

“ICH BIN EINE WURZEL AUS ÖSTERREICH”: LOCATION AND NATIONAL IDENTITY  
IN AUSTRO-ROMANY AUTHOR CEIJA STOJKA’S *WIR LEBEN IM VERBORGENEN*  
(1988) AND *REISENDE AUF DIESER WELT* (1992)

by

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(Under the Direction of MARTIN KAGEL)

ABSTRACT

*Wir leben im Verborgenen* (1988) and *Reisende auf dieser Welt* (1992) is a double-volume memoir by Austrian *Romni* and Holocaust survivor Ceija Stojka. In this work, she revisits the horrors of imprisonment in Auschwitz-Birkenau, Ravensbrück, and Bergen-Belsen while concurrently describing the aftereffects and problems of reintegration to Austrian society after the Holocaust. Although she writes as a traveling *Romni*, she also demonstrates her belonging in Austria through her identification with various Austrian locations. She connects Roma memory to sites of Austrian cultural heritage, yet she also links her identity to sites of exclusion from Austrian society. In recognizing a range of Austrian sites as moments of both inclusion and rejection, she transforms them into sites of shared Austro-Romany memory. In this sense, location is a key element in the way Stojka writes about her identity in *Wir leben im Verborgenen* and *Reisende auf dieser Welt*, since it gives her a flexibility to practice both cultures, yet still belong to Austria.

INDEX WORDS: Roma, Austria, Holocaust, Ceija Stojka, Identity, Autobiography

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## DEDICATION

For my beloved family and dear friends, who supported me even when identity politics became dinner conversation. And for my Miláček, whose patience is limitless.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
CHAPTER	
1 Introduction.....	1
Roma in Austrian Society Prior to 1938.....	6
Austrian Roma in the Holocaust.....	8
The “Epistemic Value of Experience”.....	10
2 Writing from a Marginalized Perspective .....	12
Aspects of Memoir Writing: Female Autobiography and the Holocaust.....	14
3 An Austro-Romany Style.....	25
Locating the Individual in the Collective.....	25
Use of <i>Romanes</i> and German.....	27
An “Austrian” Language.....	28
4 Locations of Austro-Romany Memory: Belonging and Exclusion .....	31
Mariazell, Jois, and Pinkafeld.....	35
Paletzgasse and Bergen-Belsen.....	45
5 Conclusion.....	52
WORKS CITED .....	54

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

In our 2011 interview, Roma survivor Ceija Stojka spoke directly to the question of post-Holocaust minority identity (*Minderheitsidentität*) in Austria: “I really despise that term, ‘minority.’ It doesn’t describe us and there are some (whom I won’t name) that use it against us. They would like to think of us as minor. And we aren’t. We are the Roma.”

Although Stojka enjoys the opportunity to wear her Roma heritage and culture with pride today, there existed a time when the dark cloud of National Socialism silenced the voices of Roma all over Europe. In her two-volume memoir *Wir leben im Verborgenen* and *Reisende auf dieser Welt* Stojka revisits the horrors of imprisonment at Auschwitz, Ravensbrück, and Bergen-Belsen, while concurrently describing the aftereffects and the problems of re-integration into Austrian society after the Holocaust. Although there are numerous Roma German-language Holocaust memoirs, Ceija Stojka is the first and only female author who relates these experiences in an Austrian context. Through these pieces, she engages with a set of uniquely Austrian social and political issues, such as post-Holocaust discrimination, the place of the Roma in Austrian society, and the issue of Austrian identity essentialism.

Since the publication of *Wir leben im Verborgenen* and *Reisende auf dieser Welt* in 1988 and 1992, Stojka has continued to engage with these issues through her other creative works. In 2003, she published the first book of poetry in *Romanes* and German entitled *Meine Wahl zu schreiben: ich kann es nicht*, followed by the audio CD of Roma songs and story telling “Me Diklem Suno” (“I Dreamt”) in 2004. In 2005 Stojka revisited the horrors of internment at

Bergen-Belsen with an unabridged account of her experience of this particular camp in *Träume ich, dass ich lebe: Befreit aus Bergen-Belsen*, and collaborated with Dr. Karen Berger to produce and star in the first full-length documentary about Austrian Roma, made especially for an Austrian television audience, entitled “Ceija Stojka: Portrait einer Romni.” Additionally, Stojka has produced a large body of visual artwork to complement the literary images she creates.

Stojka’s Austro-Romany background and her insistence on spreading awareness of the Roma Genocide has garnered attention from numerous scholars, whose works explore various facets of her identity in the wake of the Holocaust and continued contemporary discrimination. Personal interviews conducted by Karen Rosenberg and Karen Berger contribute to the primary body of Stojka’s autobiographical work, while articles by Susan Tebbutt and Michaela Grobbel investigate Stojka’s performative representation (through writing and singing) of her identity as a negotiation between minority and majority society and as acts that “create and undo themselves at the same time” (Grobbel 141). Book chapters by Roxane Riegler and Gesa Zinn focus on Stojka’s poetry as a medium of identity expression in the face of trauma and as a special kind of exile literature within Europe, and Lorely French at Pacific University spreads awareness of Stojka’s works and message of equality through arranging for her paintings to be exhibited in the United States. Although these scholars focus on different aspects of Stojka’s creative persona, they emphasize the need for understanding identity as existing at the intersection of cultural spheres, on Bhabha’s “periphery” (39). However, they do not address the unique relationship between identity and location in her works.

This thesis attempts to contribute to existing scholarship by showing how the prolific Austrian poet, writer, singer, artist, and educator Ceija Stojka experiences her identity through

Roma memories located at sites of Austrian cultural heritage. In recognizing a range of Austrian sites as moments of both inclusion and rejection, she transforms them into sites of shared Austro-Romany memory. In this sense, location is a key element in the way Stojka writes about her identity in *Wir leben im Verborgenen* and *Reisende auf dieser Welt*, since it gives her a flexibility to practice both cultures, yet still belong to Austria. As the poetic voice from Stojka's "I am a root" indicates:

Ich bin eine Wurzel  
aus Österreich  
eine Wurzel  
die sich auch nicht umsetzen lässt  
ich würde woanders ja gar nicht gedeihen.  
.....  
.....  
meine Wurzeln liegen tief  
ja tief in der Erde  
und mein Stamm ist kräftig und gesund. (in Meier-Rogan 24)

Just like this root, Stojka has a deep connection to Austrian locations and Austrian memory, even as she practices her Roma culture with pride. When I met with her in June of 2011, her Viennese apartment reflected these realities as a colorful mixture of her own paintings, photos of her family, and an impressive collection of German-language books. Sitting at her dining room table,

we conversed to the murmur of local Viennese talk radio while drinking tea and eating *Krapfen*. Although Stojka receives visitors interested in her story nearly five days out of the week, she spoke to me with an attentive and sympathetic openness, responding to my concern of asking unpleasant questions related to her Holocaust experience with: “Nichts ist unangenehm! Alles geschieht. Es ist ja geschehen, sonst wärest du nicht da.” This lack of boundaries in terms of telling her story extends to other parts of her life, and manifests itself in the way she writes of socio-cultural memory, location, and identity in *Wir leben im Verborgenen* and *Reisende auf dieser Welt*.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, identity refers to “the sameness of a person or thing at all times or in all circumstances; the condition or fact that a person or thing is itself and not something else; individually, personally” (620). For Stojka, identity retains this individualistic quality, but it relates to other aspects of identity in a different way. Because of the self-reflexivity of the personalized writing process, Stojka’s memoirs become spaces in which identity is both indirectly reflected and consciously constructed. She questions the sameness that traditional notions of identity entail, asserting the necessity of flexibility in the modern identity formation process. In this way, she engages with traditional notions of homogeneity in the modern nation-state.

The concept of nation has traditionally been viewed as denoting a uniform entity, with the key element being the sameness of its citizenry. To create political uniformity, the modern nation constructs a complex matrix of socio-cultural binaries, through which its citizens define themselves against their non-citizen counterparts. The way that these socio-cultural binaries are constructed often results in discrimination against fellow citizens who, because of ethnicity or

origin, may still be viewed as non- or not-quite-citizen counterparts.<sup>1</sup> Such binaries make it nearly impossible for multi-cultural groups like the Roma to fully participate in and thrive in their societies, and these societies exclude such groups from being its legitimate members. Since Austrian society has been conceived of as a group of sedentary, non-Slavic, Caucasian, German-speaking, Catholic individuals, the originally itinerant Roma have been marginalized and persecuted as “outsiders” since their arrival in the fourteenth century (Action 28).

Stojka’s memoirs stand as testaments of resistance to this narrow definition of Austrian identity. Yet she also questions her outsider status. While members of other marginalized groups may feel obligated to define themselves according to society’s prescriptive nomenclature in order to engage with it, Stojka’s works immediately lay claim to both Austrian and Roma identities. She rejects the identity binary (Austrian versus Roma) as a necessary component of the nation-state by asserting her own claim to Austrian cultural belonging, even as she simultaneously celebrates her Roma heritage. In this sense, Stojka replaces the binary thought pattern with what sociologist Sheila Rowbotham describes as a “dual-consciousness” (26-40). Certain commonly held stereotypes are refuted, while other aspects of the Roma culture and its hybridity are elucidated, leading Stojka to convey a self in the memoirs which is culturally defined, yet also stands separate from the majority’s Austrian culture. According to sociologist Rosaura Sanchez, this process results in the creation of “constellations of identities” that remain distinct but subtly intertwined (42).

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<sup>1</sup> For a more complete discussion of this subject, see Benedict Anderson’s seminal study *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, particularly Chapter 8 “Patriotism and Racism.”

Stojka's conception of identity not only responds to the negation of the Rom by Austrian hegemonic society, it also demonstrates a strong awareness of her own positioning in a complex and sometimes conflicting confluence of economic, political, and social structures. Refraining from limiting her memoirs solely to the Holocaust experience, she is able to address Austrian concerns regarding the Roma in these structures as well, resulting in a multi-dimensional work that operates on a number of levels. Even as she relates her painful memories of the past, her memoirs remain anchored in the present in a way that reflects what Sanchez understands as "'positionality,' or one's imagined relation or standpoint relative to positioning" (Sanchez 39). By creating a past that exists alongside the present, Stojka is able to reflect on her own ideological stance regarding her social position and not only exposes, but comments on the social inequities she experiences within the sub-strata of the Roma community and the larger Austrian society (Milton, "Anti-Gypsyism" 37).

#### *Roma in Austrian Society Prior to 1938*

The importance of Stojka's works in negotiating a new kind of Austrian identity cannot be underestimated, especially when juxtaposed against the troubled history of the Roma in German-speaking countries. Although they were initially well-received following the first wave of migration to Germany and Austria in the early 1400s, tensions soon developed between the darker-skinned, foreign-looking migrants and the sedentary population (Rose 14). Official edicts expelled Roma from German speaking territories several times, while local guild restrictions shut them out of their traditional occupational areas of metalworking and basket making. These restrictions eventually forced them to resort to begging and stealing, creating the stereotype that

is associated with Roma still today (Tebbutt, “Scapegoats” 3). A policy of rejection became the norm, supported by edicts calling for confinement for life to hard labor; branding, flogging, and expulsion for older males and women; handing over of children under ten to Christian families for “good upbringing”; execution without trial for practicing the itinerant way of life; rewards for catching or killing a ‘Gypsy’ (Lewy 4). After centuries of persecution, Enlightenment principles eventually forced the end of such brutal practices.

A second wave of Roma emigration to the German speaking states came from the Balkans and Hungary during the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Their arrival coincided with the emergence of racial theory in Europe, which labeled them as a “racially inferior group whose presence jeopardized the purity of the Germanic race” (Lewy 4). It was also at this time that the state governments passed laws calling for strict control of identity papers and the withholding of trading licenses for itinerant peoples, prohibiting free movement in bands, and forcing migrant children to attend state schools in the name of ‘re-education’. Bavaria established its *Zigeunerzentrale* in 1899, and quickly moved from recording information about Gypsies to suggesting measures against them (5). Also local populations collaborated with the government in making life as difficult as possible for the Roma, even pushing Frankfurt authorities to force their itinerant neighbors into what was officially called a “concentration camp for Gypsies,” in the form of a fenced in, poorly maintained living area with no running water far away from the more populated area (Lewy 8).

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<sup>2</sup> According to our 2011 interview, Stojka states that her family arrived in German-speaking territory in the early 1700s.

While these laws remained extremely restrictive, early twentieth century state governments had not found a way to control the movements of the Roma and were still engaged in what they termed a “struggle against the Gypsy plague,” (Milton, “Social Outsiders” 271). Finally, on April 3, 1929 the comprehensive “Law for the Fight against the Gypsy Nuisance” was passed by the parliament in Hesse, with similar laws being passed in Vienna and the Burgenland province. As one observer wrote: “All in all, the Weimar Republic had done a good deal of spadework for the regime which would succeed it” (Lewy 10). The next few years would only prove how true this statement was throughout Germany and Austria.

#### *Austrian Roma in the Holocaust*

With the annexation of Austria to the German *Reich* in 1938, around 11,000 Roma, Sinti, and other “Gypsy” groups came under the grip of National Socialist rule (Turner 35). Even before the *Anschluss*, Austrian hostility towards the Roma was widespread and intense. The incursion of National Socialist racial policy into Austria made it possible for Austrians to express these sentiments more freely. When the National Socialist government was implemented in Austria, the authorities moved against what they considered ‘asocial, racially unfit’ groups with alarming speed, accomplishing what had taken years in Germany in a matter of several months (Lewy 57). In the words of the governor of the Burgenland province: “Those who know the Gypsies’ character and understand how degraded their race is will agree that they must be treated exactly like the Jews” (Lewy 59).

In accordance with these views and aiming to rid Austria of the Roma, Austrian authorities established internment camps Maxglan in Salzburg and Lackenbach in the

Burgenland (Turner 96). While some Roma, like most of Ceija Stojka's family, managed to conceal themselves with the help of friends or neighbors, the majority faced imprisonment in inhuman conditions, and subsequent transportation from these camps to the Lodz ghetto in 1941. The first transports consisted of one thousand Austrian and Czech Roma, among them Stojka's father, Wackar Horvath. The majority of Roma imprisoned at Lodz were later gassed to death at the killing center of Chelmno in occupied Poland after 1942 (14). Others, like Stojka's father, were forced to Dachau, Neuengamme, and Sachsenhausen, only to be murdered in the course of "medical" experiments in Schloss Hartheim, in Linz (Tebbutt, "Literary Images" 3).

Following the Auschwitz Decree of 1942, Austrian authorities rounded up all remaining Austrian Roma in order to implement complete racial separation and proceed with the annihilation of the Roma. It was in this framework that the National Socialist administration established the Gypsy family camp in Auschwitz, to which Stojka, her mother, and siblings were deported in the spring of 1942 (Lewy 16). The spring of 1943 brought eight transports of 2,348 Austrian Gypsies to Auschwitz, while smaller camps and holding ghettos were dissolved. Those who had avoided gassing, and who survived hard forced labor and starvation, were transported to Buchenwald and Ravensbrück in early August 1944 (Turner 107). Those not included in these transports, which included 2,897 Roma and Sinti men, women, and children, "were taken to the crematoria, where they were gassed" (Lewy 17). Ceija Stojka and her mother were among those moved to Ravensbrück.

In late 1942, Vienna was proudly announced to be "Gypsy-free," and already in March 1944, SS *Reichsführer* Heinrich Himmler concluded that the restrictive decrees against Jews and Roma should be discontinued since "their evacuation and isolation [had] already been

completed” (Lewy 19, Milton, “Social Outsiders” 227). The death toll resulting from these policies is staggering: the estimated number of Roma murdered by the National Socialists and their supporters stands between 250,000 and 500,000 Europe-wide.<sup>3</sup> The exact total number of all murdered Gypsy groups is unknown.

### *The “Epistemic Value of Experience”*

Cejka Stojka encountered what is arguably the most extreme form of discrimination against the Roma practiced within the last 200 years of Austrian history (Tebbutt, “Virtual Wall” 269). Yet she immediately returned to Vienna with her surviving family upon their liberation from Bergen-Belsen in 1945, and continues to call the city her home, despite the city’s increasingly right wing, anti-foreigner government. While this may seem like a startling contradiction, it underscores what Sanchez terms the “epistemic value of experience” inherent in the writings of marginalized groups (43). Stojka’s writing shows strong connections between her social positioning and positionality as both Austrian and Roma, and these connections are a result of a variety of experiences through which Stojka has lived. Therefore, experiencing marginalization in some circles and acceptance in others informs the way that Stojka forms and negotiates her identities. Through staying in Vienna and writing her story as an Austro-Romany story, her identity takes on a spatial element, connecting her to a city in which she is simultaneously shunned and celebrated. She therefore demonstrates an understanding of identification as a containment process, even as the variability allows her to shift and negotiate

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<sup>3</sup> “Genocide of European Roma, 1939-1945” in *Holocaust Encyclopedia*. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Online.

different aspects of this identity in order to engage her audience. Through the writing process, she embarks on a “search for commonalities, for identities-in-difference” that can unite individuals with “common interests (. . .) to produce political alliances and solidarity for social struggle” (Sanchez 31-32). This remains especially important in the context of the Roma genocide and the oral nature of the Roma culture. By committing her life to paper, she constitutes herself as a “subject as well as an object of history” and relates a story which not only re-defines Austrian collective memory, but that recognizes the social, economic, and political boundaries of the collective and transforms them.

## CHAPTER 2

### WRITING FROM A MARGINALIZED PERSPECTIVE

In the post-World War II, post-Holocaust environment, many who had survived the National Socialist death camps found returning to Austria or Germany painful. Their families murdered, they arrived home to find their homes demolished, their possessions gone, and only shadows of the life they had known in existence. In the midst of this hopelessness, a large number of survivors emigrated to other parts of Europe or to the Americas, leaving behind cities that held memories of devastation and grief. Jewish survivor Ruth Klüger writes that she is startled when she hears people talking of the “lovely” city of Vienna, since she can only remember a city that “was forbidden, *verboten*, out of reach for Jews” and describes it as “her first prison” (25-26). As a consequence, she finds it difficult to identify with Austria and to travel back there.

Given the overwhelmingly negative response of Holocaust survivors towards their former homelands, it is rather unusual that Ceija Stojka continues to make Vienna her place of residence. Liberated at the age of twelve from KZ Bergen-Belsen by British troops in 1945, Stojka, her mother, and her surviving siblings decided to make their way back to Austria. After months of haphazardly using whatever transportation available to get back to Linz, the family heard of an assembly of surviving Roma at the city’s Urfahrbrücke, and were able to meet many of their relatives at this location. Stojka’s mother was reunited with two of her five children, and they traveled with bits and pieces of the extended family to Vienna. Upon learning that their small wooden house in the Paletzgasse had been destroyed, the family sought accommodation with friends until they received an abandoned Nazi apartment from the Allied Powers occupying

the city. In the meantime Stojka's mother and older sister Mitzi continued to look for the youngest missing siblings, and Ceija, whose schooling had been cut off by imprisonment, went to the nearest educational institution, asking to join in on classes. When the owner of the apartment returned, the family had to leave and since they were unable to find anywhere to live permanently, they were forced to return to their itinerant way of life. When their traditional occupation of horse-trading became economically unsustainable, the family returned to Vienna in 1949, largely due to the large network of relatives that called it their home. The post-war climate provided almost no way for Roma to support themselves, and selling wares at the yearly market through a trading license remained one of the few ways that they could survive. Widespread prejudice made it difficult for Roma to receive an official trading license, yet both Ceija Stojka and other family members managed to do so, and thus became involved in the carpet trade. In spite of their low socio-economic status and in the face of continued discrimination, the Stojka family has occupied a Viennese apartment since the 1950's and has played an active role in the *Wiederaufbau* of the Austrian economy. Through residing in the very country that victimized her, Ceija Stojka elects consistently to confront the past and its painful memories, even as she deals with marginalization and denial of Roma genocide in the present. In the face of this reality, the act of writing takes on added significance.

It is important to note that at the time of the publication of Stojka's memoirs in 1988 and 1992, only two scholars had attempted to provide a detailed study of the plight of Austrian Roma during the Holocaust.<sup>4</sup> Both of these studies attempted to recreate a past that Austrian authorities

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<sup>4</sup> See: Selma Steinmetz's *Österreichs Zigeuner im NS-Staat* (1966) and Erika Thurner's *National Socialism and the Gypsies in Austria* (1998).

and the passage of time had largely obscured. Although they were commendable attempts at uncovering the past, the works have had little to no influence outside academic circles. Because of the lack of an official Austrian organization that represented Roma and Sinti interests, it was also difficult for the Roma and Sinti to give personal accounts of the persecution they had suffered. In the atmosphere of silence that prevailed in Austria, Ceija Stojka's memoir exploded onto the literary scene "like a bomb" (Baumgartner 3). *Wir leben im Verborgenen* and *Reisende auf dieser Welt* appeared as the first personal Austrian accounts of the atrocities suffered by the Roma at the hands of the National Socialists. Beyond detailing Stojka's experiences, they provided the first-hand confirmation of many facts and reports presented by Selma Steinmetz and Erika Thurner. Because of the shocking and personal nature of Stojka's memoirs, coupled with the fact that they remain aimed at the *gadjo* or ethnic white Austrian audience with the intention of informing them about an aspect of a troubling yet shared past, the memoirs function as a public record of forgotten or ignored events. In this sense, they also act as a way of redressing and healing wrongdoing.<sup>5</sup>

#### *Aspects of Memoir Writing: Female Autobiography and the Holocaust*

While Ceija Stojka writes as a Roma connecting to an Austrian *gadjo* readership, she also writes as a *Romni*, as a female Roma. Although texts written by women of various ethnicities are quite common today, the white male text has represented the literary standard for autobiography for most of history. Consequently, autobiographical theory has largely been developed around a

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<sup>5</sup> For a more detailed discussion of this phenomenon, please consult Azade Seyhan's *Writing Outside the Nation*, 45.

“pervasive concept of individualism” that excludes those who have been historically denied the right to individualism from ‘real’ autobiographical writing (Stanford Freeman 75). For non-traditional autobiographers, like women, minorities, and many non-Western peoples, collective and relational identities play a central role in the construction of their memoirs (75). In other words, while the identity of the self is recognized and indirectly described through the very act of autobiographical writing, these groups often view their identities within the larger scope of their communities, with the personal experiences and feelings often acting as representative of group experiences and feelings. Therefore, female autobiographies must be seen as simultaneously individual and collective (Bree 174). Indeed, as women’s autobiographical theory continued to develop, theorists like Nancy Chodorow and Sheila Rowbotham cited these very senses of identification, interdependence, and community as key elements in the development of the female identity (Stanford Freeman 75). Additionally, Rowbotham argues that a woman “cannot experience herself as an entirely unique entity because she is always aware of how she is being defined *as woman*”, which means that the woman belongs to the group of people whose gender or racial identity has been defined by the dominant white male culture (Rowbotham in Stanford Freeman, 76).

While these feminist thinkers of the 1970s provide an interesting basis for the discussion of female autobiography, it is not always useful to think of women and men in these oppositional terms situated only on one plane of experience. Present day research suggests that it may be more practical to see the writing of women like Ceija Stojka as influenced by a matrix of different factors, rather than just one overarching ‘patriarchy.’ In her book “Deutsche Literatur von Frauen,” Gisela Brinker-Gabler describes how new research recognizes that “vielfache

Differenzen auch in der Kategorie 'Frauen' in den Vordergrund gerückt sind, das heißt unterschiedliche Modalitäten aufgrund kultureller und historischer Gegebenheiten; Variablen wie Klasse, Ethnizität, sexuelle Orientierung usw“ (Brinker-Gabler 397). This stance is a much more accurate description of Stojka's positioning in society, because it recognizes the variety of factors like race, ethnicity, class, and gender that influence her writing, rather than just treating her experience as a universally female one. Indeed, it is through viewing Stojka not only as a woman writer, but as a *Romni* writer that the larger significance of her works becomes apparent. Stojka may thus present the reader with her own unique experiences and perspectives that arise from her positioning even as she concentrates on relating a personal historical account.

Because Stojka makes a point of tackling aspects of identity as they relate to the Roma minority in Austrian society, it might also be expected that she would comment on the way her identity as a woman has been shaped by her minority status. However, she interestingly never speaks directly of women's issues. Nor is her own experience presented as a uniquely *Romni* experience. In fact, both memoirs completely ignore issues of female marginalization and questions of equality, even as they discuss aspects of female adolescence, childbearing, motherhood, and Roma tradition. The reader can glean some snippets of information from these events, but Stojka presents them in a way that suggests an absolute seamlessness of gender within the Roma community.

This may be attributed partly to the nature of the memoirs, the intended audience, and the Roma culture and its male-centered traditions. The memoirs were the first of their kind, and Stojka may have been more interested in disseminating personally and historically relevant information regarding a misrepresented, misunderstood time than critically reflecting on gender.

Similarly, since she was writing for the *gadjos*, or white Austrians, at a time when anti-Roma sentiment and discrimination is reaching a post-Holocaust high, the importance of presenting the Roma as a unified yet hybrid modern whole might have helped to underscore their belonging in Austrian society. Rather than disrupting the sameness of this image, she may have wanted to foreground her identity as Roma, while back-grounding her identity as *Romni*. This would be in line with literature that suggests the tendency of minority groups first to identify collectively, then individually (Sanchez 39).

The construction of art in Roma culture provides perhaps the most convincing argument for Stojka's reticence on women's issues, as the act of writing remains an uncharacteristic form of artistic expression for the traditional Roma. When art is produced, it must be oral or visual, not literary, since the Roma have long practiced a solely oral tradition. Especially the sub-group that Stojka belongs to, the Lovara, are known for singing and communicating through legends and stories that are sung as a group (Berger, *Solange es Roma gibt* 133). They traditionally sing in their own language of *Romanes*, and singing in German has long been considered taboo. Similarly, writing in German holds the same kind of taboo status. Stojka and her immediate family are quite different, deviating from their own Roma group in their attitudes towards alternative kinds of expression. In *Wir leben im Verborgenen*, Stojka writes that her father was well-traveled and very cosmopolitan, and insisted on educating his children in the Austrian school system. As a result, the entire family wrote and spoke fluent German, and her father became a role model within their community. However, the family still practiced a strong mix of Austrian and Roma tradition, and part of this tradition reserved attention-drawing personal

expression as a man's domain. In an interview with Dr. Karin Berger, Stojka elucidates on the conflicting emotions of writing in German as a *Romni*:

Dass ich mit jemandem reden wollte. Es war aber niemand da, der mir zugehört hätte, und—Papier ist geduldig. Es hat mit dem Schreiben halt rech gehapert, aber wie ich einmal begonnen hab, sind die Erinnerungen nur so herausgeschossen (. . .) Obwohl es oft ein bisschen schwierig war zu schreiben, denn mein Partner hat kein richtiges Verständnis dafür gehabt (. . .) So hab ich immer die Zeit ausnützen müssen, wenn ich alleine war. Eine halbe Stunde habe ich meistens geschrieben, dann musste ich ja schon wieder kochen. Während ich aber gekocht oder das Essen serviert oder Geschirr abgewaschen hab, hat sich das in mir wieder gespeichert, in meinen Gedanken war ich schon wieder auf dem Papier. Und wie ich dann wieder Zeit gehabt hab, ist das fließend herausgekommen (. . .)

Dann hab ich mir diese Zettel schön geordnet, hab einen genommen und bin zu meinem Bruder gegangen. Karli, hab ich zu ihm gesagt, du tatest mir ein Gefallen, wenn du das Blattl lesen würdest. —Geh, das Gekritzel, schmeiß weg.—Ja? Und ich hab mich geniert für mein Gekritzel und bin gegangen. Trotzdem hab ich alles genommen und in der Küche, wo niemand kommt, aufgehoben. Und immer, wenn ich eine neue Seite fertig hatte, hab ich sie dazugeschmissen. Zum Schluss hab ich mich nicht mehr abhalten lassen. (*Keine andere sein* 97-98)

These statements highlight not only the difficulty of expressing female sentiment related to the Roma Genocide, but also the problems of writing the personal story of the *Romni* within this context. For a *Romni* to want to confront these painful memories in order to achieve peace would be out of line with the male-centered domain of personal expression, since it would center around her own experiences as an individual. The act of remembering trauma here becomes a highly emotional process, not expressed through songs of mourning sung with the group, but in the written German form. Moreover, to talk about these painful personal memories publicly stands as a kind of betrayal of the solidarity of the group and its collective memory. Lastly, Stojka's quote highlights the silence that pervaded both the *gadjo* and Roma society regarding the fates of half a million Roma under Hitler.

Pushed to write by her painful memories and the sorrow of not seeing so much loss recognized, Stojka finally broke through these taboos with composing and publishing her memoirs. One must consider that she already acts outside of the norm by writing in German to a *gadjo* audience. She compounds this process by writing in a style that bears a loose resemblance to Roma songs of mourning for the dead, which are composed through a sung oral reconstruction of the dead individuals' lives, in verses that are repeated over and over again by the group (Grobbel 143).<sup>6</sup> In this vein, the very structure of the memoirs bring not only herself, her family, and the Roma Genocide to light, but also bring Roma tradition out of the safety of the *Verborgenen*. Gender considerations effectively fall by the wayside in light of these processes.

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<sup>6</sup> This process, sung in *Romanes*, is similar to the Jewish *kaddish*, but contains elements of the European fugue, because verses are repeated and recombined with other verses as the song continues.

While she writes as a *Romni*, writing as a Holocaust survivor adds yet another dimension to Stojka's struggle for agency. Both women writers and Holocaust survivors who write about their experiences express intense individual feelings that are inevitably tied to the collective experiences of these groups. The difficulty lies in locating an individual voice yet representing shared experiences of being, and in putting these strong feelings of marginalization into literary form.

While Holocaust memoirs may be seen as literary works, they also reflect the historical and cultural experience of a given period (Garbinari, "Considerations" 16). Because literary texts rely on form as well as content to reach an audience, critics argue that the very act of transferring the atrocities suffered or witnessed into narrative form trivializes them, because the truly terrible cannot be expressed through words or writing (Wieviorka 64). Indeed, the very act of remembering becomes traumatic because of the reliving that accompanies it. Since literary forms cannot capture the full horror of the experience, the emotional impact effectively becomes lost in its representation. Many survivors who wish to retell their experiences become frustrated by this "insufficiency of language" (Kraft 32). Although Stojka remains more concerned with relating the untold experience of the Roma Genocide than the limits of representation, she nevertheless comments on the overwhelming emotion involved in writing of these events:

Ich könnte dies nicht ein zweites Mal schreiben, denn in meinen Gedanken erlebe ich jetzt alles, als wäre es gestern passiert. Wenn ich alle meine Gefühle niederschreiben könnte, wäre dies sicher ein endloses Buch der Leiden. Doch meine Gedanken laufen schneller als meine Hände alles zu Papier bringen können. (*Verborgenen* 20)

While the topos of *Nichtdarstellbarkeit* remains prevalent in Holocaust literature, theorists also posit that poetic language provides a way of representing that which escapes rational understanding. In his seminal study “The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination,” Lawrence Langer explores the ability of poetic language to provide a basis for apprehending and expressing what he terms a “literature of atrocity” (xii). Langer, using Auschwitz survivor Paul Celan’s *Todesfuge*, demonstrates how its poetic structure may reconcile the inherent paradox between a “living language seeking lacking vocabulary to describe what it has ‘seen’” and a “poetic voice echoing silence as well as speech” (9). He argues that in *Todesfuge*, the reader’s experience of the Jewish Shulamith and the German Margarete effectively becomes the reader’s experience of the poem, therefore making the Holocaust “imaginatively (if not literally) accessible” (Langer 12). The literary work, rather than failing to express the full reality of Auschwitz, captures the paradoxical *realities* of the experience through immersing the reader in “perceptions about that literal truth which the mind ordinarily avoids...” (Langer 30). Although Ceija Stojka focuses only on expressing one reality of the Holocaust in her memoir, her visual art collections and the poetry accompanying them actively negotiate these paradoxes.<sup>7</sup>

The idea of the personal narrative as existing somewhere between the established historical Holocaust canon and the creative literary sphere also makes interpreting Holocaust memoirs difficult, especially when they sometimes “deviate [...] radically from shared experience” (Kraft 32). Survivors write to tell their own story, yet they must negotiate the collective memory of history in the writing process, leading to a great variability in accounts.

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<sup>7</sup> *Ceija Stojka: Bilder und Texte: 1989-1995*

While Austrian Jewish survivor Ruth Klüger writes in critical response to accepted Jewish collective memory, Stojka attempts to construct a new Roma collective memory, when relating it to her own individual experience, challenging the unwillingness of the Austrian and Roma community openly to confront the Roma Holocaust. Therefore, her works continually emphasize the connections between the larger concepts of the individual and the collective, with the collectives in question standing as both the Roma and Austrian collective. Indeed, this interconnectivity between individual and collective mirrors the way that Stojka views her Austro-Romany identity.

Because it is a hybrid of brutally clear recollection and the fallibility of trauma memory, Kraft further describes Holocaust survivor memory as consisting of “a series of individual episodes, with each episode maintaining its integrity” (30). Influenced by both the factual “core memory” and the emotional “narrative memory,” survivor literature often assumes a kind of dual voice reflective of these memory components. Stojka’s memoir echoes these elements in a structural manner, by first rendering an emotional account of the event and then superimposing factual commentary onto it. When the family was awaiting departure to Ravensbrück, Stojka informs the reader: “Nun kamen wir, die Aussortierten, in einen Sonderblock und durften nicht heraus. Meine Mama und ihre Freundin mit den Kindern waren wieder beisammen. Für uns war das ein schönes Gefühl, dort standen richtige Häusern mit roten Ziegeln” (*Verborgenen* 32). And later, she tells of the cruelty of the SS-women at Ravensbrück towards a particular *Romni* inmate: “Wir in unserer Baracke hatten furchtbar Angst, denn jetzt wussten wir, was uns alles passieren kann. Es war schon ganz spät, aber niemand kam zu unserer Baracke. Es war eine Totenstille. Die Arme kam wirklich nicht mehr” (*Verborgenen* 48). Sometimes this pattern is

reversed, with the event taking on a factual tone and the commentary adding emotion after the event has been processed through writing it down. Following their departure from the holding cells in Auschwitz-Birkenau, Stojka writes: “Wir hörten von den anderen, dass die in Birkenau zurückgeliebenen noch am selben Tag vergast wurden. Der kurze Aufenthalt in Birkenau war grauenvoll. Ich kann es bis heute fast nicht glauben” (*Verborgenen* 33). When the English soldiers liberated the family from Bergen-Belsen, Stojka describes her feelings in a similar way: “Der Panzer rollte bis zu mir, einen Meter neben mir blieb er stehen. Ich zitterte am ganzen Körper vor Angst und starrte” (*Verborgenen* 70). In these quotes, it is possible to see how Stojka’s memory of this traumatic time contains both emotional and factual components that nearly often remain unique even as they complement each other.

Through the composition of her memoir, Stojka demonstrates an understanding of the variability of memory and indirectly acknowledges her own reflective processes as key parts of coming to terms with the trauma of the Holocaust. While Stojka shows a great sensitivity to the reconstruction of memory, her works do not categorically separate narrator and author voice in terms of narrative status. This remains an interesting difference when Stojka is compared to other female Holocaust memoirists, like Ruth Klüger. In the sense of the “autobiographical pact,” Stojka presents both voices as a unified whole, whereas Klüger plays with the conventions in a self-reflexive way that separates them with sometimes startling effects (Fenchert in Klüger, 165). Nonetheless, through her separation of the factual and emotional components of events, Stojka hints that she understands the difference between these two voices, but that to confront the form of autobiographical writing in a self-reflexive way remains outside the purview of these memoirs in light of their focus and aims.

Because Ceija Stojka relates not only the experience of persecution, but also the already hybrid legends, songs, languages, traditions, and practices of the Austrian Roma, her memoir essentially writes a version of a cultural experience of an entire people. She thereby actively works to regain her agency, in order to confront her past. This process automatically connects to the public sphere as well, since the identity dualism in her works establishes the rightful claim to participate in both Austrian and Roma cultural traditions. Writing remains an act that defies the socio-cultural role the National Socialists forced on her during the Holocaust, and one that reflects the fluctuation of identity consistent with socio-historical influence. When coupled with the general anti-Roma sentiment still present in modern day Austria, Stojka's works and her struggle to establish herself within the society take on an important meaning. As Stojka asserts her right to create her own identity through writing, she asserts her right to stay in Vienna and flaunts her resistance to the policies forced on her by the National Socialists. Her physical presence publicly forces the population to remember the past, while her creative works, her writing, and her public speaking engagements force them to confront it.

## CHAPTER 3

### AN AUSTRO-ROMANY STYLE

Throughout *Wir leben im Verborgenen* and *Reisende auf dieser Welt*, Ceija Stojka constructs her memoirs in a form that not only engages the *gadjo* readership, but also reflects the formation of an Austro-Romany identity which defies binary categorization of Austrian versus Roma. Although she relies on conventional modes of narrative organization and utilizes comparatively uncomplicated language, Stojka employs a variety of means to explore the complexity of her own and the larger Austro-Romany identity, including communicating in both German and *Romanes*.

The two volumes, although functioning as a single textual body, differ from each other in terms of style and voice. This difference is announced in the subtitles. The subtitle of *Wir leben im Verborgenen*, which concerns itself mainly with Auschwitz-Birkenau, Ravensbrück, and Bergen-Belsen is “Ist das die ganze Welt?,” whereas the depiction of post-Holocaust life in *Reisende auf dieser Welt* bears the subtitle “Wir machten das Beste daraus.” These subtitles highlight the central tone of each piece, with Stojka writing the first from a bewildered child’s perspective and the second from the rational perspective of an adult.

#### *Locating the Individual in the Collective*

In the first volume, Stojka demonstrates a very strong identification with the Roma collective, indicated through her use of the plural personal pronouns *wir/uns*. Stojka begins the narrative by informing the reader of the family’s lifestyle: “1939 fuhren wir Rom noch mit Wagen und Pferden frei in Österreich herum“ (*Verborgenen* 15). This synonymy of the

individual with the Roma group continues throughout the beginning of the work, with the pronoun *ich* only being used thrice within the first four pages. Its purposeful use stands out when Stojka emphasizes the pride she felt on her first day of school (“Ich war mächtig stolz”) or to highlight the accuracy of her accounts (“Ich erinnere mich noch genau”) (15-16). Even when the *ich* pronoun is used, Stojka normally connects it to the group, with the aforementioned sentence continuing “...wie wir mit unseren Cousins spielten” (16). Stojka also sometimes speaks for the group by constructing sentences in this way. Upon the news of her father’s death, Stojka assumes the voice of her immediate and extended family when she comments on the family’s feeling of loss: “Wir haben den Tod unseres Vaters nie überwunden” (20). This pattern continues throughout *Wir leben im Verborgenen* and is especially prevalent during Stojka’s descriptions of life and suffering in the death camps, highlighting the fear and solidarity inherent in these experiences.

In contrast to the first volume, *Reisende auf dieser Welt* reflects the adult sentiment contained within its subtitle through assuming a more independent narrative voice. Indeed, the first paragraph of this section concerns itself extensively with Stojka’s individual feelings of freedom after liberation. In light of this, Stojka uses *ich* often, and the memoir presents a very equal distribution of both the *ich/wir* pronouns for its continuation. Through this change, the reader begins to see Stojka’s transition from a frightened girl to a confident woman capable of survival and success. Although she remains part of the larger Roma collective, this woman begins to negotiate her identities in a new way within a post-Holocaust Austrian setting, in order to define her own life.

### *Use of Romanes and German*

Language plays an important role in the way that Stojka navigates through post-war Austrian society. Throughout both volumes, she writes in both German and *Romanes*, often mixing the two languages in moments of strong emotion.<sup>8</sup> This is quite unusual in light of the conventions surrounding the use of the Roma language in a non-Roma setting. Indeed, *Romanes* is only to be spoken with other Roma, and to use it in communication with *gadjos* is forbidden. However, Stojka employs *Romanes* on over a dozen occasions in *Wir leben im Verborgenen*, and almost all these occasions contain some form of intense and painful emotion. While the use of *Romanes* implies increased solidarity among the family during these moments, Stojka immediately translates it into German for her audience. As her mother receives an urn filled with her husband's ashes, Stojka writes: "Sie nahm die Urne in die Hand, schüttelte sie und schrie: 'Wackar, ande san du katte?' (Wackar, bist du da drinnen?)" (*Verborgenen* 19). And as the family were marched toward the gas chambers in Auschwitz-Birkenau, a moment which they thought would be their last: "Unsere Mama sagte zu uns: 'Agana awillas o zeito, igren ame anen dumaro. Wast dei chutilen murie zocha.' (Jetzt ist es so weit, ihr musst mir alle die Hand geben und euch an meinem Rock festhalten)" (31). After the family was liberated, Stojka's mother began the search for her two boys, from which the family was separated before their transport from Auschwitz-Birkenau to Ravensbrück. Stojka emphasizes the pain and worry felt by her mother through her repeated utterances in *Romanes*: "Oft ging sie in das Zimmer hinein und schaute hinein. Sie betete und sagte: 'Swundo Dell na muk duje schawen dei anle mange balle.'

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<sup>8</sup> *Romanes* refers to the umbrella language of the Roma, with each group of Roma speaking a particular dialect. For example, Ceija Stojka and her family speak the *Lovara* dialect, since they belong to this particular sub-group of Roma (Berger, *Solange es Roma gibt*).

(Lieber Gott, lass meine zwei Buben nicht im Stich und bringe sie mir wieder)” (78). Stojka’s translations of *Romanes* make Roma culture visible, demystifies the language for the Austrian public, and makes *Romanes* accessible to the *gadjos* in a way that lends the text a great deal of impact.

In a sense, the translation process demystifies not only the language, but also the culture of the Roma to the audience. Indeed, Stojka assumes that her audience knows little about the Roma culture and often devotes a paragraph to explaining a particular Roma tradition. Stojka’s expertise in both cultures and languages functions here as a form of translation tool, effectively “teaching” *Romanes* and Roma culture to the audience. Through reading the *Romanes* followed by the German translation and accepting these phrases as authentic connections between two related languages, the reader becomes familiar with the construction of an Austro-Romany identity that the equal use of both languages by a *Romni* would imply.

### *An “Austrian” Language*

While communicating emotions in *Romanes*, Stojka engages with her Austrian audience primarily in their own German tongue. Because she does this in a fluent manner, she proves that she is an educated citizen of the state. She dispels the prejudice of illiteracy often associated with Roma, and engages with her readers on their level. The use of Austrian language and customs connects Stojka to her Austrian readership. It leads the work to read much like an authentic conversation, and gives the reader the sense that Stojka is telling the story directly to him or her.

This not only provides an additional method of heightening audience engagement, but also linguistically solidifies Stojka's position as an Austrian.<sup>9</sup>

Interestingly, Stojka's language possesses an additional native element, because she also writes in Austrian dialect. Indeed, one would be hard pressed to regard the book as a 'German' memoir, since Stojka speaks to her audience largely in an elevated Austro-Viennese dialect evident in her use of vocabulary, her phrasing, and sentence construction. She employs, for instance, typically South-German or Austrian combinations like "Strohflankerl," (*Verborgenen* 57) and "Gitsche," "Schöbel," "Eßsackerl," (*Reisende* 20, 47, and 75). Word choices also include "Scheibtruhe" for "wheelbarrow" and "Krampen" for "pick-axe" (*Verborgenen* 32 and 60, in Tebbutt, "Marginalization" 145). In relating the story, she also uses Austrian variants like "übernachtig" and "manchesmal" (*Verborgenen* 51 and 63), and makes references to having "eine gute Jause" and consuming "Guglhupf," "Kaiserschmarrn," (*Verborgenen* 16, 49, and 78) and "Melange" (*Reisende* 70, in Tebbutt, "Marginalization" 146).

Equally interesting to note is the clear language in which Stojka writes; she refrains from using complicated, stacked constructions and instead creates her sentences as self-standing pieces of information that connect through content to give meaning. For example, when describing transportation from Ravensbrück to Bergen-Belsen, Stojka details the way the family protected her:

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<sup>9</sup> Language remains perhaps the strongest factor through which Austrians define themselves against other German-speaking nationalities. Austrian German in this sense is tied inextricably to post-WWII Austrian national identity.

Meine Mama packte mich auf ihren Rücken und warf die Decke über uns. Die anderen Frauen machten dasselbe. Wir kamen in das Lager Bergen-Belsen, es lag mitten in einem großen Wald. Der erste Anblick war erschütternd. Gleich hinter dem Tor lagen ein paar Tote. Der Brustkorb war ihnen aufgeschlitzt, Herz und Leber fehlten ihnen. (...) Nur ein paar Schritte vor der Baracke lagen die Toten, dass man sie gar nicht zählen konnte, einer über den anderen, jung und alt, manche lebten auch noch. (*Verborgenen* 56)

This mode of expression continues throughout the memoir, with the most traumatic events described in the simplest way possible. In this vein, Stojka opts for a straightforward composition that illuminates the contents of the memoirs. This straightforward style also functions to widen the demographic of readers; the memoirs are meant for all levels of education and therefore all levels of society. Its unadorned construction also creates a work for a variety of age levels, although its graphic content and vivid imagery certainly are aimed at an adult audience. Constructing the memoir in Romanes and Austrian German and focusing on content, Stojka maintains an awareness of the larger significance of the story she is telling, just as she maintains an awareness of the *gadjo* audience she relates it to.

## CHAPTER 4

### LOCATIONS OF AUSTRO-ROMANY MEMORY: BELONGING AND EXCLUSION

In relating her life after liberation from Bergen-Belsen in 1945, Ceija Stojka describes the family's return to Austria as motivated by the desire to locate all surviving family members in the aftermath of the Holocaust. She details the changing circumstances that influence their ways of living throughout the decades and gives her audience a sense of the profound loss that followed the Roma as they tried to rebuild their lives and communities in Austria. She tells the tale of herself and her family in a chronological narrative of locations and events, each laden with its own special importance, and takes the reader on a tour of the Austrian political and social landscape from the mid 1940s through the early 1990s. Because of the significance of place that characterizes her story, her memoir becomes structurally guided by landscapes of Austria. This anchors her to the country, even though she moves through it in the traditional traveling lifestyle of the Roma.

The concept of *reisen* or travel has long played a central role in traditional Roma culture, with the consistent journey from place to place throughout the year acting as a strong identity affirmation marker for many Roma. Ceija Stojka and her family also followed the tradition of *reisen*, until it became economically unsustainable in the early 1950s. *Reisen* stands in opposition to a sedentary lifestyle that is associated with a single place of supreme importance, i.e., the home. Therefore, Roma have often been criticized by Austrian society for remaining disconnected from a grounded 'home' and the socio-cultural practices that characterize the sedentary life. In her memoir, Stojka combats this by presenting *reisen* in a way that connects it intimately to place and emphasizes the dialectic between *reisen* and *sitzen-bleiben*. Yet she also

uses travel and its connection to *Ort* and *Nicht-Ort* to examine the spatial and temporal associations that tie her to a site of cultural and historical memory.

Travel requires movement, and the necessity for the freedom of movement characterizes Stojka's memoir in a way that might be expected from a Romni. Many of the main events in the memoir are organized around either the commencement of movement or its conclusion, with the first two paragraphs of *Wir leben im Verborgenen* already juxtaposing the Roma group's pre-National Socialist freedom ("1939 fuhren wir Rom noch mit Wagen und Pferden frei in Österreich herum") against the effect of the 1939 edict banning Roma from traveling ("Wir waren in der Steiermark, als meine Leute erfuhren, dass wir nicht mehr umherreisen dürften") (15). The narrative continues to relate the restriction of the family to a small wooden house surrounded by a tall fence, the extreme conditions of imprisonment in various camps, and immense space of liberation in 1945. Upon locating all surviving family members and in the face of dwindling opportunity in Vienna, the Stojkas once again traveled throughout Austria until 1949. As they came to reside in a Viennese apartment, Ceija Stojka and her sister Kathi entered the carpet trade, for which they sold wares from door to door. Later, Ceija and her Aunt Gescha procured a trading license so they could participate in the traveling markets that moved throughout Austria.

On the surface exists a sense of forward-moving spatial and temporal progression, yet Stojka emphasizes the cyclical nature of all aspects of the family's *reisen*. While she describes movement through Austria as having "no clear destination," this movement is actually marked by repeated and planned visits to fixed locations, with each place standing as a physical representation of one or more historical, social, and cultural memories (*Reisende* 20). Because

Stojka conceives of history in a similar cyclical pattern and sees space as a container of the historical, cultural, and social memory that informs identity, she writes her Austro-Romani identity not only through place, but through time as well. The *reisen* through the physical space takes on the qualities of *reisen* through the temporal space of memory, with Stojka both passively building and actively negotiating her identity in the face of the historical realities of the places she is connected to.

Because of a strong orientation to place, location becomes episodic in a temporal sense in Stojka's memoir, and she uses this phenomenon to develop a kind of geography of her identity markers. Five locations in *Reisende auf dieser Welt* can serve as characteristic examples of different aspects of Stojka's identity. Mariazell, Jois, and Pinkafeld provide the context for Stojka's exploration of the Austro-Romany identity as represented through the Austrian Roma. These locations are important because they represent three events of "returning" in the process of *reisen* that are shown in a temporal and a physical way, all occurring within a short time of each other during the family's travel phase. The significance of the traveling Roma's decision to return to specific locations must be recognized, since it demonstrates an intimate physical and emotional connection to areas that are also historically and culturally important to the sedentary Austrian population. Stojka emphasizes this strong bond by offering a shared memory consisting of interwoven Roma and Austrian components and she represents the cultural practices at Mariazell at Easter and Pinkafeld at Christmas as equally intertwined. Jois, while certainly remaining a location of shared memory and identity for Stojka, disrupts this pattern slightly, since she encounters an official there who refuses to recognize her Austrian status. However, this episode can still be read as a reactionary reinforcement of identity in the face of rejection.

In a larger scope, the Paletzgasse in Vienna and Bergen-Belsen in Lower Saxony frame the aforementioned representation of identity in Stojka's memoir by providing the basis for a more active negotiation with accepted notions of history and larger, related identities. These episodes, occurring upon liberation in 1945 and on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of liberation from Bergen-Belsen in 1990, frame Stojka's continual and concurrent struggle to establish her identity in the face of memories of social rejection. The visits differ from those to Mariazell, Jois, and the Burgenland because Stojka makes a point of traveling alone rather than with the group in a time when her family has settled in Vienna to confront emotions of trauma and loss associated with places such as the Paletzgasse and Bergen-Belsen. Through these locations, Stojka relives past feelings of separation, working through her trauma in a way that allows her to come to terms with it.<sup>10</sup> She has no difficulty engaging in this process, since as a victim she is not subject to what Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich term the "inability to mourn" (14). Stojka's reliving of her traumatic past adds another dimension to an identity previously represented as unified in Mariazell, Jois, and the Burgenland. Reconciling these seemingly disparate sides of her identity occurs through Stojka's connection of the memories with locations situated within Austria. Through representing both sides of her identity as necessarily connected to Austrian place and memory, she is able to reject the separate identity ascribed to her by the National Socialists even as she recognizes the effect the Holocaust still has on her life. Even though these locations symbolize suffering, she is able to interact with them as places of shared trauma and shared Austrian collective memory. Although the treatment of the Roma under the National Socialists

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<sup>10</sup> For a more detailed discussion of this subject, see Sigmund Freud's essay on trauma "Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through" (1914).

made Stojka a social outsider, she emphasizes the arbitrary nature of this status by inserting herself and her family into the Austrian collective memory and culture represented through place. Establishing a strong connection to places of Austrian heritage even as a traveling *Romni*, Stojka suspends the divide between the traveling and sedentary population, while her reshaping of her past marginalized status implies that, although they have experienced discrimination, the Roma belong in Austrian society.

#### *Mariazell, Jois, and Pinkafeld*

Austro-Romany identity is written through the Roma familial group's daily and traditional practices while they move through the Austrian countryside on *reise*. As designated stops on this journey, Mariazell, Jois, and Pinkafeld all represent, in different ways, moments in the Roma's history as well as places of strong Austrian identification. Stojka does not always get to experience returning to these places for herself, since she indicates elsewhere in the memoir that she was too young to remember much beyond a few isolated incidents of travel. However, she emphasizes the family memories that exist in these places, and by connecting past and present, they become her own individual memories, drawing her to identify with the locations as countless others in her family have done before her. Because these locations are sites of shared overlapping Austrian and Roma memory and culture, Stojka's rethinks the divide between the traveling and the sedentary and implies a great affinity to these two lifestyles traditionally seen as disparate. The multifaceted cultural practice reduces the opposition between the populations, while the simultaneous connection of memory to travel and place conflates the finality of *Ort* with the wide space of travel or *Nicht-Ort*.

The return to Mariazell represents an interesting starting point of analysis, mainly because the area remains a treasured destination for Austrian religious pilgrims since the Middle Ages. Yet the Roma have also journeyed to the site to pay homage to the Catholic Madonna and continue to do so into the twentieth century. Stojka recognizes the importance of this holy location early on, recalling a moment in Bergen-Belsen when her mother promised her: “Nun erfüllte sich der Wunsch, von dem Mama in dem KZ gesprochen hatte. ‘Weißt du, wenn wir das KZ überleben sollten,’ hatte sie damals gesagt, ‘dann machen wir eine Wallfahrt nach Mariazell und danken der lieben Mutter Gottes’“ (*Reisende* 20). On the difficult mountainous journey up to Mariazell, the family and their animals must often stop to rest, yet Aunt Gescha relates stories of Roma pilgrimages to Mariazell to motivate the others. One particular tale takes on the quality of a legend and speaks of a very rich Rom who had everything but whose wife remained childless.

Ihre letzte Hoffnung war Mariazell. Der Mann spendete mehrere Goldstücke, seine Ringe und vieles mehr. Die junge Romni opferte ihre schönen, langen Zöpfe, die heute noch in der Schatzkammer aufbewahrt sind. Und der Wunsch ging in Erfüllung. Sie schenkte einem gesunden Buben das Leben, der später mit ihnen nach Auschwitz kam. (21)

Though somewhat enigmatic, this story demonstrates the important Roma connections to Mariazell. Firstly, the perception of the place as a destination of immense religious significance to both Roma and Austrians suggests a cultural similarity rather than a difference between the two populations. Secondly, the Roma possess a strong collective memory of this place. They too

believe in its power: “ Wenn man mit reinem Herzen betet, geht ein Wunsch in Erfüllung“ (21).

This implies decades of historical and cultural interaction with Mariazell. The presence of the *Romni*'s braids add an additional physical connection to the place. The personal nature of the tale exemplifies the strong hope for the future Mariazell represents for the Roma who travel there.

It is noteworthy that the Stojkas time their trip such that they will arrive in Mariazell exactly on Easter Sunday. Indeed, this religious holiday is of great personal importance to them and they follow the same traditions as sedentary Austrian Catholics, only from their traveling wagon. They decorate their wagon, wear their best clothing, go to church, and roast *Speck* and *Kartoffel auf die Glut* in celebration. While in church, Stojka thinks of her own personal connection to Mariazell: “Ich dachte an meinen Vater, der vor langer Zeit mit seinen Eltern hier gewesen war und angeblich auch mit uns, als wir noch klein waren” (22). Through highlighting cyclical nature of her family's stay in Mariazell, it becomes clear that this is not just something that has occurred once or twice in Stojka's life, nor is it something that begins with her. Traveling to Mariazell is tradition for Austria Roma, which they make a point of passing on to the next generation. Stojka represents this tradition in a way that concretely anchors them to the location of Mariazell in Austria.

Stojka's feeling of being historically and culturally bound to Austrian soil is further exemplified by the family's travel to Jois, a small agricultural town in southeast province of Styria. This episode occurs on the way from Mariazell to Pinkafeld in the Burgenland, where the family spends the winter months, and is noteworthy for the way it presents Austrian identity from varying historical and socio-cultural perspectives. Although Stojka has been asked to travel to Jois to receive proper identity papers following the family's entrance into the Soviet sector of

Austria, the village holds personal significance for her because it was once the home of her grandparents and mother. At the same time, the events here differ from those at Mariazell because Stojka feels connected to its history but also rejected from Jois by a population that refuses to acknowledge the past. She remarks on the state of affairs in Jois, although she does not mention where she has obtained this information:

Eine Heimat, aus der Mamas Eltern während der Nazizeit von der Gestapo aus ihrem kleinen Häuschen abgeholt und im KZ umgebracht worden waren. Nein, in diesem kleinen Dorf Jois dachte niemand an die verschwundenen und nie zurückgekehrten Menschen. (32)

In Jois, Stojka must appeal for her papers to an administrator whose racist actions and words make Stojka an outsider in every sense. Upon noticing that Stojka is a Romni, he questions her relentlessly regarding her birthplace, birth date, and parentage, clearly assuming that she cannot produce a tie to these written sedentary cultural markers. Yet she is able to provide all information he asks for, even though in her fear she relates: “Er ließ mich genau fühlen, welchen Hass er für mich empfand” (34). Suddenly in a moment of confidence, Stojka explicitly informs the official of her connection to Jois:

“Meine Mama ist eine geborene Maria Stojka von Jois. Mamas Eltern haben am Anfang des Dorfes ein kleines Haus besessen. Wissen Sie, das Haus gibt es noch, nur fehlen meine Großeltern, die sind im KZ gestorben.“ (33)

Stojka's words not only remind the official of the murder of his fellow Austrian citizens, but also establish her Roma family as equally important to the history of Jois as any other. Since the grandparents lived in Jois at the village's founding, Stojka and her family possess historical ties to the area, down to the very house in which her grandparents resided. Her grandparents likely contributed to the village culture through their accepted presence. Stojka purposefully stresses her mother's birth in Jois to imply that she belongs there as well, despite what the official may think. It is noteworthy that she uses "gestorben" (died) rather than "umgebracht" (murdered) when describing her grandparents' fate to the official. This word choice shows sensitivity on Stojka's part, and indicates that her mention of her grandparents aims to prove her connection to Jois, rather than to lay blame for their disappearance. However, this point seems lost on the man, whose attitude towards her worsens after this statement. Stojka feels the weight of his hatred aimed at her:

Gespannt wartete ich auf die Ausstellung meines Dokumentes, doch alles geschah sehr langsam. Nun stand er mit gespreizten Händen und Beinen vor dem Tisch. Endlich redete er. Seine Beine zog er eng zusammen, und mit seinem Zeigefinger zeigte er auf mich: "Ja, den Identitätsausweis kann ich dir schon ausstellen. Aber höre jetzt gut zu, du Zigeunerin. Dass du dir ja nicht erlaubst, irgendwann einmal bei unserer Gemeinde zu betteln. Hast du mich verstanden? Ich will dich hier bei uns nie wieder sehen!" (34)

As a last insult, the official adds in dialect: ‘Mia san ka Bett’lamt und scho gor net für eich’ (34-35). The use of High German and Austrian dialect is interesting here, since it implies more than it directly expresses. The official first appears not to acknowledge Stojka’s belonging and does everything he can to negate it. His use of the dialect not only establishes him as a local, but also shows an attempt to “other” Stojka linguistically. But Stojka grasps both forms of the language equally; the dialect does not impede her understanding whatsoever. Because she circumvents the dialect barrier, she also establishes herself as belonging linguistically to the area. However, even as she comprehends his words, her gaze is drawn to another side of the room, where irony of the official’s words find physical manifestation:

Mein Blick erreichte eine Zimmerecke, von wo mich der Gekreuzigte barmherzig ansah. Dann sah ich das Lächeln eines Mannes auf einem Bild: Der damalige österreichische Bundespräsident. Meine Beine versteiften sich...aus reinem Stolz (...) ich war auch damals als Reisende zufrieden und glücklich, während dieser Bedienstete am Joiser Amt Angst hatte, dass ihn die Roma anbetteln könnten. (35)

In this scene, the meaning of the crucifix and the picture of the Austrian prime minister, symbols that traditionally offer protection and comfort, become warped to reflect the feelings of alienation that the official’s actions cause. Stojka reacts to being constructed as an “other” by going on the defensive, even as she seeks to prove her belonging through historical ties.

Towards the end of the exchange, Stojka finally receives her official identification papers. She comments dryly on the heated conflict concerning her identity by contrasting it with the

resulting papers: “Ein paar Zeilen und ein Stempel bestätigten meine Identität” (35). The way that Stojka writes this sentence to stand as a kind of afterthought, unrelated to the narrative preceding or following it, underlines the contrast between different conceptions of identity. For the official, Stojka remains necessarily outside of Austrian culture by virtue of her Roma heritage, and he refuses to accept her family’s historical and socio-cultural presence in Jois. Stojka, however, conceives of her identity as multifaceted and interconnected, with its various components remaining inseparable from each other; indeed, a sheet of paper with a few lines of writing seems silly in its simplistic attempt to define her. As a result of the official’s behavior, she does not leave the room immediately upon receiving her papers:

Ich musste ihn noch einmal ehrlich und tief in seinen Augen schauen, und das tat ich aus meinem tiefsten Herzen. Mit einem Nachruf in Gedanken an meine lieben Joiser Großeltern ‚Mami und Papu, wo seid Ihr?’ verließ ich das Joiser Gemeindehaus und suchte die schöne und kultivierte Wildnis der Wiesen und Wälder auf (. . .)” (35)

Through standing up for her family’s participation in the historical timeline of Jois, she establishes their part in, and value to, the community. However, the unpleasantness of the experience makes her want to escape into the freedom of Roma life. By grounding herself in the “cultivated wilderness,” she creates a separation between the Austrians in Jois and the traveling Roma. Although she sets out to verify her belonging in Jois as both Roma and Austrian, her last act in this scene suggests that she is also susceptible to the binary thought construction she tries to prove does not exist at Mariazell, and later, at Pinkafeld.

The Stojkas return to Pinkafeld in the Burgenland during the early and cold winter of 1948. Here again, stories told by the women represent the historical connection of Roma to this location:

Meine Tante erzählte nicht nur Geschichten, sie erzählte mir von den Gesetzen die die Roma früher hier gehabt haben. Sie hielten sich an die Gesetze, die sie selbst für sich geschaffen haben. (...) Auch Mama erzählte Geschichten, die sie von ihrer Mutter und Familie gelernt hatte. Meistens ging es dabei um wahre Begebenheiten, die sich früher im Burgenland ereignet hatten. Und im Gesang erzählte Mama auch ihr Leben und das ihrer vielen Schwestern. So verbrachten wir fast jeden Abend. (39, 41)

This shows the Burgenland and the towns in it as something that is embedded in Roma memory, and as a location representative of their cultural development. Interestingly, the women use the Roma tradition of storytelling through song to tell their genealogical history in Austria, a ritualized practice that suggests awareness and active passing-on of Austro-Romany identity.

Pinkafeld in the Burgenland also remains a site of celebration for the Christmas holiday, which is conducted in a mix of Austrian and Roma traditions that take place in the little *Gasthaus* where the family is allowed to stay. Stojka describes Pinkafeld as a location in which integration of Roma and Austrians is accepted, with both populations working together to get the area ready for Christmas. Indeed, she sees Pinkafeld as a kind of idyll, referring to the *Gasthausbesitzerin* as “eine gute Seele” and mentioning that this area contains “viele solche Landleute, die auch einem Rom die Hand reichten” (36). Stojka creates a feeling of belonging by

describing the busy state of preparation taking place both in their small Gasthaus and in the street scene outside:

Dieses Mal sollte es ein wirklich schönes Fest werden, mit allem was dazugehört. Noch dazu hatten sich Gäste angemeldet. Nun mussten sich alle Hände bewegen. (...) Ich stand mit der Moni vor dem Haustor und beobachtete die Ortsbewohner. Auch sie waren mit der Vorbereitung für die Weihnachtsfeier voll beschäftigt. Manche liefen noch mit dem Christbaum nach Hause. (...) Unser kleiner Christbaum am Heiligen Abend war nur so groß, dass er Platz auf unserem Zimmertisch fand. Doch er strahlte und funkelte, als wäre er der Allerschönste. (46-47)

These sentences demonstrate the unified actions of both populations. Stojka also emphasizes the Roma's strong attachment to both Austrian and Roma Christmas traditions. Indeed, she relates her impatience with their small dog's begging for attention in the wake of her part of the preparation: "Aber zum Küssen hatte ich keine Zeit, ich musste die Äpfel schälen und die Nüsse aufklopfen und den Topfen für den Topfenstrudel vorbereiten" (46). Stojka underscores her mother's dedication to making *Hühnersuppe* and *Schwammerlsuppe*, which Stojka describes as a very important undertaking: "Nur zu Weihnachten machte sie zwei verschiedene Suppen, die Hühnersuppe und eine Schwammerlsuppe" (46-47). The family pays equal attention to properly preparing *Bokoli* and *Romane Schach*, staples of the Austro-Romany holiday tradition:

Nun ließ meine Tante den Speck aus, denn Mama brauchte Grammeln für die *Bokoli*. Ein Festtag ohne *Bokoli*, das Zigeunerbrot, wäre undenkbar. Und was wäre das für eine Küche ohne *Romane Schach*! Nicht daran zu denken! Diese Speisen gut zuzubereiten ist der Stolz jeder Romni oder Sintizza. (47)

Aside from these two items, the pattern of the celebration and gift-giving mirrors Austrian tradition, with Ceija even starting to sing “*Stille Nacht*” before the gift-giving takes place. However, it is clear that the family values its combination of Austrian and Roma traditions and pays equal attention to both during the important Christmas celebration.

It is interesting to note that Stojka recalls these events while traveling. Although they are on the move, the family is still connected to place in much the same way as the sedentary population. The Stojkas understand Mariazell, Jois, and Pinkafeld as representative of their own history, as sites of shared overlapping Austrian and Roma memory and culture. For Stojka, even travelling becomes a place, since she attaches to it historically confirmed socio-cultural memory that functions the same way as the memory attached to an *Ort* like Mariazell. In this way, just as the Stojkas return to Mariazell, Jois, and Pinkafeld each year, they also ‘return’ to travel each year. It is for this reason that Stojka can characterize herself as “auf der ganzen Welt zu Hause,” yet still remain attached to and emotionally moved upon visiting the place of her birth in Kraubath in Styria (55). Because her awareness of the way that space can arbitrarily be used to establish identities and to exclude certain groups, these locations of Mariazell, Jois, and Pinkafeld lay the foundation for Stojka’s confrontation of the Holocaust occurring in the Paletzgasse and Bergen-Belsen.

### *Paletzgasse and Bergen-Belsen*

While Mariazell, Jois, and Pinkafeld represent Roma as part of Austrian history through an amalgamation of place and identity, Stojka presents Paletzgasse and Bergen-Belsen as sites of traumatic memories of rejection. These locations are marked by trauma resulting from the events that occurred there, and it is by visiting these sites that Stojka seeks a way to reconnect an act to its location. Rather than showing a connection to Austrian society, her visits to Paletzgasse in Vienna and the concentration camp of Bergen-Belsen signify a loss of humanity and forced social isolation. Returning to the Paletzgasse and Bergen-Belsen, Stojka relives the traumatic emotions of the arrest of her father and the experience of the Holocaust, and attempts to come to terms with the long-term consequences of these events. Highlighting these locations, Stojka indirectly tells of the way that exclusion from Austrian society forms a complementary part of her Austro-Romany identity.

When Stojka writes about the Paletzgasse, located in the sixteenth district of Vienna, she describes it as the place of the family's first imprisonment. Although the National Socialists allowed the Stojkas to remain in their traveling caravan, they forced the family to build a fence around it and forbade them from any kind of movement around the city. Under National Socialist surveillance, the Stojkas were hemmed in, hungry, and subject to constant midnight terror raids by the Gestapo. Shortly before they were deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau, Stojka's father was arrested. The Paletzgasse marks the last time she saw him alive before his deportation to a concentration camp.

When Stojka first begins to think of returning to the Paletzgasse in 1946, the newly liberated family has already been living in Vienna for some time. She visits the Meidling cemetery in Vienna where the ashes of her father are buried, but soon feels that she must return to the Paletzgasse to calm the yearning for her father. When she reaches the spot where their caravan hidden by a wooden barrier used to stand, Stojka is struck by how little has changed, even after all that has happened: “Alles war mir noch vertraut” (20). Nothing in the area seems to reflect the history of what Stojka knows happened there. However, Stojka relives the memory that she associates with this location as a way of confronting the emptiness caused by the loss of her father:

Ich setze mich auf dieselbe Wiese, wo ich noch als Kind mit meinen Eltern glücklich gewesen war und sah auf dieselben Bäume, auf jeden Ast, auf die Bretter des Kongressbades. Die Farbe war noch dieselbe, die ich kannte, rot-weiß-rot. (20)

These purposeful actions of site-specific engagement with history represent Stojka’s attempt to connect the past and present in a location that fails to show its history. In the absence of her father, who is united with this location in her memory, Stojka feels a strong emotional pull to return. But all traces of Stojka’s past here have been erased, and unlike in Jois, she cannot locate herself in the Paletzgasse. The “rot-weiß-rot“ of the Austrian flag painted on the boards around the Krongressbad serves as an ironic reminder of the way Stojka was excluded from Austrian society in this very spot. As Stojka attempts to confront the memories that are tied to the imprisonment of her childhood, she demonstrates that the location can also be a site of hidden

memory. However, she combats this by forcing herself to locate specific things about the place that she does remember, like the fields and the trees. Although Paletzgasse remains an Austrian location, Stojka makes visible the multiple histories that it contains. Paletzgasse serves as a cathartic release for Stojka's mourning of her father, but her presence there also brings up the past acts that occurred there and highlights them as a consequence of exclusion. The feeling of emotional exclusion is intense and tangible, even after much time has passed. Stojka does not comment on it directly, but simply returns to the safety of her family after sitting on the field: "Als ich auf unseren Platz beim Prater zurückkam, fragte mich meine Mama, wo ich gewesen sei. Aber sie wusste es ohnehin, sie brauchte mich nur anzuschauen" (20). As this quote indicates, there is a shared sense of loss among this Roma family for those who disappeared under the Nazis. By reliving and acknowledging the impact this has on her, Stojka integrates this experience into the larger definition of her self.

The last and perhaps most striking purposeful act of revisiting that Stojka describes is the 1990 return to Bergen-Belsen in Lower Saxony on the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its liberation. Although Bergen-Belsen is in Germany, it remains a site which Stojka associates with her Austro-Romany identity, since she was sent there by the Austrian government. She begins the episode by telling the reader that "schon lange hatte ich den Wunsch gehabt, in Bergen-Belsen das Stück Erde wiederzusehen, wo Mama und ich nur mehr das bisschen Leben hatten" (107). Although she is invited with many other survivors, Stojka waits until the day when nothing is planned to visit the camp: "Nur so konnte ich mich genau konzentrieren" (107). As she reaches the entrance of the camp, with her two daughters trailing behind her, she details the group's progress: "Wir gingen nicht ins Museum, sondern gleich zu jenem Platz, der vor 45 Jahren mit

Leichen bedeckt war. Dort lagen die Massengräber“ (108). Stojka continues her inventory of the components she remembers from the camp. She is particularly concerned with finding her “Lebensbaum,” whose leaves helped Stojka and her mother survive starvation. Locating this tree becomes an almost desperate undertaking, and after being pulled to the left by a mysterious force, Stojka sees the tree, still standing but long dead: “Er war viel größer geworden. Oder war er es doch nicht? (...) Ja, er war hier, wir sahen den Spalt genau. Es gibt in Bergen-Belsen keinen zweiten solchen Baum” (109). She uses the tree to orient herself, in order to find the barracks, locate the area where her mother and she were imprisoned, and place her shoes exactly where her mother peeled the potatoes she stole from the kitchen. At this point, past becomes present and she writes: “Jetzt sah ich alles genau vor mir” (109). Again in this episode, Stojka actively connects past and present in a way that actualizes the past. She even takes a piece of this past with her to Vienna: a twig of the “Lebensbaum” (110).

As in the Paletzgasse episode, Stojka makes a point of not only returning, but actively seeking out the locations of memory. To remember alone is not her goal; she traces all components of the experience in a way that connects the past to the present and brings the crime associated with the location to light. In contrast to the Paletzgasse, where Stojka writes as a child mourning the loss of her father, the voice here is of the adult who struggles to find meaning in the face of the Holocaust and its aftermath. Her adult voice connects her survival to the “Lebensbaum” as she tries to work through the childhood trauma:

Leider war mein Baum abgestorben. Wieso? Weil er genau neben den Grabstätten steht.  
Wahrscheinlich hatte er noch 35 Jahre gelebt, bis seine tiefen Wurzeln den

Gärungsprozess nicht mehr ausgehalten hatten. Vielleicht habe ich unrecht, doch anders kann ich es mir nicht erklären. Alle anderen Bäume sind saftig grün, nur meiner ist trocken. Aber er ist schön. (109-110)

Unlike in the Paletzgasse episode, Stojka here attempts to reason vis-à-vis the trauma of her experience, forty-five years after its occurrence. While the Paletzgasse offered no physical manifestation of the crimes that occurred there, Bergen-Belsen reflects the aftereffects of the Holocaust through the tree that perished in its wake. In this sense, Stojka identifies with the “Lebensbaum.” Even though she is inevitably marked by this trauma of the Holocaust, she perseveres in life and is still standing. For Stojka, the broken yet still standing “Lebensbaum” represents the suffering of those in Bergen-Belsen by its mere presence. This satisfies her and she is able to leave the place at peace with herself and the past: “Glücklich fahren wir am nächsten Tag nach Hause” (110).

Both the Paletzgasse and Bergen-Belsen episodes not only describe locations of traumatic events, but also sites where rejection from Austrian society has long term, actual consequences. Indeed, the murder of Stojka’s father and the deportation of the entire family to a death camp stand as acts of total exclusion and annihilation from Austrian society, the remnants of which haunt Stojka emotionally. She uncovers these hidden acts, while choosing locations that also show the other viewpoints of her unified Austro-Romany identity and focus on the Austrian attitude of exclusion. Indeed, these locations and their events contrast strongly with the sense of inclusion and unity at Mariazell, Jois, and Pinkafeld. Yet they form an important and

complementary aspect of Stojka's identity since they reflect that her identity has been determined for her rather than by her during certain periods of her life.

Stojka's memoir portrays how identity can be both described and ascribed by social, historical, and cultural forces. Through her strong connection to Austrian sites of positive and negative memory, she incorporates the social rejection she experienced during Holocaust into her Austro-Romany identity in a way that revisits the divide between the two cultures, as well as the opposition between ascribed and descriptive identity.

Mariazell, Jois, and Pinkafeld represent sites where Stojka describes her identity through shared Austro-Romany memory, and these sites blend the Austrian and Roma worlds together to make them almost indistinguishable from one another. In fact, if one would not know the Stojkas' background, it would be difficult to differentiate them from other Austrian families based on their religious and cultural traditions. Stojka also creates links between the formerly disparate traveling and sedentary lifestyles through her strong connection to sites of Austrian cultural memory. Importantly, these episodes and others indicate that Stojka and her family view themselves as unequivocally part of Austrian society and generally do not question their belonging. This sense of a shared yet diverse community is repeatedly shown at Mariazell, Jois, and Pinkafeld. Especially the active practice of Austrian cultural and religious customs in these locations creates doubts as to the "otherness" of Roma.

Although Stojka gives the reader the sense that she would prefer to present herself in this unified way, she acknowledges the times when Austrians have ascribed an unwanted identity to her. The official in Jois refuses to accept Stojka as legitimately Austrian, even as she makes a point of demonstrating her belonging in Jois. While she categorically rejects any kind of ascribed

identity in the memoir, she admits that these forces exist and their impact on her life and the lives of the Roma community. The episodes at the Paletzgasse in Vienna and Bergen-Belsen in Lower Saxony are indicative of extreme forms of identity ascription and the exclusion from Austrian society that may arise from them. Stojka recognizes these sites as moments of rejection from Austrian society, yet she still treats them as sites of shared Austro-Romany memory. By working through the trauma of the Holocaust in these locations, she reclaims an agency of identity that was denied to her there. Interestingly, she incorporates the rejection of this time into her own definition of her identity and in doing so, reclaims it as her own. In a larger sense, Stojka denies the very idea that identity can be ascribed to her at all by taking elements of ascribed identity and using them to describe herself. Because of this act, she breaks down the divide between ascribed and described identity, effectively returning the agency of identity determination into the hands of the individual.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

The way Stojka writes her own identity may aid in determining the direction of future research concerning Roma writers throughout Europe, who, in certain parts of Europe, continue to be seen as stateless outsiders (Kapralski 94). In actively linking two cultures seen as disparate together through location, Stojka builds bridges between them that foster understanding and unity. It would be interesting to conduct further research in this field, and to see if location works in a similar fashion in the works of other Roma writers. Since location plays a central role in how societies see themselves and their counterparts, the way that societies interpret location can help to break down stereotypes and divisions that prevent diversity and acceptance within the modern nation-state.

When I spoke with Ceija Stojka in the summer of 2011, she emphasized the need for a new kind of attitude between Roma and Austrians:

Wir [Roma] sind auch anders und das Andere ist das kleine Kern, dass sie nicht öffnen können. Wir lassen es auch nicht zu. Für uns soll die Welt anders bleiben, denn anders ist schön. Zur gleichen Zeit müssen wir auch auf einander zugehen, nicht einander abstempeln. (...) Aber die Österreicher müssen auf jeden Fall lernen, offener zu Zigeunern zu sein. Zu dem, was anders ist. Sie müssen auf ihnen zugehen und mit ihnen plaudern. Sie müssen ihnen kennenlernen und Vertrauen aufbauen. Diese Furcht muss weggenommen werden. Denn wir müssen alle mit einander leben.

Although Stojka admits that there are certain differences between the Roma and Austrian populations, she underscores that the most effective way to overcome them is to understand difference as positive and complementary. Through her efforts as a writer, artist, singer, and educator, Stojka's many works provide a guide for understanding the diversity of modern culture, even as they commemorate the suffering that results from extreme forms of discrimination. Ceija Stojka proves that the modern Austrian identity is one of hybridity, and that the true unity of the modern nation-state can only be achieved upon the acceptance and inclusion of all its citizens.

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