has been achieved. For Benoit, forgiveness is not possible and his fury can only be calmed down by revenge.

Zoli is also an outsider, however, for her, a future is possible. From an early age Zoli already questioned some of the dogmas of her Roma heritage, such as women should not be allowed to learn to read and write. Nevertheless, Zoli had a happy childhood, and her Romaniness is a strong part of her identity, different from Benoit. She experienced and witnessed persecutions for being Roma, specially during the war, although she was not kept in a concentration camp. Zoli, like Benoit, also questions the reasons why the Roma are so much persecuted; however we see there is no revolt in her words: she accepts the fate and tries to make the most of a bad situation. Even when Zoli is expelled from her *kumpania* for being polluted, she reasons but she never complains, and shows no desire for revenge, but rather resignation – a feeling which echoes in most of Roma communities. Zoli, after her journey, also arrives at the West and decides to settle down; at the mountains of Italy she begins another part of her life, and starts anew. However Zoli, like Benoit, cannot suppress her memory and her story, and she decides to write it down to her daughter, Francesca. Zoli recovers her Roma heritage through writing - a second rebirth in the novel, which ends in an optimistic tone. Writing for both protagonists becomes a way of dealing with the trauma, of making sense of their story, of reconstructing one's identity and of passing it on to next generations, thus preserving memory.

There are differences also in the narrative strategies employed in both novels. In *The Eighth Sin*, Stefan Kanfer employs fragments of actual testimonies and accounts of survivors in order to back up his narrative. He uses documents, in our understanding, so as to overcome a much discussed ethical impossibility of representing the Holocaust in fiction. This device puts the novel halfway between testimony literature and fiction – a docu-fiction, as Valentina Glajar has pointed out. In *Zoli*, we see that, although the story is loosely based in a real character, the degree of fictionalization is greater; there are several narrators and points of view in the novel, and the narrative is mainly based in the memory of the characters. In *The Eighth Sin*, history and documentation play an important role in the narrative; there is an intention of exposing the history of the *Porrajmos*, showing that it really happened, while in *Zoli*, the emphasis is on Roma culture and memory; Colum McCann does not approach the Holocaust directly, but rather deals with it in a subtler manner.

In sum, what we note in both novels is that the authors show a deep admiration for Roma culture. Both Kanfer and McCann have dealt with Roma heritage in a very respectful way, researching the object of their novels and avoiding the use and reinforcement of old gypsy stereotypes. Of course, as they are non-Roma writers, we are aware that they offer a non-Roma view of the *Porrajmos*. Besides, there may be some inaccuracies in the portrayal of Roma culture, such as, for instance, the reduced use of Romani language. One may say that the Roma described in the novels (specially in *The Eighth Sin*) is a Roma extracted from the books, not from real life. Or that the pollution rules (in the case of *Zoli*) are not so strict nowadays. However, it is also true that fictional representations of the Roma by the Roma are lacking, once the distrust of the written word among the Roma is still common. This also shows a certain difficulty on the part of the Roma to represent themselves against the continuous use of negative stereotypes and to stand up and have their voices heard, as Ian Hancock explains:

> Stereotypes need not be malicious as long as they are recognized as just that – stereotypes. We know that Hollywood gangland mafiosi do not represent all Italians, and we learn in school, at the same time, about the contributions of Botticelli, Leonardo and Michelangelo. Today, with increased media coverage and access to informative web sites such as Patrin and RADOC, ignorance can no longer be used as an excuse, if writers do their homework. The general public is coming to understand that the literary "Gypsies" (or more usually "gypsies") are something quite different from the actual Romanies, whose real story is both complex and moving – so reasons for the relentless perpetuation of the myth must be sought elsewhere, and the consequences of so doing examined. (In: GLAJAR; RADULESCU (eds.) 2008, p. 189)

Zoli and *The Eighth Sin* are works which aim at exposing a history which was (and is) too often denied and are novels which attempt to challenge the Gypsy stereotype engraved in the collective imaginary of the West. These literary representations of the Roma can be seen

as markers of a much needed change in the *gadjé* perspective. That is what we strongly hope for.

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ANNEX A – Map 2: Routes of Romani Diaspora

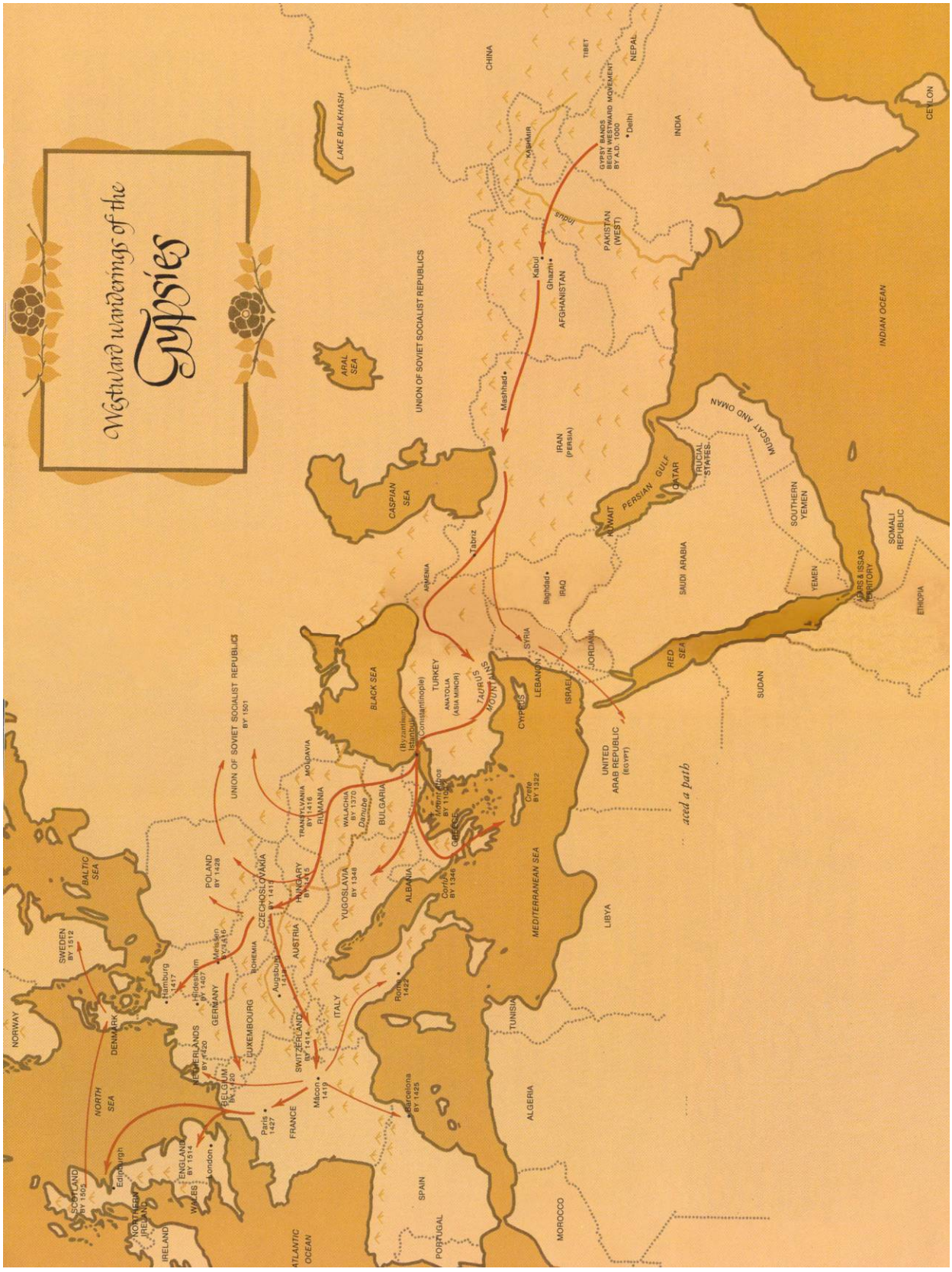

Figura. 2: Routes of Romani Diaspora
Source: MCDOWELL, Bart. *Gypsies: Wanderers of the World*. Washington: National Geographic Society, 1970, p. 16-17.

ANNEX B – Papusza's photo

Figura. 3: Bronislawa Wajs (Papusza, 1949)
Source: FONSECA, Isabel. *Bury me Standing: the Gypsies and their journey*. New York: Vintage Books, 1995, p. 23.

ANNEX C – Roma in concentration camps and badges used in concentration camps

Figura. 4: Romani arrivals in the Bełżec extermination camp await instructions.
Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Archive In: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Porajmos.jpg

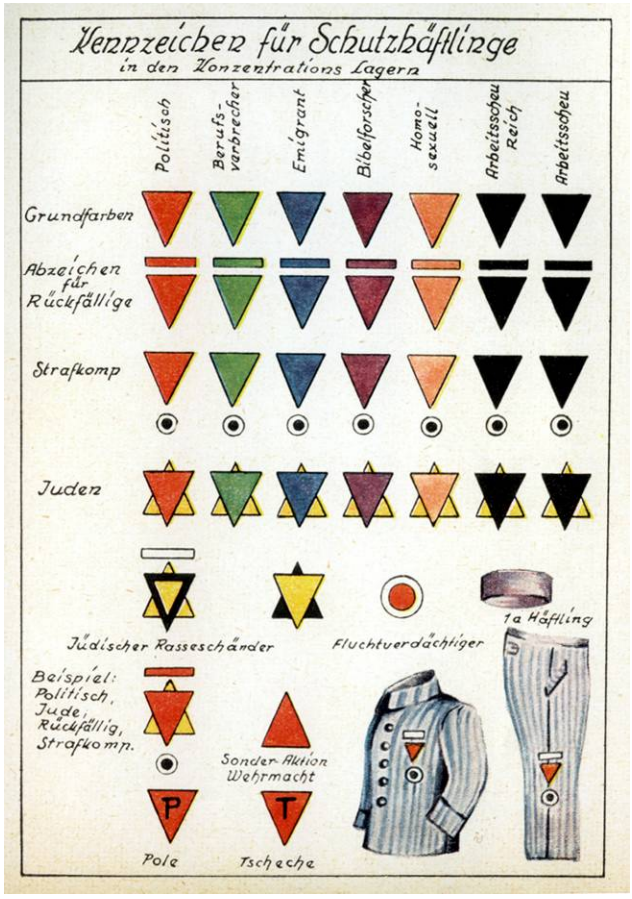

Figura. 5: German concentration camp chart of prisoner markings. The black triangle was assigned to "asocial" and "work-shy" elements, including the Roma. They were later assigned a brown triangle.
Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:German_concentration_camp_chart_of_prisoner_markings.jpg

ANNEX D – Roma flag and anthem proposed by the 1971 World Romani Congress

Figura 6: Roma Flag. Blue symbolizes blue skies, heaven and spiritual values; green, the land and earthly values. The red wheel symbolizes movement and progress and makes reference to the Indian national flag, which has also the Ashok Chakra in the center (cf. *Roma*, by WR Rishi. Punjabi University, Patiala, India, 1976 & 1996)
Source: http://www.romani.org/local/romani_anthem.html.

DJELEM DJELEM - THE ROMANI ANTHEM
Written by Zarko Jovanovic, 1969
Adopted as theofficial Romani anthem at the
First World Romani Congress in
London, England, April, 8, 1971

Romani	English Translation by Ron Lee
Djelem, djelem, lungone dromensa	I have travelled over long roads
Maladilem baxtale Romensa	I have met fortunate Roma
Djelem, djelem, lungone dromensa	I have travelled far and wide
Maladilem baxtale Romensa.	I have met lucky Roma
Ay, Romale, Ay, Chavale,	Oh, Romani adults, Oh Romani youth
Ay, Romale, Ay, Chavale.	Oh, Romani adults, Oh Romani youth
Ay Romale, katar tumen aven	Oh, Roma, from wherever you have come
Le tserensa baxtale dromensa	With your tents along lucky roads
Vi-man sas u bari familiya	I too once had a large family
Tai mudardya la e kali legiya.	But the black legion murdered them
Aven mansa sa lumiake Roma	Come with me, Roma of the world
Kai putaile le Romane droma	To where the Romani roads have been opened
Ake vryama - ushti Rom akana	Now is the time - stand up, Roma,
Ame xutasa mishto kai kerasa.	We shall succeed where we make the effort.
Ay, Romale, Ay Chavale,	Oh, Roma adults, Oh, Roma youth
Ay, Romale, Ay Chavale.	Oh, Roma adults, Oh, Roma youth.

Quadro 1 : Source: http://www.romani.org/local/romani_anthem.htm.