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Critical Romani Studies

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Aims and Scope

Critical Romani Studies is an international, interdisciplinary, peer-reviewed journal providing a forum for activist-scholars to critically examine racial oppressions, different forms of exclusion, inequalities, and human rights abuses of Roma. Without compromising academic standards of evidence collection and analysis, the Journal seeks to create a platform to critically engage with academic knowledge production, and generate critical academic and policy knowledge targeting – amongst others – scholars, activists, and policymakers.

Scholarly expertise is a tool, rather than an end, for critical analysis of social phenomena affecting Roma, contributing to the fight for social justice. The Journal especially welcomes the cross-fertilization of Romani studies with the fields of critical race studies, gender and sexuality studies, critical policy studies, diaspora studies, colonial studies, postcolonial studies, and studies of decolonization.

The Journal actively solicits papers from critically-minded young Romani scholars who have historically experienced barriers in engaging with academic knowledge production. The Journal considers only unpublished manuscripts which present original, high-quality research. The Journal is committed to the principle of open access, so articles are available free of charge. All published articles undergo rigorous peer review, based on initial editorial screening and refereeing by at least two anonymous scholars. The Journal provides a modest but fair remuneration for authors, editors, and reviewers.

The Journal has grown out of the informal Roma Research and Empowerment Network, and it is founded by the Romani Studies Program of Central European University and the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture. The Romani Studies Program at CEU organizes conferences annually where draft papers are presented and discussed before selecting them for peer review.

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Visions of Esmeralda Lock: Epistemic Injustice, ‘The Gypsy Woman’, and Gypsilorism

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Abstract

Using a combination of Jodie Matthews' concepts of "The Gypsy Woman" as a product of successive trans-historical encounters (actual, literary, or visual) between Gypsy subject and non-Gypsy audience, formal Archival sources in the Scott MacFie Gypsy Collection at the University of Liverpool, Foucaultian *archives* of subjugated knowledges, and Miranda Fricker's approaches to epistemic injustices, this article examines the life-narrative of a Romani woman, Esmeralda Lock, and her changing relationship with her Gypsilorist interlocutors over 70 years of her life. Following the example of Laura Ann Stoler, "factual stories" in Esmeralda's life that re-affirm Gypsilorist fictions are also examined. Esmeralda was unique in that she was literate, and hence able to leave a small but important trail of correspondence spanning 62 years (including a hitherto unknown sketch and commentary) enabling a challenge to Gypsilorist (mis)representations of her life. Her correspondence also allows her changing epistemic value of Gypsilorists to be traced. Further analyses of epistemic injustices may offer new dimensions to understanding and explaining not just the construction of subordinating discourses but also the mechanisms of Romani epistemic suppression.

Keywords

- Archive
- Epistemic injustice
- Esmeralda Lock
- Gypsilorism
- 'The Gypsy Woman'

Introduction: The Force of Encounter and Stored Epistemic Injustices

In *The Gypsy Woman: Representations in Literature and Visual Culture,* Jodie Matthews (2018) argues that each trans-historical encounter (actual, literary, or visual) between Gypsy subject and non-Gypsy audience creates a friction that generates an opportunity to revisit and renegotiate the discursive and epistemic positioning of each encounter. This then allows interrogations of the epistemic imbalance implicit in the forces or frictions of such encounters. Hence, "… *different encounters open out on to each other*", producing resonant cultural effects (Matthews 2018, 9, emphasis added). Examining encounters with the fictional Gypsy figure across time and space trans-historically, enables us to understand how particular Gypsy stereotypes are "marked out through particular spaces, bodies and terrains of knowledge" (Matthews 2018, 189).

In her ground-breaking work, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, Miranda Fricker identified two types of epistemic injustice: testimonial, which occurs when "prejudice causes a hearer to give a deflated level of credibility to a speaker's word" (Fricker 2007, 1), and hermeneutical, which occurs because "the powerful have an unfair advantage in structuring collective social understandings" (Fricker 2007, 147). Hence, testimonial epistemic injustice is often an individual manifestation of deeper hermeneutical structural prejudice, and both types always indicate an asymmetrical epistemic relationship between dominant and subordinated individuals and groups. An example of one such dominant group, the Gypsilorists, studied Gypsies. In a broad sense, the term covers anyone who wrote about Gypsies; in a narrower sense, it could be restricted to those who were members of the Gypsy Lore Society (GLS) who wrote in the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* (*JGLS*) founded in 1888. The GLS operated from 1888–1892 and was revived again in 1907, primarily through the work of Robert Andrew Scott MacFie, a wealthy sugar refiner who had developed an interest in Gypsies and financed the new Society. He was treasurer, secretary, and editor of *JGLS* until 1914, when he enlisted in the military. The GLS struggled on but ceased in 1919. After the war, MacFie retired in ill-health. The GLS was revived once again in 1922 by a large donation from William Ferguson, a wealthy cotton spinner, and continued until 1978.

Much of the work of English Gypsilorists was based on the recording, collection, and storage of dialects, customs, and cultures assumed to be degenerating and vanishing. They were particularly interested in kinship linkages and genealogies (which they called "pedigrees"), assuming that purity of descent and blood would produce quality information. This process was labelled 'salvage ethnography' by anthropologist Franz Boas, who argued that "… future generations will owe a debt of gratitude to him who enables us to preserve this knowledge, which, without an effort on the part of our own generation will be lost forever" (Boas, cited in Elliott 2002, 10). The first issue of the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* in 1888 aimed explicitly for a salvage ethnography for Gypsies as subjects, assuming their "race" and culture would soon disappear, writing that "… we trust to preserve much information that might otherwise perish" (The Editors 1888, 2). Gypsilorism thus developed as a site of both types of epistemic injustice.

In an interview, Fricker argued for an extension of her work, pleading for "more empirical work on how prejudice affects attributions of credibility" and "examination of the *dysfunctional* case from the point of view of those who are at the losing end" (Dieleman 2012, 256, Fricker's emphasis). This article attempts such an empirical work by following the life narrative of a Romani woman, Esmeralda Lock (1854–1939), which shows the point of view of someone on the losing end.

The Locks were a Romani family who travelled in North Wales and along the English and Welsh border, the men horse trading, basket weaving, and knife grinding, the women fortunetelling and hawking. Ethnographic writings produced by Gypsilorists about Esmeralda inevitably involve asymmetric epistemic resources, which necessarily creates epistemological duplicity, thus creating both types of epistemic injustice. Traces of this duplicity are made concrete in scholarly articles and books, and especially in formal archives, thereby creating active sites of knowledge production and loci of stored epistemic injustice.

Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972) is central to examining such forms of epistemic injustice. He argued that there were two types of archive, the formal Archive (always with a capital A and a standard font), comprising official government records, major libraries and universities, and other accessible sources such as books, magazines, and newspapers. In these "factual sources" were to be found the epistemic biases that generated particular views of Gypsies. In contrast, the *archive* (always with lower case and italic font) comprised biased selections, omissions, and subjugated knowledges, material deemed unsuitable that could have been preserved but was not.

By examining a series of *gaje*-mediated Archival sources about Esmeralda's life from 1873 to 1963 a series of epistemic biases are revealed. However, there is a counter-narrative generated by correspondence from Esmeralda from the 1890s to 1938. Here, the formal Archives consulted are housed at the University of Liverpool, and " … comprise two separate but interrelated sections: the Gypsy Lore Society Archive and the Scott MacFie Gypsy Collections" (SMGC) (Hooper 2004, 21) which were " … to be kept intact for all time as a reference library for gypsy students throughout the world."[1] Additional resources were found in the British Newspaper Archive[2] and Welsh Newspapers Online.[3] Although there are considerable inevitable omissions in the formal Archives of the SMGC, it is the most comprehensive record of Gypsilorism that exists, and is an essential source for postcolonial critique. The SMGC houses the majority of Esmeralda's correspondence and acts as a crucial source of information about Esmeralda.

1 See Yates 1953. Details of the Scott MacFie Gypsy Collection are available online: https://sca-archives.liverpool.ac.uk/Record/71235 The copyright of SMGC material cited here is held by the Special Collections and Archives of the University of Liverpool Library and is reproduced with permission. Their cataloguing system is used in referencing their material.

2 Available online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk.

3 Available online: https://newspapers.library.wales.

The Evolution of Gypsilorism

Heinrich Grellmann's *A Dissertation on the Gypsies* (1873) presented the first systematic analysis of Romani people in Europe, and thus played a pivotal in the expansion of Gypsy studies in the nineteenth century. English editions of Grellmann were published in 1787 and 1807. Many books about Gypsies in England subsequently were published, including works by John Hoyland (*A Historical Survey of the Customs, Habits, & Present State of the Gypsies* 1816); James Crabb (*The Gipsies' Advocate* 1832); George Borrow (*Lavengro* 1851, *The Romany Rye* 1857, *Wild Wales* 1862, *Romano lavo-lil* 1874); Bath C Smart (*The Dialect of the English Gypsies* 1863); Bath C Smart and Henry Thomas Crofton (*The Dialect of the English Gypsies, 2d Edition* 1875); Charles Godfrey Leland (*The Gypsies* 1882, *The English Gipsies and Their Language* 1873, *Gypsy Sorcery and Fortune-telling* 1891), Leland (first president of the GLS) and Walter Simson (*A History of the Gipsies: With Specimens of the Gipsy Language* 1865). There were also many works of fiction, newspaper, and magazine articles about Gypsies, including *In Gypsy Tents* from 1881 by Francis Hindes Groome, Esmeralda's second husband. Although George Borrow died before the GLS was founded, his books on English Gypsies became the introduction to Gypsilorism for many people and made him a crucial figure in its expansion. Importantly, Borrow introduced the concept of the *Romani Rai* (or *Rani*, if female), a non-Romani who claimed acceptance by Romani people, and thus access to their culture and language, thereby creating a role as a mediator who conveyed their intimate knowledge of Romani people to other *gaje* (non-Romani people). The *Rai/Rani* thus became literally an embodied creator of the documents and duplicitous Archives that maintain epistemic injustice. Epistemic imbalance between the *Rais* and their Romani informants was thus fundamental to Gypsilorist activities. Esmeralda Lock knew this, stating that "… All *Rais*, […] are FISHERS, and if it's not words or tales, they're after, it's something else!" (Griffiths and Yates 1934, 61, capitals in original). Following Borrow, many other Gypsilorists sought *Rai* status, including Hubert Smith, (Esmeralda's first husband), Francis Hindes Groome (Esmeralda's second husband), and Charles Godfrey Leland, all of whom knew Borrow, and all of whom had written books about Gypsies prior to the formation of the GLS. With the formation of the Gypsy Lore Society in 1888, the quest for *Rai* status widened. Associating with Esmeralda was one way to enhance *Rai* status.

Building on Matthews' analysis of the Gypsy woman in art and literature, this article traces the frictions and forces of Esmeralda's real-life encounters. Her life narrative is a clear dysfunctional case, revealing her location at the losing end of evolving epistemic injustices, both testimonial and hermeneutical. Esmeralda is best known for having married two Gypsilorists and was also claimed as a Romani *Phen* (sister) by a third. Most of Esmeralda's life involved encounters with Gypsilorists, who selectively (mis)represented her voice, a situation made possible by the structurally prejudiced assumption that Romanies were non-literate. For example, in a whimsical self-published pamphlet, Scott Macfie wrote "... I venture to dedicate it to you, my oldest Gypsy friend, in the hope – *nay, with the sure conviction* – that you will never read a word of it" (MacFie 1909, 1, emphasis added). Unusually for a Romani woman, Esmeralda became literate in 1876 and was able to generate correspondence, creating through each of her letters a point of friction that allows deeper analysis of her relationship to her Gypsilorist interlocutors, thereby developing a fragmented counter-narrative which reduces the asymmetric epistemic relationship between her and Gypsilorists.

Esmeralda's relationships with Gypsilorists produced an intricate network that spanned over seventy years. To clarify this complex web, table 1 shows a timeline of Esmeralda's life and the main Gypsilorists involved with her, as well as the operation of the GLS.

Table 1.
Timelines of Esmeralda, Smith, and Groome, and GLS/*JGLS*

Year	Esmeralda Lock – born 1854.	Hubert Smith –born 1822. Esmeralda's first husband.	Francis Hindes Groome – born 1851. Esmeralda's second husband	Dora Esther Yates – born 1879. Esmeralda's 'Romani sister'.	Status of GLS and *JGLS*
Pre 1870	Esmeralda and her family camp on Hubert Smith's land.	Town Clerk of Bridgnorth. Shows interest in Gypsies. Lock family allowed to camp on his land.	Begins collecting Romani vocabulary and dialect.		
1870	1st trip to Norway	1st trip to Norway	Starts study at Oxford		
1871	2nd trip to Norway	2nd trip to Norway	Continues collecting Romanes.		
1872			Elopes with Britti Lee, a married Romani woman. His family settle his debts and bring him home.		
1873		1st edition of *Tent Life with English Gypsies in Norway*	Returns to Oxford but drops out. Travels in Europe. Collects Romani dialects.		
1874	Esmeralda sent to Norway.	2nd edition of *Tent Life*. Hubert follows Esmeralda to Norway. They marry there in August then return to Bridgnorth.	Travels in Europe, returns in July to teach in Bath. Visits Smith at Christmas, starts (?) affair with Esmeralda		
1875	Esmeralda and Groome elope to Germany, they return to Edinburgh	Petitions for divorce on grounds of adultery.	In Edinburgh, Groome works as clerk.		
1876	Esmeralda marries Groome under Scottish law on 20 November.	Divorce heard: multiple newspaper accounts published. Divorce granted on 7 November.	Groome works as clerk and editor.		

Year	Esmeralda Lock – born 1854.	Hubert Smith – born 1822. Esmeralda's first husband.	Francis Hindes Groome – born 1851. Esmeralda's second husband	Dora Esther Yates – born 1879. Esmeralda's 'Romani sister'.	Status of GLS and JGLS
1881	Recorded as Groome's wife in Census.		*In Gypsy Tents* published.		
1888			Co-editor of *JGLS* 1888–1892.		GLS founded. Funded by David MacRitchie.
1891	? Esmeralda and Groome already separated.		Another woman is recorded as Groome's wife.		
1892					GLS and *JGLS* cease.
1895	Returns to her family. Friction with her relatives and other Romanies.		Continues to work as editor/writer.		
1899			*Gypsy Folk Tales* published.		
1900				Graduates MA University College, Liverpool.	
1902			Groome dies.		
1907					GLS revived. Funded by Scott MacFie. *JGLS* published 1907–1919.
1911	Travelling and co-habiting with a *gajo* traveller. Visited by *Rais*, meets Dora Yates.	Hubert Smith dies.		Meets Esmeralda.	
1914	Ceases travelling. Sedentary, living in a wagon in Prestatyn, a coastal holiday resort in North Wales. Remains there until her death.				

Year	Esmeralda Lock – born 1854.	Hubert Smith – born 1822. Esmeralda's first husband.	Francis Hindes Groome – born 1851. Esmeralda's second husband	Dora Esther Yates – born 1879. Esmeralda's 'Romani sister'.	Status of GLS and *JGLS*
1919					*JGLS* ceases publication.
1922				Dora Honorary Secretary of GLS.	GLS revived. Funded by William Ferguson. *JGLS* resumes publication.
1924	70 years old – eligible for old-age pension.				
1931				Appointed curator of John Sampson's literary estate.	
1935				Scott MacFie dies. His collection passed to Dora Yates, who in turn donates it to the University of Liverpool. Becomes SMGC.	
1938	GLS Jubilee Dinner. Esmeralda excluded by Ithal Lee and Dora Yates.				
1922				Dora Honorary Secretary of GLS.	GLS revived. Funded by William Ferguson. *JGLS* resumes publication.
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1935				Scott MacFie dies. His collection passed to Dora Yates, who in turn donates it to the University of Liverpool. Becomes SMGC.	
1938	GLS Jubilee Dinner. Esmeralda excluded by Ithal Lee and Dora Yates.				
1939	Run over by a bus in Prestatyn; dies in Rhyl Hospital. Buried in Rhyl.				
1945				Appointed Curator of the SMGC.	
1953				*My Gypsy Days* published. The chapter "My Romani Sisters" discusses Esmeralda.	
1963	Morley Tonkin, a Bridgnorth journalist writes an article about Esmeralda in *The Shropshire Magazine.*				
1974				Dora Yates dies.	
1978					GLS ends in England. JGLS ceases publication. USA Chapter of GLS continues.

Affirming Fictions through Factual Stories

When examining Archives as sites of epistemic injustice, Stoler argues: "The task is less to distinguish fiction from fact than to track the production and consumption of those 'facts' themselves" (Stoler 2002, 91). She further argues that "*It was in factual stories that the colonial state affirmed its fictions to itself* …" by being recorded in the epistemically privileged Archive, thereby producing mediated (mis)representations that suppressed potential contributions to knowledge-making (Stoler 2002, 97–98, emphasis added).

Hubert Smith was a solicitor, Town Clerk of Bridgnorth in Shropshire (which borders Wales), a mountaineer, traveller, militiaman, and guitar player. Like many Gypsilorists, he had become interested in Gypsies after reading George Borrow and encouraged the Lock family, who travelled in the area, to camp on his estate.

Hubert Smith's *Tent Life with English Gipsies in Norway* (1873) was an account of his travels with Esmeralda and two of her brothers, in which Smith noted Esmeralda's stereotypical "Gypsy naturalness" with her "…eyes full of fathomless fire [that] sparkled with merriment and witchery…" (Smith 1873, 10). He recorded a highly sexualised male gaze, describing the simultaneous figure-hugging and revealing nature of Esmeralda's clothing, closely mimicking Victor Hugo's fictional Esmeralda: "… the bodice was rather close fitting – scarcely room enough for development. […] the dress was so made so that it seemed quite tight all the way down […] There was no concealment of legs" (Smith 1873, 69–70). Later, imagining that Esmeralda had kissed him, Smith's male gaze shifted to erotic fantasy: "Silently she gave us a chuma (gip. kiss). […] We dismissed it as the chimera of a forest dream. We had forgotten it; yet it is upon our notes, and so it is left" (Smith 1873, 220–221).

Whilst fuelling Smith's voyeuristic fantasies, Esmeralda was also relegated to the subordinate domestic sphere, where she "… would do all the cooking and undertake the arrangements of the tent …" (Smith 1873, 9). She also cleaned Smith's boots, brushed his clothes, and washed his garments, whilst he lounged by the tents. Her performative values as singer and dancer were also exploited by Smith, as Esmeralda played her tambourine and sang to accompany his guitar and her brother's fiddle on the voyage to Norway. Most of the illustrations of Esmeralda in Smith's book show her carrying a tambourine (see figure 1).

Following his male gaze and erotic fantasy, the final engraving in Smith's book shows him grasping Esmeralda as his prize, removing her from her Romani family and culture (see figure 1).

After returning to England, Smith's erotic fantasy became reality, when he and Esmeralda again returned to Norway and were married there in July1874. Their short-lived abusive marriage ended in late 1874 or early 1875. In a letter to John Sampson, university librarian at the University of Liverpool, a prominent Gypsilorist and collector of the pure (sic) Welsh Romani dialect, Esmeralda confirmed details of this coerced and abusive marriage: "Things got from bad to worse when one day he [Smith] told me there was a romney rie [Romani *Rai*] coming to stay the [C]hristmas with us …" (GLS C 8. 40). The 'romney rie 'was Francis Hindes Groome, a young Gypsilorist, Oxford University drop-out and avid collector of Romani dialects and folk tales, who later featured in Esmeralda's life. Although initially impressed by Esmeralda's Romani language, Groome and Esmeralda soon began an adulterous affair, cuckolding Smith in his own house.

Figure 1. Hubert Smith claims his prize – Esmeralda and her tambourine (Smith 1873, 515).

In his quest for *Rai* status, Groome, when a student at Oxford, eloped in 1872 with a married Romani woman, Britannia Lee, spending almost five months travelling in England with her, even changing his name to Francis Lee. In October of 1872 his family settled his debts and made him return to the family home in Suffolk and to his original name. His *Rai*-hood quest continued when Groome and Esmeralda eloped to Germany in early 1875. Smith immediately began divorce proceedings. Later that year Esmeralda and Groome returned to live in Edinburgh. The divorce from Smith was made absolute on 7 November 1876, and on 20 November 1876, Esmeralda and Groome were married under Scottish law.

A Remarkable Divorce Case

A Remarkable Divorce Case (or sometimes *A Romantic Divorce Suit*) was the headline in many newspapers (metropolitan, regional, and local, both in Britain and overseas) reporting on Smith's petition for divorce in May 1876. Although discussion of the entire proceedings is beyond the scope of this article, several salient points can be made. First, the reports of divorce proceedings vividly illustrate what Fricker calls "situated hermeneutical inequality", whereby the newspaper reports placed Esmeralda in a subordinate epistemic position, unable to counter media accounts of her behaviour (Fricker 2008, 70). Second, many Gypsilorists knew of Groome's behaviour, both at the time it occurred and later, but no report of the divorce proceedings is held by the SMGC, thereby suppressing this scandalous episode in his life. The divorce proceedings clearly showed epistemic asymmetry and the patriarchal basis of the courtroom. The legal profession was exclusively male, the legal basis of marriage was patriarchal, and the common law principle of *couverture* (the legal fiction that husband and wife are one person) gave a husband rights over his wife and her property. The Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 was heavily gender-biased, allowing a husband but not a wife to sue for divorce solely on the grounds of adultery. Also, spousal abuse was effectively condoned: "A husband was not allowed to do violence to his wife, *except* as a means of ruling

and chastising her" (Blackstone 1765, cited in Siegel 2006, 2123, emphasis added). In court, the class positions of Smith and Groome as Gentlemen were introduced, and their respective male barrister and solicitor were identified. These powerful male protagonists in the legal arena, in conjunction with media reports, created a structure of hermeneutical epistemic injustice, where Esmeralda's female adultery was considered indefensible, leaving her at a considerable disadvantage (Fricker 2007, 147). Esmeralda, the 22-year-old Romani woman co-respondent, did not appear in Court or give any statement in her defence; by being denied a voice, she directly experienced literal testimonial epistemic injustice within the wider structure of situated hermeneutical inequality. Smith, as a solicitor, knew the penalties for perjury, and his testimony would have been accepted by the court as reliable, thereby confirming Smith's epistemic dominance over Esmeralda. In evidence, Smith admitted objecting to Esmeralda visiting her family. He claimed that she then threatened him with a brass candlestick; his response was that he "[d]id not deny boxing her ears two or three times on that day. *He was obliged to do so in self-defence*" (*A Remarkable Divorce Case* 1876, emphasis added). Smith continued, "… she had a temper and a spirit of her own", an undesirable challenge to the patriarchal standards of a respectable middle-class Victorian husband (*A Remarkable Divorce Case* 1876). The newspaper reports were an example of the intersecting structural and procedural operation of Victorian white male class power and privilege, aligned against a Romani woman who had been subject to testimonial and hermeneutical epistemic injustice. In the press accounts of the divorce proceedings, Esmeralda shifted in discourse from an earlier raven-haired temptress with flashing eyes of fathomless fire to a duplicitous and uncontrollable vampire-woman who, with her new lover, Groome, cuckolded, mocked, and deceived her older husband.

When the divorce was finalised, Esmeralda and Groome married in Edinburgh under Scottish Law. Groome found regular wage-paying work with *Chambers' Encyclopaedia* and *The Gazetteer of Scotland*, thereby losing his status as a Gentleman. His biographer noted that he rapidly settled into "the bondage of systematic labour" (Patrick 1912, 173). Groome also continued his Gypsilorist activities, publishing *In Gypsy Tents* (1881), *Kreigspiel*, a novel (1896), and *Gypsy Folk-Tales* (1899), and writing for and editing *The Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* from 1888 to1892.

An anonymous author, writing in *JGLS* fifty years after the divorce, examined Groome's correspondence and knew of his activities but suppressed details, writing: "Into the subsequent divorce proceedings, the marriage of Groome and Esmeralda *against both their wills, under the persuasion of his family*, and his life in Edinburgh, there is no necessity to enter here …" (Anonymous 1928, 68, emphasis added). If Esmeralda and Groome were indeed coerced to marry by his family, then it was Esmeralda's second forced marriage, and her second to end in separation.

Apart from a few references in *My Gypsy Days* about their mixing with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in London, there are few details of their life in Edinburgh between 1876 and their eventual separation.
While living in Edinburgh, Groome boasted that his major find as a Gypsilorist was John Roberts, a Welsh harper, fluent and literate in English, Welsh, and Romani. Roberts corresponded with Groome, from 1877 to 1879, and supplied him with Romani genealogy, language, and folktales. Roberts was related to Esmeralda via his wife's family and was her honorary 'uncle'. It was improbable that Groome's so-called 'find' and subsequent epistemic appropriations occurred without Esmeralda's access to a network of Romani contacts.

Groome and Esmeralda were recorded living together in Edinburgh in the 1881 Census of Scotland. However, by the 1891 Census of Scotland, the only Francis H. Groome has a Mary J. Groome, aged 26, recorded as his wife. If this information is correct, the woman cannot have been Esmeralda (Census of Scotland 1881; 1891). At the 1901 Census of Scotland, Mary J. Groome was recorded as living in Edinburgh and Head of the Household (Census of Scotland 1901). At the 1901 Census of England and Wales, Groome was recorded at his brother's address in Surbiton, England, and his status was single. The exact date of Groome's and Esmeralda's separation is unknown but possibly occurred between 1881 and 1891. Both Esmeralda and Groome, in correspondence after their separation, had noted her difficulties in returning to a Romani itinerant life with her relations. Groome died in early 1902.

The most popular and accessible "factual" account of Esmeralda's life is found in Dora Yates' 1953 memoir, *My Gypsy Days*. Yates was honorary secretary of the GLS and editor of *JGLS*, and her connection with the GLS spanned over seventy years. Yates claimed that Esmeralda had been coerced into her first marriage: "… it was against her will that the elderly *Rai* [Hubert Smith] persuaded her rapacious parents to give him their daughter in marriage 'bikin'd me like a tarni grasni' [sold me like a young filly] she declared years afterwards to her *Romani Pen* ['Gypsy sister'] …" (Yates 1953, 102).

Yates, like Smith, portrays Esmeralda as an emotionally driven primitive, noting the "extraordinary magnetic force of her flashing eyes […] passionate, violent tempered, tender, pathetic […] such a wild child of nature" and, mimicking Smith, "eyes of fathomless fire" (Yates 1953). Hubert Smith had given in evidence at the divorce proceedings that Esmeralda had threatened him with a brass candle stick. Interestingly, in Yate's 1953 account, the threat with a brass candlestick was presented as an actual assault with two silver candlesticks that "… felled him [Smith] like an ox!" (Yates 1953, 105).

However, Yates did recognize Esmeralda's epistemic value, stating that "To many a *Rai* and *Rawnie*, Esmeralda imparted her store of Gypsy lore and Gypsy genealogies" (Yates 1953, 102–103). Yates presented Esmeralda's relationship with Groome as a lifelong, although often tempestuous, love-at-first-sight romance. This account conflicts with Esmeralda's record of her attitude towards Groome (discussed below). Yates' unlikely assertion that Dante Gabriel Rosetti painted Esmeralda on the parapet of Notre Dame again directly maps the real-life Esmeralda onto Victor Hugo's fictional Esmeralda. The final sentence of Yates' chapter re-emphasises her stereotypical view of Esmeralda as an emotionally driven primitive: "For over four-score years she lived her own Gypsy life in her own way, and the world of Romance is poorer without her. May the earth rest lightly on thee, my wild, wicked sister!" (Yates, 1953, 107).

"Esmeralda – The Gypsy Girl of 20 Could Not Sign Her Name – But Bridgnorth's 52 Years Old Town Clerk Wed Her – And Then She Ran Away with an Archdeacon's Son" was the title of a 1963 magazine article by Shropshire journalist Morley Tonkin. The article was possibly prompted by the fact that he once had owned the house to which Hubert Smith had brought Esmeralda as his bride. A detailed discussion of this article is beyond the scope of this research, but it is important to note that he had traced Groome and Esmeralda's wedding certificate; she had signed it, the first indication of her literacy. He had also studied the press reports of the 1876 divorce proceedings and wrote extensively of the material therein. He also interviewed a number of Bridgnorth people who had known Esmeralda as well as Dora Yates. However, he produced a much more detailed and nuanced account of Esmeralda's life than Yates. Although the magazine is held in

the SMCG, there is no record of the date of acquisition. Although the article added substantial amounts of information about Esmeralda's life, there was no mention or review in *JGLS*.

Esmeralda's Letters: The Counter-narrative

The first clear evidence of Esmeralda's literacy is from her wedding to Groome in November 1876, as Tonkin had discovered. However, her available letters in the SMGC are few in number, sporadic in their temporal distribution, often undated, and without a return address. The earliest are from the 1890s. As Foucault suggested, some information may be deliberately suppressed or excluded from the Archive (such as the newspaper divorce reports absent from the SMGC), thereby contributing to the Foucaultian *archive*. Material may even have been deliberately destroyed, as Dora Yates did with some of John Sampson's after his death, when she "… burned everything of a painful nature to the [Sampson] family …" (GLS D2 (82)). Despite such limitations, each of Esmeralda's letters records a textual encounter between writer and readers, which, as Matthews (2018) has shown, generates frictions and forces that allow re-evaluation of discourse and levels of epistemic injustice. Hence, Esmeralda's letters are valuable indicators of her capacity to construct epistemic counter-narratives to the Gypsilorist versions of her life. It is beyond the scope of this article to provide a detailed analysis of all her correspondence; however, salient themes can show the general nature of her counter-narrative.

As individual Gypsilorists consolidated their findings through personal meetings, correspondence, and publication in the *JGLS*, they thereby accumulated their stock of epistemic capital. By collecting and exchanging information they were able to grasp elements of Romani language and life in ways which Romani people themselves could not understand or were denied access to because of their non-literacy. When John Sampson's *The Dialect of the Gypsies of Wales* was published in 1926, it was the linguistic equivalent of locating an intact dinosaur skeleton after years of only bone fragments. He had found, recorded, and systematized an inflected and grammatical Romani dialect in daily use. Following this, the English Gypsies' Anglo-Romani was seen as merely a register of English with odd Romani words, and hence a degenerate dialect that reflected a declining and mixed-race group. It was labelled by Gypsilorists as *poggadi chib* (Anglo-Romani: 'broken tongue'). Having already collected substantial vocabularies from their various English Romani informants, culminating in Smart and Crofton's 1875 dictionary, there remained a diminishing source of material for Gypsilorists to collect. Hence their informants became epistemically superseded and eventually epistemically redundant. Esmeralda was a victim of both processes. Although Groome gave credit to his informant Roberts, he gave Esmeralda no credit for any assistance in his Gypsilorist works, never even mentioning his marriage to a Romani woman. At the 1901 Census of England and Wales, Groome was recorded as single. Thus, Esmeralda was not only bodily removed from a link to Groome but also textually (Census of England and Wales 1901). In 1899 Leland asked Groome for biographical information. In his reply, Groome likewise never mentioned that he had been married to Esmeralda, simply stating, "He [Groome] revisited Germany in 1875" (GLS XLIII /6/15). As shown above, Groome's denial of Esmeralda continued when he was recorded as married to someone else in 1891.

There are two sources of Esmeralda's writings, those in the SMGC, spanning from the 1890s to the 1930s: and an annotated sketch in the Special Collections and Archives of the Boston Athenaeum in

Boston, Massachusetts. Of course, there may exist other material yet to be uncovered. Quotations of her correspondence in this article retain her spellings and grammar.

In the 1890s Esmeralda was valued for her own knowledge of Anglo-Romani, but particularly as a direct source of knowledge about Smith and Groome as early Gypsilorists. John Sampson, university librarian at the University of Liverpool, was a prominent figure in Gypsilorism, most famously for his book *The Dialect of the Gypsies of Wales* (1928), which earned him the title *Rai* of *Rais*. He wrote to Esmeralda seeking information about Groome. In correspondence to John Sampson, Esmeralda asserted her epistemic value; "…then would be the time to write a book rie, you would be able to imagin yourself old Smith with esmeralda and the Donkies. What fun. *Of course, you could not get on my rie without me*" (SMGC A.6.4, emphasis added). Smith's patriarchal control, spousal abuse, and Yates' 1953 contention that Esmeralda's marriage was coerced, were reinforced by correspondence to John Sampson when Esmeralda wrote, "I was sent abroad to marry a man I did not like, started to knock me about" (GLS C 8 (40)).

Scott MacFie Gypsy Collections 1911–1914

During the revival of the GLS from 1907, Esmeralda still was seen as a source of epistemic capital and the majority of Esmeralda's available letters are from this period. For example, MacFie asked her opinion of both Smith's and Groome's books. Asserting her epistemic position, her reply was dismissive: "*Merie comley Rie*. [My Dear *Rai*] … about that book of that man Smith I think it should never have been written and Mr Groome's book is not much better. […] kindest regards from Esmeralda Groome" (SMGC MS 2.15 (2)).

Of particular value is her correspondence with William Ferguson, the wealthy owner of a cotton-spinning mill, Gypsilorist, and president of the GLS in 1922. The majority of Esmerald's letters are to Ferguson, who was not just her correspondent but also her benefactor.

Esmeralda also had developed a relationship with Lady Arthur Grosvenor, an aristocratic Gypsilorist, who was president of the GLS from 1913 to 1914. Esmeralda was teaching her Anglo-Romani. Lady Grosvenor, between 1906 and 1913, travelled each summer in a *vardo*, passing as a Gypsy named "Syrena Lee", accompanied by a Romani family. She also wrote for the *JGLS*, ironically, about a collection of Anglo-Romani vocabulary. Esmeralda tried to assert her superior epistemic value to Lady Arthur by offering to replace the other Romani family; however, this was unsuccessful.

Robert Andrew Scott Macfie, secretary of the revived 1907 GLS, sent many Gypsilorists seeking information on the life of Groome, Romani language, and culture to Esmeralda. Since Esmeralda was travelling in a fairly circumscribed area of north Wales, Cheshire, and the Welsh borders, and being literate, she was easily reached by post and readily accessible to Gypsilorists. Macfie commented in a letter, "I took him [Woolner, a noted Sanskrit scholar, registrar and principal of its Oriental College, and later Vice-Chancellor of the University of the Punjab, Lahore, in present-day Pakistan] to meet Esmeralda yesterday … *She talked fluent Anglo-Romani, and he was much pleased*" (GLS A32, 792, 8, emphasis added). Macfie also sent William Ferguson to meet Esmeralda, writing: "… I thought you ought to know that so celebrated a gypsy was in our neighbourhood in case you should have been able to visit her. But you would find Esmeralda singularly easy

to get on with she will talk for hours about Hubert Smith and Groome" (GLS B 3 (12). Ferguson replied to Scott MacFie: "I will send a postcard to Esmeralda before going to see her. *I really think I ought to recompense her for the loss of a day's work* as it is not at all likely that she would care to be out of pocket in seeing such an uninteresting person as myself" (GLS A17, 57, emphasis added). The italicised passage appears to be the only time that any of the Gypsilorists ever considered that Esmeralda had to earn a living, and that making herself available to Gypsilorists had an opportunity cost for her.

Scott MacFie wrote to an unidentified addressee that Esmeralda "… has lived for many years now with a gajo traveller, … called Henry Fowler, a decent old chap, but no Gypsy. It was Esmeralda and her brothers that Hubert Smith took to Norway. […] He treated them rather shabbily" (GLS A 31, 243).

MacFie does not expand on the 'shabby treatment', nor how many years Esmeralda has been living with Fowler. Having had not one but two *gaje* husbands, and a relationship with a Traveller, and having separated from all three, as well as having lived in houses as a *gaji* for perhaps more than twenty years, Esmeralda was a boundary transgressor in both Romani and *gaje* worlds. By the time she was forty, Esmeralda had divorced Smith, separated from Groome, was single and childless, unusual conditions for a Romani woman of her age and era, and thus she found difficulty re-integrating into Romani life. After her separation from Groome, travelling with relatives had caused friction, and she ended up living and travelling with Fowler, likewise a boundary transgressor. In many of her letters to Ferguson, she complains of ill-health and poverty, often asking for help, and loans of money. Ferguson, however, was rather different to most other Gypsilorists, for he gave Esmeralda material assistance. She wrote "... at the present time I am nearly starving. I have not a penny in the world […] my only real friend do you think you could possibly lend me a few poundes […] just to give me a start again to buy something to sell for the summer and as soon as I can pick myself up again I will pay you every penny back" (GLS B 4 (2)).

She does not simply beg but asks for support to continue working. She is aware of the stigma attached to such a request, not wishing other Romani people to know of her plight. She refers to an altercation in which her partner Fowler was sent off, thereby leaving her on her own without any male support, making the necessities of nomadic life even more difficult. Ferguson provided the loan, and Esmeralda later wrote to thank him. Esmeralda continued to support herself by the perennial Gypsy standby role of fortuneteller, having "mastered the art of begging and fortune-telling" (Yates 1953, 102). Ferguson's generosity continued, since he also sent blankets to Esmeralda's brother. Esmeralda also continued to meet various *Rai*s that had been sent to her by MacFie and other Gypsilorists, maintaining her belief in her epistemic value. She wrote to Ferguson; "My dear old friend. …. I had two Riers come to see me on Wensday evening. One was the Rie Macfie the other a Rie from India [Woolner, mentioned above]. They *were very pleased to see me*" (GLS B 4 (12), emphasis added).

The final letter from Esmeralda to Ferguson held in the SMGC discusses the location and travelling of her relatives. She also mentions the fact that Gypsilorists have hired her *vardo*, to experience nomadic Romani life at first hand. Such hiring was a novel economic niche for Romanies. The Rev George Hall recorded his travels with a Romani family in a hired *vardo* in *The Gypsy's Parson*; Dora Yates also hired and travelled in a *vardo*, whilst MacFie had regularly camped out in Romani tents. Ferguson and Lady

Arthur Grosvenor had their own *vardos* and regularly travelled in them. Esmeralda wrote "My dear Rie. … Have you been out again this summer with your waggin. All the rier are still out travelling with my waggon. They seem to be having a good time." GLS B 4 (18)

Although Dora Yates had met Esmeralda in 1911, and in *My Gypsy Days* claimed her as her *Romani Phen* [Romani sister], their correspondence held in the SMCG began in 1933 and continued until 1938, just before her death in 1939. All of Esmeralda's letters to Dora were sent from Prestatyn (a holiday resort on the North Wales coast). Although Esmeralda and Dora Yates were of the same gender, the latter's background of family wealth, university education, and involvement with Gypsilorism, is more appropriately considered as white class privilege.

Esmeralda had ceased full-time travelling in 1914, aged 60, and lived a single and semi-sedentary existence, based in her wagon at Prestatyn, until her death. She would travel short distances in a cart and tent in the warmer months; in July 1916, she was charged for fortune-telling at Connah's Quay, 18 miles/30 kilometres from Prestatyn (Cheshire Observer 1916, 5). After 1918, Esmeralda's epistemic value had diminished. Many of the proto-Gypsilorists about whom she had direct or indirect knowledge (such as Borrow, Smith, Groome, Leland, and Smart and Crofton) had died. With expanded studies of continental Romani people and their, dialects, folktales and customs, the notion of British Romani people and their dialect as isolated and degenerate had increased. No longer was her Anglo-Romani dialect valued, no longer was there a succession of important *Rai*s sent to visit her, but rather newcomers to Gypsilorism, who she found inferior to the *Rai*s of earlier years. When the correspondence with Yates began, Esmeralda was seventy-nine years old and something of an anachronism, linked to an earlier era of Gypsilorism, becoming epistemically redundant, and effectively yesterday's woman.

Esmeralda often wrote to Yates of her ill-health, as well as her precarious financial position, similar to correspondence with Ferguson twenty years earlier. She also solicits loans from Yates: "My Dear Dora. … I have been so very ill and am so full of difficulties that I don't know hardly which way to turn. […]. I am asking you to do your best to borrow £ 7. […] it will save my home been taken from me ..." (GLS C 8 (51). As with Ferguson, when she also asks for the loan, she is attempting to earn a living, and promises to repay the loan; "I am trying hard to sell this 'Vardo' and when I do I will return the money to you" (GLS C 8 (51).

Esmeralda's views on the old *Rais*' visits compared to the new ones indicate that she had absorbed Gypsilorist elements of the concept of *Rai*-hood: first, by accepting that there was such a status, and second, by positing a hierarchy of the good *Rais* of a recalled past in contrast to the acquisitive new *Rais*. Although both of Esmeralda's husbands had claimed *Rai*-hood, she saw "her Frank" as being the better of them, and thus was sensitive to the ascribed *Rai*-status of the emerging *Rais*. She clearly had a nostalgic view of the older *Rais* as superior to the ones currently sent to her and was sensitive to her diminished epistemological value. "All the beautiful Romney Riars, *the good men, seem to have forgotten me*. As long as you can tell them all they want then they are finished. I also have finished" (GLS C 8 (54), emphasis added). Yates had sent Ferdinand Huth (known as Fred) to see Esmeralda. He was independently wealthy and ran a sack and bag business. Since it involved considerable travel by car, and he could collect Romani dialects, genealogies, and customs on his way. He joined the GLS in 1932 and visited Esmeralda, who was not impressed by him, recognising the exploitative epistemic asymmetry of the new *Rais*. She wrote:

> *Dora my pen you gin what most of these mushers are. They com to gin saw If he will turn out to be a kaskow prall to mandy I will pucker you saw you comesti gin. What say tooty.*
>
> Dora my sister you know what most of these men are. They love to know all. If he will turn out to be a good brother [used in the sense of 'friend'] to me I will tell you all you love to know. What say you.
>
> – GLS C 8 (53)

She is scathing about Huth and his exploitative nature of his visits: "… When he went away from here he never even came to say good-bye. If I were you I should have nothing to do with him he is out for all he can get. … I am sorry that man [that is, Huth] met Mr Ferguson all he wanted was photographs and he didn't want to see that *Purro Rie* [old *Rai*, that is, Ferguson] anymore" (GLS C 8 (52)). More importantly, Esmeralda continues to assert her epistemic value to Gypsilorism by suggesting to Yates that they could collaborate: "Sister Dora I have a scheme in my head between you and I, I think we could write a 'Book' on my experiences of Gypsie life" (GLS C 8 (51)). However, she later recanted, after Yates tried to extract some remaining epistemic value from her life. Esmeralda, recognising the loss of her epistemic value, plaintively replied: "What you asked me about my earlie life I will think it all over. *I am afraid it would not be much good to anybody*" (GLS C 8 (54), emphasis added).

Esmeralda continued to describe her plight to Yates: "Dear Sister Dora, I truely thank you … for what you sent me. I really did want it I had'ent a penny to bless myself with. *I have nothing at all only the old age pension, and you know that is not much*. I have been very ill for a month" (GLS C 8 (54), emphasis added). Esmeralda's statement that her only income is an old-age pension (which was means-tested, and only claimable at seventy) contradicts Yates' claim in *My Gypsy Days*, and also in Tonkin's magazine article, that Groome's family had provided her with an annuity for life. Groome also wrote that he supported Esmeralda financially: "I walked with her straight to the lawyer in the New Town through whom *I weekly pay her a small sum* and she left Edinburgh that same afternoon, and I have never heard word of her since. Nor do I wish to" (GLS C2 (9), emphasis added). This payment may have been the *aliment* or spousal support payable after separation under Scottish Law. Esmeralda's final letter to Yates was sent about ten months before she died. She reiterates some common themes; the state of her health, her possible epistemic contributions, and her reaction to Huth, the upstart *Rai*.

> My dear little sister, … I am still very poorly myself. Will you promise to come and see me as soon as you possibly can, *as I have a great deal to tell you*. About … Fred, [that is, Huth] never mind, all things will be settled bye and bye. […] Cheer up my dear, & do come & see me, I want to see you badly. This is all until I see you. God bless you. From your sister, Izzie."
>
> – GLS C 8 (55), emphasis added

After this letter, there is no correspondence in the SMGC that shows Yates and Esmeralda met or corresponded again.

The Gypsy Lore Society Jubilee Dinner 1938

Throughout her life Esmeralda not only asserted her epistemic value but also sought recognition as an autonomous individual. These aims were thwarted in a particularly unsavoury way in mid-1938. Dora Yates had organized a Jubilee Dinner to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the GLS to take place on 11 June 1938. There were fifty guests, mostly *gaje* members of the GLS, and four token Gypsies: Ithal Lee[4] and his wife Mary Anne; Rosie Griffiths, and Harry 'Turpin' Wood. Each of these had been selected for their particular qualities as Romanies. Ithal and Mary Anne were seen as prime examples of traditional Romanies, and Ithal's father had married into the Wood family; Ithal was also a good friend of John Sampson and scattered his ashes after his cremation. Rosie Griffiths was Dora Yate's other *Romani Phen* (Gypsy sister) and had nursed Sampson in the weeks before he died. Harry Wood, son of Matthew Wood (Sampson's main informant in his collection of Welsh Romani dialect), had corresponded with Ferdinand Huth by dictating letters and was a representative of the well-bred and linguistically pure Welsh Gypsies. As Yates explains, "I had intended to invite Esmeralda Groome, *as the widow of our first Editor, to preside*, but when I mentioned this to Ithal Lee, he assured me solemnly that if she were present, he would walk straight up to her and spit in her eye! For by the Romanies she was condemned for her infidelity to the Romani code of marriage," having married two *gaje* men and cohabited with at least one other (Yates 1953, 177, emphasis added). Rather than risk disruption of the dinner, Yates acquiesced to Ithal's view, and Esmeralda was not invited. Note that Esmeralda was to be invited as Groome's widow, a mere appendage to one of the founding fathers of Gypsilorism and not as a Romani person of epistemic value in her own right, who had been associated with the *Rais* and *Ranies* of the GLS for 68 years, even before the foundation of the GLS. Nor was she to be invited as Yates' own putative 'Romani Sister'. These rejections of Esmeralda, first from her fellow Romanies, and second by her Gypsilorist 'sister' in the year before her death, was a brutal reminder of her life in liminal spaces. Ironically, the last letter from Esmeralda to Yates (discussed above) was dated the day before the Jubilee dinner. A further irony was that Augustus John unavoidably was unable to attend the dinner, and Lady Arthur Grosvenor, Esmeralda's former pupil in Anglo-Romani, was asked to preside in his place. It is possible that Yates, having decided to reject her 'Romani sister' as unsuitable for the Jubilee celebrations, may have ceased corresponding with her. It is not clear whether Yates informed Esmeralda that she was not to be invited to the Jubilee dinner, nor if Esmeralda ever discovered this rejection in the remaining ten months of her life. In her final comments on the death of Esmeralda in *My Gypsy Days*, Yates also places Esmeralda as an appendage to Groome. She writes "… the same cry of yearning is forced from our hearts today now that *Groome's Esmeralda* has left the stage" (Yates 1953, 107, emphasis added).

4 Ithal Lee, who knew Esmeralda and blocked her attendance at the GLS Jubilee dinner of 1938, was my paternal great-grandfather. His son, my paternal grandfather, also knew her and her family; his first wife, Violet Lock, was Esmeralda's niece. My father also knew her and her family and recalled meeting her on a few occasions as a boy in the late 1920s.

Another Perspective: Esmeralda and 'Pagerminge'

Challenging Smith's male gaze view of Esmeralda, Yate's saccharine account of Romantic love at first sight and life-long devotion in *My Gypsy Days*, and the rather more intricate and nuanced account by Tonkin, Esmeralda herself presents a picture of a difficult and tempestuous relationship with Groome. The Special Collections and Archives of the Boston Athenaeum in Boston, Massachusetts purchased papers and correspondence of Groome after his death. Amongst this material is a hitherto unknown, undated, annotated sketch by Esmeralda that could have been produced at any time after her marriage in 1876.

The right-hand page shows a caricature figure of Groome as a pig, and the following annotations, in English and Anglo-Romani.

> "I will keep you from pulling my beloved long nose. Don't you think my nose is not very much like a monkeys. Yes I really think it is"
>
> "My dear Frank (that is, Francis Hindes Groome) you are just like *pagerminge*" [Anglo-Romani, meaning "break vagina", possibly meaning either the man who took her virginity or gave her a sexually transmitted infection, or both), most likely her first abusive husband Hubert Smith].
>
> "*Kosko divus mel [?] minge jel to beng [?] jovelnave on "busstell [?] mell bull and mangery.*"

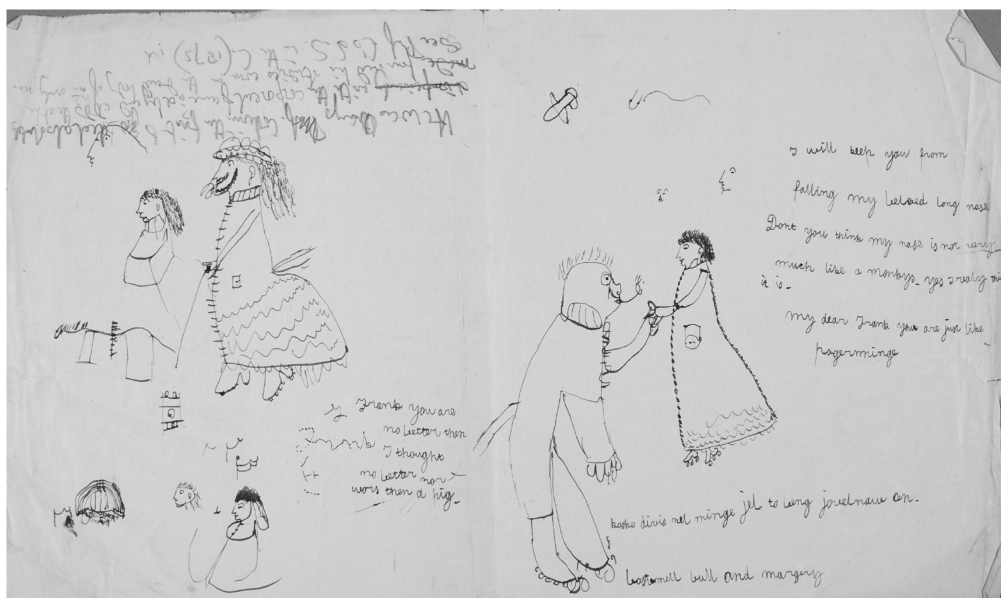

Figure 2. Sketch and comments by Esmeralda. Reproduced with kind permission of The Boston Athenaeum, Special Collections and Archives.

This means:

> "Good day sweaty/dirty vagina, go to [the] Devil's lousy name [and] sit down [on your?] buttocks and beg"

On the left-hand sheet, adjacent to the sketch of Groome as a pig reads:

> "Frank you are no better than I thought no better nor worse than a pig."

Clearly this item needs further semiotic analysis, but it is a crucial revelation about Esmeralda's relationship with Groome. The volatility of their marriage and eventual breakdown was covered in reports of the divorce proceedings and also discussed by both Yates (1953) and Tonkin (1963). However, this sketch seems to be the only Archival evidence from Esmeralda herself that depicts the intensity of her negative feelings towards Groome. It is clear that Esmeralda's profane language, denigration, and unflattering comparisons indicate a deeply unsatisfactory relationship with Groome and that Esmeralda used her acquired literacy to ventilate her feelings about both Groome and, if he was *pagerminge*, also Hubert Smith.

Esmeralda's Last Days

On 22 Feb 1939 in Prestatyn, Esmeralda was run over by a bus, taken to her *vardo*, remained there for three days, then moved to a hospital in Rhyl (a coastal holiday resort in north Wales, 4 miles/6 kilometres west of Prestatyn) where after six weeks she died on 4 April and was buried on 8 April. According to Dora Yates, she charmed the staff with her indomitable spirit. However, it is not clear whether Yates (or any other Gypsilorist) actually visited Esmeralda in hospital or even attended her funeral. Yates wrote an obituary in *JGLS* and also supplied details for newspaper obituaries. Edward Harvey, a recent member of GLS, visited Rhyl and Prestatyn a week after the funeral, and spoke to people there. He gave a detailed account of his visit in a letter to Yates, most of which, however, was not mentioned in *My Gypsy Days*. According to Harvey, a *gaji* neighbour paid for her hospital treatment and funeral.

Even after Esmeralda's death, epistemic injustice prevailed. At her Coronial Inquest, the doctor who attended at the accident was not called to give evidence, only the doctor at the hospital. When the foreman of the jury objected, the coroner replied, "It's my court, I will decide who gives evidence here" (*Dundee Evening Telegraph* 1939, 2).

Conclusion

Just as the colonizer 'speaks for' the colonized, so Hubert Smith, Francis Hindes Groome, Dora Yates, Morley Tonkin, and others, 'spoke for' Esmeralda as successive manifestations of "The Gypsy Woman", a trans-historically persistent trope, which can be re-imagined and reconstructed through the forces and frictions of encounter. Esmeralda was successively (mis)represented first as the alluring

Gypsy girl with flashing eyes and raven hair, attractive figure, and a hint of display of flesh, Yates' "wild and wicked sister" who was a subject for the male gaze and fuelled male fantasies. Next, under the scrutiny of Victorian-era media, Esmeralda becomes the Carmen-like femme fatale who drains male life-force, bringing disorder and death. Finally, in her sedentary years in Prestatyn, Esmeralda is shifted to the Wise Old Gypsy Woman, with occult powers, known for her fortunetelling skills. Each (mis)representation of Esmeralda is derived from shifting levels of asymmetric epistemic injustice, exploiting her knowledges and experiences. Each misrepresentation also blighted her life in real ways. Her domestic skills as Smith's servant in Norway and Groome's wife in Edinburgh were exploited, and her performative values as singer and dancer were also exploited; Smith (1873) notes her tambourine playing, to accompany his guitar and her brother's fiddle, on the voyage to Norway. Most of the illustrations of Esmeralda in Smith's book show her with a tambourine. During her elopement with Groome in Germany, her singing and dancing in cafes supported them, as Tonkin noted. She also had value as a trophy Gypsy wife for both Smith and Groome, bolstering their status as *Rai*s in the world of Gypsilorism. Groome even suggested that Smith had married Esmeralda merely to promote sales of his book. However, by resisting such pressures and asserting her autonomy and agency, at considerable personal cost, Esmeralda left fragmentary traces of her experiences over sixty years, thereby challenging the Gypsilorists by claiming her own unique and privileged epistemological position. Paradoxically, like many Gypsilorists, Esmeralda lamented the loss of a mythical vanished Gypsilorist past, of "the good old *Rais*", valorising 'her Frank' [Groome] as a major Gypsilorist scholar.

The realignment of Esmeralda's life-narrative presented here shows that Archival/*archival* sources can be approached as loci of power/knowledge and sites of active construction of Foucaultian discursive formations, as Stoler argues. The life of Esmeralda as examined here reconstructs and challenges the trans-historically persistent tropes(s) of "The Gypsy Woman". As Medina points out "The counter histories that critical genealogies can produce are possible because *there are people who remember against the grain* …" (Medina 2011, 12, emphasis added). Esmeralda was one such person, who, through her correspondence, provides an anamnesiac counter-narrative to the discourses of the white class privilege of Gypsilorism. Bringing Esmeralda's challenges to view is important, for as Suzannah Lipscomb points out: "We erase lives from history not by rewriting history, but *by failing* to rewrite it" (Lipscomb 2021, 107, emphasis added). By considering Stoler's suggestion to seek the pulses in the construction of the Archival narrative, it is possible to develop readings that "… rediscover the methods of knowledge production and how particular knowledges achieve legitimacy and authority at the expense of other knowledges" (Nakata 2007, 195). Challenging such processes of "legitimizing" is crucially important for Romani people, since it also involves distributive justice. For as Fricker herself points out "we should leave room for something called 'epistemic injustice' that is *primarily a distributive injustice* – someone's receiving less than their fair share of an epistemic good, such as education, or access to expert advice or information" (Fricker 2017, 60, emphasis added). She also argues that "[b]y studying the negative space of epistemic injustice, the positive space of epistemic justice is revealed; and so, we learn what virtues we may need to cultivate in order to make our epistemic conduct at once more rational and more just" (Fricker 2008, 71). Hence, extended analyses of epistemic injustices by Romani scholars may offer new dimensions to understanding and explaining not just the construction of subordinating discourses but also the mechanisms of suppression, thereby developing the virtues that could produce more rational and more just treatment of Romani people.

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The address is available online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dVWwRK2Zsj8.

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Fortunetelling As a Fraudulent Profession? The Gendered Antigypsyist Motif of Fortunetelling and Persecution by the Criminal Police

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Abstract

With the beginning of the Second World War the highest policy authority in the Nazi regime ordered that all fortunetelling female Sinti and Roma were to be incarcerated in concentration camps. This article traces the genesis of gendered antigypsyist motifs from the first written documentation on Sinti and Roma in Europe in the late Medieval period through the Enlightenment and the specialized discourse of criminology and penology in the nineteenth century. Furthermore, it analyzes both how the state apparatus criminalized fortunetelling as a fraudulent profession and how the criminal police under the Nazi regime implemented an order to incarcerate female Sinti and Roma by attributing the criminalized activity of fortunetelling.

Keywords

- Antigypsyism
- Criminology
- Fortunetelling
- Policing
- Nazi genocide

Introduction

Literary studies (Bogdal 2001; Brittnacher 2005; Solms 2008), visual history (Bell and Suckow 2008), and studies of religion, with a focus on "critical Occidentalism" (Eulberg 2020), have examined the question of fortunetelling and chiromancy as an antigypsyist stereotype that was attributed predominantly to women. The current article analyzes the antigypsyist motif of fortunetelling from the perspective of research on historic antigypsyism, examining the history of ideas as well as the implications of antigypsyism in society while putting it under the lens of gender-critical reflections, with a special focus on the relevance of the disciplines of criminology and penology. A starting point for this research is the observation that on 20 November 1939, the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* (Reich Main Security Office, RSHA) ordered that all female "Gypsies" who had been punished for fortunetelling or were justifiably suspected of fortunetelling were to be incarcerated under "police preventive detention" in a concentration camp (Zimmermann 1996, 187; Fings and Sparing 2005, 105–106).

Here, an important research question arises: if this decree is seen in the context of a series of measures against Sinti and Roma by the Nazi regime, why was it specifically targeted at "fortunetelling female Gypsies"? What are the interconnections between fortunetelling, antigypsyism, and gender stereotypes while attributing this occupation predominantly to females? And finally, what are the implications in social reality? Had female Sinti and Roma been persecuted on the grounds of conducting fortunetelling? What were the differences between persecution on this basis before the decree from 20 November 1939 and after?

This article focuses on the history of ideas as well as its implications for social reality in the historical periods before the Nazi regime to understand the genesis of this gender-specific stereotype and to analyze in what way the National Socialist (NS) terror apparatus relied on longer traditions of policing and persecution of Sinti and Roma. The methodological foundation for this is a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which by now has different academic approaches to "a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context" (Van Dijk 2004, 352). According to Fairclough's three-dimensional framework, the text as a semantic unit corresponds with a social practice that generates and consumes the text (discourse practice), which is again embedded in and shaped by sociocultural context and practice (Fairclough 2015). Discourse is thus a form of social action, in which social and political issues are constructed and reflected,[1] power relations are negotiated and performed as well as social relations and ideologies are produced and mirrored (Fairclough and Wodak 1997).

1 The discursive creation of the construct "Gypsy" – which is a projection by the dominant society and has little in common with the people to whom the stigma is ascribed to such as Sinti or Roma – is an example thereof. Whenever this term is used in the following text it should be read as such. "Gender" and gender inequalities are furthermore also constructed through discourse and linked to the hegemonic societal context with implications of unequal power relations and discrimination in social reality. Sinti or Roma women thus were often affected by the intersection of both constructs.

History of Ideas: Emergence of a Multifaceted Gendered Antigypsyist Motif

The projection of fortunetelling as a typical occupation of people stigmatized as "Gypsies" is a complex motif with various expressions: the motif of fortunetelling and chiromancy, in particular, has been used to signify ethnic Otherness, religious deviance or superstition, a deviant attitude to work connected with laziness and trickery as well as a gender marker, projecting this occupation onto primarily (aged) women. The following section gives a description of the kaleidoscopic expressions of the motif of fortunetelling connected to antigypsyist stereotypes.

1. Dimension: Ascribed Otherness and Superstition

The first recorded appearances of a people who were characterized as foreigners "from Egypt" or "Gypsies" began to appear soon after their arrival in Europe around 1417; they were portrayed as poor and taking up occupations such as trickery, thievery, magic, and fortunetelling. One of the earliest accounts widely recited in later periods is the *Cosmographia* by Sebastian Münster from 1550 (Münster 1550/1628). The idea that fortunetelling, and the method of chiromancy, in particular, was imported to Europe from the Levant or India through migration became dominant. Thus, during the period of Enlightenment – a time in which ethnological studies of different peoples became increasingly popular – this motif became widespread (Hille 2005, 66). One prominent example is the book *A studied chiromancer* (*Ein gelehrter Chiromantiker*) from 1752 that was published anonymously and supposedly based on an old "Gypsy script" from 1553 (Chiromantiker 1752, 4). The source is not specifically contextualized but "fell into the author's hands […] through a lucky coincidence," and the author's task is to translate it into understandable German. The preface states that chiromancy was held in high esteem by earlier generations, especially among ancient Egyptians and Greeks. The practice allegedly was brought to Europe by emigrating "Gypsy" families and was regarded similarly to astrology or alchemy in Germany. The author further claims that chiromancy's reputation gradually dissipated and generally was regarded as superstition shortly after the Reformation, especially as wandering families were no longer allowed to pass through Germany (*Ibid.,* 5).

This source clearly underlines that there was a change in the perception and reputation attributed to chiromancy and fortunetelling after the Reformation, when people began to view it as superstition. Thus, the practice of chiromancy, which was regarded as a central occupation of people who were stigmatized as "Gypsies," became linked primarily to an ascribed ethnic or religious Otherness as well as to deviation or even superstition. Furthermore, this source also hints at the practical implications of antigypsyism, referring to harsh policies of displacement and expulsion that were strictly enforced by the sovereigns of territorial states.[2]

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2 Prohibiting signs for "Gypsies" (also for "vagabonds," "heathens," and Jews) were set up at border crossings throughout the Holy Roman Empire that warned "[G]ypsies" of trespassing and illustrated the draconic punishments that would follow in case of noncompliance, for example, Zigeunerwarnstock, Universalmuseum Joanneum Graz, Folkloristic Collection, inventory number 35.867.

The Brockhaus Encyclopedia entry on "divination or fortunetelling" (*Weißsagung oder Wahrsagung*) from 1868 exemplifies the change of perception that lasted till the late nineteenth century and made the connection between fortunetelling, superstition, and the discourse of Otherness even clearer (Brockhaus 1848, 200–202). The entry starts with a definition of divination as a natural human trait to unveil one's future and a belief to be able to influence one's fate through interpreting signs, using magic, or receiving God's prophecy. It goes on to state that this is a natural trait of all peoples and times, but that the three monotheistic religions – Christianity, Islam, and Judaism – make a clear distinction between God's prophecy and fortunetelling, which they reject. Such beliefs were popular in Greek and Roman polytheistic religions, for example, the Greek *mantis* or oracles. The author of the entry further claims that the interpretation of dreams was brought from the "Orient" to the Greeks and thus depicts it in a discourse of Otherness. The author insists that some contemporary beliefs around fortunetelling in the nineteenth century date back to paganism, having survived the Medieval period.

The entry further highlights that fortunetelling or any other form of superstition was pushed back by society due to further education of the intellect, increased scientific engagement, and police decrees against fortunetelling, as it often was accompanied by trickery. Only the "fortunetelling of Gypsies" (*Zigeunerwahrsagerei*) managed to outlive the decrees alongside some other minor forms of fortunetelling. The entry concludes with the observation that the practice seemed to be increasingly popular in times of instability and when people do not find comfort in religion, that is, times "in which great events or the expectations of such excites a general tension, are fruitful of fortunetellers who promise to satisfy them" (Brockhaus 1848, 202). Eighty years later in 1928, a handbook of Prussian administration defined "fortunetelling" in a similar way connected to superstition – thus the implications of these ideas to social reality within the state apparatus becomes evident. The civil administration's handbook also highlighted that fortunetelling was mainly undertaken by women. In the countryside female fortunetellers supposedly conducted cartomancy, telling fortunes through handwriting or chiromancy, and thereby fostered superstition, spending of money, and also trickery and robbery (Schendel 2011, 134).

Penology and criminology dealt with the phenomenon of "fortunetelling" from their perspective at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century in their subject-specific discourses (Streicher 1926). In 1929 Hubert Capitain wrote a dissertation on "Fortunetelling and its Significance for Law" at the Faculty of Law of the University in Cologne. In analogy to the previous sources, he also depicts chiromancy as a practice of fortunetelling that was brought to Europe in the Medieval period: "The Middle Ages then brought about the blossoming of astrology among the overwhelming majority of all peoples; alongside which gradually arithmetic, geomancy and, through the Gypsies, also chiromancy, gained ground" (Capitain 1929, 4). He projected coherence and nationhood onto Gypsies and exteriorized the practice of fortunetelling, considering it as something that has no "European roots" (*Ibid.*; Streicher 1926, 39)

A handbook of criminology also particularly connects chiromancy with people designated as "Gypsies." Under "fortunetelling" the author Streicher states: "The Gypsies are regarded as the main carriers of chiromancy in broad sections of the population" (Streicher 1936, 1038). Likewise, Erich Block stated in his dissertation at the Faculty of Law at the University of Erlangen from June 1935 that "in the fifteenth century, the Gypsies brought this art [chiromancy] to Europe, which was even taught at universities in

the heyday of the sixteenth to the early eighteenth century" (Block 1935, 15). Block also referred to *A studied chiromancer* from 1752. He argued that this publication can be seen in the context of the "heyday" of chiromancy between the sixteenth to the early eighteenth century.

Entangled mechanisms and functions can be found in the representation of the colonial "Other" and Sinti or Roma. Ethnologists and "Orientalists" also did comparative descriptions of fortunetelling "Gypsies" and indigenous peoples in the peripheries. For instance, the Dutch ethnologist van Hasselt also referred to chiromancy as a typical occupation of female "Gypsies" and compared it to the fortunetelling practices of the Noeforezen tribe on Noefoor island close to Papua New Guinea (Van Hasselt 1876, 186–187). His depiction highlights the ascribed "primitive" nature and behavior of indigenous people. In contrast to people stigmatized as "Gypsies," indigenous people supposedly made use of much easier forms of fortunetelling. Postcolonial approaches to the study of historical forms of antigypsyism among missionaries or "Orientalists" and linguists demonstrate that dominant society had congruent underlying ideologies and uses similar mechanisms to label "Others" in colonial peripheries as the mechanisms labelling Sinti and Roma in the peripheries at home (Meier 2016).

As Sinti and Roma as well as others who are stigmatized with discriminatory language are regarded as non-European – "de-Europeanizing" according to Bogdal (2011, 269–280) – and as importers of such practices as fortunetelling through their migration, there is a close ideological link between these two different oppressed groups. Scholarship from the Enlightenment thus constructs a body of knowledge that allows for governing and representing people designated as "Gypsies" differently to other Europeans. Thus, the grounds were laid for early modern and Enlightenment scholarship on Sinti, Roma, and others who were already "contaminated" (Van Baar 2011, 77–106).

Intertextual references reveal the continuities of these stereotypes. Whereas the tropes of Otherness and fortunetelling as an import remained little changed, their embeddedness in a frame of religious explanation transformed during the Enlightenment to an ethnic one, and a particular discourse around this motif arose in the emerging fields of criminology and penology where it was linked to fraud and deception (Streicher 1926; Captain 1929). This specialized discourse is, however, interwoven and entangled with the popular discourse in the late nineteenth century and mutual exchanges took place (Becker 1992, 288).

2. Dimension: A Gendered Stereotype in the Context of Labor

People who were stigmatized as "Gypsies" were not only regarded as foreign and heathen but also as a people who did not work formally and who were suspected of suspicious forms of mobility. They were depicted as lazy and only capable of dishonest work such as begging, fortunetelling, prostitution, or stealing. Changes in systems of the state's care of the poor, and the perceptions of the deserving and undeserving poor, have been very influential on the perception of practices of begging and fortunetelling (Willems 1997, 31–32). Whereas the poor had been dependent on the support of the church before the eighteenth century, the church and local government reformed social policies for the state's care of the

poor later and started to criminalize idleness or begging. Workhouses for compulsory work were spaces that underscored this change. The notion of work was loaded with the moral values of dominant society.

Fortunetelling was not just in itself regarded as a dishonest profession but also as a method linked to distract victims of theft. This can be observed in several encyclopedia entries from this time. Zedler's universal encyclopedia from 1749 states, for instance, in its entry on "Gypsies" that they were a "hord [sic] of evil rabble that does not want to work but instead do idleness, stealing, whoring, devouring, guzzling, gambling, etc. as their profession. [...] They were said to be very known in giving horoscopes, in chiromancy and fortunetelling, particularly. Over time the occupation of fortunetelling became stereotypically associated with females of the group and often with old women in particular" (Solms 2008, 6). Cordula Bischoff analyzes this motif in Fine Arts and observes that female fortunetellers were portrayed predominantly with female clients after 1700 (Bischoff 2004, 145–155; Bell and Suckow 2018, 537).

The idea of ascribing this motif to women dates back much further. As with the ascription of religious Otherness and superstition, the roots date back to the late Medieval period. Sebastian Münster writes in his *Cosmographia* that old "Gypsy" women earn a living by fortunetelling, and while they give answers to the enquirer how many children, men, and women they will have, they reach with great agility into a purse or bag and empty the contents so that a person does not notice (Münster 1550/1628, 603).

Unsurprisingly, the motif of fortunetelling women can also be found in an influential study about "Gypsies" by the Enlightenment writer Heinrich Moritz Gottlieb Grellmann in 1783. He states that winter is the time when women tried "how much their list of stealing can achieve: then many men stay in their hut and send the women out to earn a living. They beg [...] and also do fortunetelling [...] and cheat simple people with amulets" (Grellmann 1783, 114–115). Grellmann also cites at this point the *Cosmographia* by Sebastian Münster from the late Medieval period.

Grellmann's motif was repeated among scholars and found its way into public discourse. Grellman himself points out that fortunetelling "Gypsies" were known for deceiving simple people all over Europe. He highlights the gender aspect in this respect. He states that it was peculiar that women were so wicked to claim that they can see the future of someone by looking at their hands. Men who performed fortunetelling were exempt (Grellmann, 1783, 96–97). Grellman foreshadows that only if "Gypsies" settled permanently, recognized a home country, and were encouraged to do formal work – even doing so by force – then this superstition of fortunetelling would decrease.

Cordula Bischoff stresses that one reason why it is attributed to women since the Enlightenment may be that gender values of the "rational" eighteenth century stereotypically did not link such practices of what was regarded as superstition or trivial magic to men. Thus, the motif carries and reflects deeper meanings about gender constructions. An intersectional perspective further highlights that the notion of "irrationality" was attributed to women through this motif and that they were stereotypically regarded as "Others" who did not belong to "civilized" and "enlightened" people (Bischoff 2004, 145–155; Bell and Suckow 2018, 537).

The ascription of fortunetelling as a gendered occupation for aged women can also be read in several other encyclopedic entries. The Brockhaus *Bilder-Conversations-Lexikon* (Picture conversation lexicon)

from 1841 states that the "slightly brighter-looking women are in recent years often very graceful [in] appearances, but usually also frivolous and crafty women. They are often dancers, beat the tambourine, sing, and do fortunetelling or cartomancy and other kinds of scams in their old age" (Brockhaus 1841, 802, author's translation). This stereotype is persistent in encyclopedia entries across the centuries. In an entry from 1905, aged women are depicted in a similar way and contrasted with young female dancers: "They [the male "Gypsy"] prefer to earn their living by begging and stealing, fraudulent livestock cures and the like. However, they are skilled smiths in iron and copper, tinkers, wire braiders, wood carvers […], horse and cattle dealers, the old women are fortunetellers, the young girls excellent dancers" (Meyers 1905, 925, author's translation). Whereas fortunetelling and ageism become evident in the depiction of women of age, younger ones were portrayed at the seductive "exotic Other."

Also, in the specialized discourse of penology and criminology at the beginning of the twentieth century, the motif of fortunetelling was also ascribed predominantly to women. A handbook of criminology from 1936, for instance, frames it as fraud that often accompanied "sleight-of-hand tricks" such as conjuring money (Paterna 1936, 1151). This depiction is entirely framed in the context of deviant and criminal behavior and how the state apparatus – legislative, judicative, and particularly executive – could act against such criminality.

A collection of regulations for police officers to combat "Gypsies and vagabonds" from 1931 underlines this observation. The pocket-size police publication starts with a brief overview of relevant official instructions and then provides a systematic list of "possible offenses." The second regulation that is listed in this collection is "fraud with little damage from need" (*Notbertug*), fortune telling, interpreting dreams, and so on, which conflicts with §55 Abs. 2 VollzB (Dorsch 1931, 12). In contrast to the writings from ethnographers and anthropologists in the Enlightenment, these antigypsyist stereotypes differ as they are connected to instructions on how to combat crimes conducted by certain people. If fortunetelling was used as an antigypsyist marker for women, then it was done so in the frame of the fight against crime. Thus, the very same motif had different connotations depending on its context.

3. Dimension: Fortunetelling of "Gypsies" As a Phenomenon of the Peripheries

The notion that this occupation was undertaken by Sinti or Roma women in the geographical peripheries of the German states, that is, mainly in villages and rural areas, is linked to the idea of fortunetelling as a marker of Otherness, "primitivity," and superstition. On the same token, fortunetelling gained popularity and became a specialized profession predominantly in the bigger cities during times when occultism was on the rise.

Although many publications were written and (police) laws passed against fortunetelling, there were also attempts to justify fortunetelling with scientific arguments. One early highlight is *A studied chiromancer* from 1752. Chiromancy also was taught at several universities, for instance, in Halle in 1780 (Riedel 1920, 120–121). Nevertheless, fortunetelling was promoted in public discourse by a minority, and this

profession was conducted by people who became increasingly professional. Concerning the status of chiromancy in Germany, Riedel observes in 1920: "Just a few decades ago people smiled and scoffed at this 'Gypsy art', today they take this 'science' devilishly seriously" (*Ibid.*, 121).

Following in the footsteps of the Industrial Revolution, job professionalization, and urbanization, fortunetellers also became more professional and advertised their services in newspapers and magazines. In 1934 the journalist and private detective Heinz Lehmann-Lamari – a harsh critic of fortunetelling – calls Berlin a "stronghold of superstition," reported that 23 fortuneteller newspapers were in circulation, and that almost every daily newspaper published advertisements for fortunetellers, who advertised their service as "scientific chiromancy" (Lehmann-Lamari 1934, 12–13). Well over 2000 fortunetellers who lived comfortable lives from their "dishonest" business were said to be in Berlin. Lehmann-Lamari portrays them as coming from different parts of the world – France, Spain, or Turkey – staying in hotels, asking for a lot of money for their exclusive services from their customers, and wrapping their businesses with a certain "nimbus" through a certain "layout" (*Aufmachung*). A "magic darkness, furniture covered in black, two lit candles, etc." supposedly attracted mainly female customers (*Ibid.,* 24).

This depiction of highly professional fortunetellers in the big cities is, however, not ascribed to the figure of "Gypsies." In general, they are depicted as living a "primitive" and nomadic lifestyle in the peripheries, undertaking non-professional occupations. For instance, Walther Thieme, director of the City Mission in Berlin, gathers many different antigypsyist stereotypes, including romanticized views, in his article from 1927, which was published upon the 50-year anniversary of the City Mission in Berlin. Among them was one account on fortunetelling in the peripheries, describing a campfire scene in the Tegel forest and "brown fellows and the passionate eyes of the women with their red and yellow garments." He furthermore undertakes an exoticized characterization of "travelling people with their foreign customs and gestures" and warns the reader not to get closer because of "their fortunetelling and stealing, their casualness and sluggishness." He closes off with racist remarks that all these traits "do not give one any confidence in permanent change" (Thieme 1927, 82).

Thus, there is a clear distinction between fortunetelling by people who are perceived as highly professional working in the bigger cities and advertising their services and the image of "Gypsies" fortunetelling in the peripheries, knocking on private doors and betraying simple people. Iulia Patrut highlights that the figure of the "Gypsy" served as a "border figure" in which one's own uncertainty is transferred and German collective self-perceptions are negotiated (Patrut 2017, 37). The spatial separation and the location of this figure in the peripheries thus highlighted the notion of Otherness.

This also corresponds with the depiction of women in Fine Arts and visual media, who are stereotypically portrayed in an open, unidentifiable wide space and within a natural landscape. This localization highlights the ascribed nomadic lifestyle, homelessness and a "primitive" life in the peripheries or wilderness (Bell and Suckow 2008, 504). The large distribution of this motif can also be observed in picture books for children (*Ibid.,* 547–549). For example, *The Biggest Picture-ABC* by Theodor Hosemann from 1828 depicts an older woman with an infant on the back and another child with her, reading the palms of a young woman. In the background a church tower can be seen, which locates them outside the city and possibly serves as an image of contrast between religion and "superstition" (Hosemann 1828, 22; Reuter 2017). The letter "Z" was

illustrated with the word "*Zigeunerinn*" [sic] and the letter itself was a combination of a Black person dressed only in trousers who is beating a crocodile with a baton. This combination with a person from overseas further ascribes "primitivity" and locates "Gypsies" in social and geographical peripheries.

Implications for the Social Order: German State(s) against Fortunetelling

In modernity fortunetelling is connected with ideas of dishonest work, superstition, and a gendered occupation, and these images were often mirrored in antigypsyist stereotypes. Peter Becker highlights in an article on police attitudes to marginalized groups that images of alleged criminals in this specialized discourse and practice are shaped by popular discourses but that there also has been a mutual exchange between specialized and popular discourse, which explains its heterogeneity. A common feature of these discourses is that the idea of "middle-class normality" is taken as a yardstick for ascribing deviant behavior (Becker 1992, 288).

Fortunetelling became an offense from the seventeenth century and mainly was prohibited in the context of fraud or disorderly conduct but also could be persecuted in terms of assault – depending on the harm done – or a special offense such as jugglery (Capitain 1929, 36). One of the first legal prohibitions of fortunetelling can be found in a police decree from Saxony from 1661 (Brockhaus 1848, 201; Schendel 2011, 134). In Prussia, fortunetelling was forbidden under a royal rescript from 24 May 1797, which directed the police authority that a law against fortunetelling or cartomancy was necessary (Mannkopff 1838, 128). This rescript was cited under the laws against the misuse of religion and the prohibition of "jugglery" (§220 – §222), which hints at the close connection between fortunetelling and the perception of religious deviance.

The legal and police prosecution of witchcraft and magic, including fortunetelling as one manifestation thereof, was hotly debated among scholars of the new academic fields of penology and criminology in the nineteenth century (Dorn-Haag 2016, 132). These scholars aimed at establishing abstract penal principles within a scientific discourse. Witchcraft and magic, including fortunetelling, were less regarded as religious offences and considered to belong to the context of fraud and trickery. Dorn-Haag points to the historical frame of a developing industrial and trade society based on the division of labor and seeking effective criminal protection against fraud, which further contributed to the relevance of such academic discussions and following legal prohibitions (Dorn Haag 2016, 133–134). Therefore, legal prerequisites of fraud were discussed among scholars. Two questions were crucial: first, the development of an abstract legal concept of fraud in comparison to deception and, second, the differentiation between prohibited fraud and permitted business. Furthermore, it was also discussed in what respect the aggrieved can also be held responsible for fraud because of his or her credulity. In the cases of fortunetelling, contributory negligence was seen in the aggrieved person's lack of discrimination, belief in superstition, or gullibility (*Ibid.*, 137–138). Central characteristics of prohibited fraud thus were seen in the making of false promises, the exploitation of the aggrieved person's credulity, and above all the reception of money or any other personal benefit in return. Scholars of penology and criminology took into consideration whether the

practitioner of fortunetelling believed in the accuracy of the fortunes that he or she had told. If so, it was assumed that he or she was "insane" or superstitious and thus the fortuneteller was not to be persecuted for fraud (*Ibid.*, 140).

For instance, the legal scholar and lawyer Karl August Tittmann writes in his handbook of penology and German penal legislation in 1823 that the "evil will to deceive must always be suspected" if there was no "no manifestation of misery of the soul or simple superstition" (Tittmann 1823, 496–497). He suggests that the punishment varied depending on the promised effects of the fraud and that only those should remain completely unpunished who did not treat fortunetelling as a business or source of income and who offered the service without financial compensation. The legal persecution of magic and fortunetelling as a religious offence is visible in Tittmann's explanation when referring to a "religiously illegal act." Nevertheless, this excerpt demonstrates the strong focus on prohibiting fortunetelling and other forms of magic as fraud when used as a source of income and based on trickery. Furthermore, the notion of work also played a role in the list of possible punishments in which manual labor in jail was named.

At the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century fortunetelling, cartomancy, interpreting dreams, divination, astrology, and other forms of "jugglery" were put under larger legal prohibitions in the laws of several German states – at a time when occultism was on the rise. These decrees against fortunetelling were abstract, general prohibitions that were in force in certain police districts only. Their number increased dramatically at the beginning of the twentieth century so that the legal terms "*Wahrsageverordnungen*" (decrees against fortunetelling) or "jugglery-paragraphs" were established (Dorn-Haag 2016, 297–298; BArch, R 58/9059, fol. 173).

With the foundation of the German Reich in 1871, a coherent and supraterritorial collection of laws was published in the Criminal Code for the German Reich. Several paragraphs of this penal code could have been used to persecute fortunetellers. According to §263 RStGB, fraud is punishable if someone deceives someone else, including fraudulent representations, and is thus gaining an illegitimate advantage thereof. Fortunetelling and other forms of magic also could be legally subsumed as "disorderly conduct" (*grober Unfug*) under §360 I No. 11, Alt 2 RStGB. Central for a persecution according to this paragraph was a real or perceived disturbance of public order. This in return matched with the new self-conception of the police who were responsible for prosecuting these crimes. Since the eighteenth century the police force's task was to ensure peace, security, and public order, which was a broader range of tasks than previous police work closely connected to military means (Becker 1992, 284). Although fortunetelling is conducted generally on a one-to-one basis, it frequently was persecuted with reference to this law because it stood in contradiction to "general morals" (Streicher 1936, 146–148; Dorn-Haag 2016, 304–307). For instance, the administrative appeals court of the province of Prussia ruled in 1881/82 that fortunetelling was a breach of morals. Fortunetellers, interpreters of dreams, and "similar wandering people" were engaging in a more or less disorderly conduct, which went against "good morals" and regularly served bogus purposes (Schendel 2011, 134).

Another method of curtailing fortunetelling as a business was the denial of trade licenses for traveling salespeople. A book on Prussian administrative law from 1914 remarked that no trade licenses for traveling salespeople should be handed out to "Gypsies" as well as other individuals who perform fortunetelling

as a business as it goes against "good morals" (Reichelt 1914, 822). Such prohibitions on fortunetelling also depended on governmental power or institutions and their main motivations behind the prohibition of fortunetelling. Sometimes it was prohibited and punished according to trade laws and sometimes according to police decrees and prohibitions (Streicher 1936, 149).

Fortunetelling is thought to increase in popularity in times of war and instability, and which is amplified as a danger to social order and state, as this description of the general discourse has shown. Implications for the social order can be observed in measures that are taken by a state apparatus in times of social, economic, and political unrest. Social and legal implications have been observed during the First World War. For instance, the governor of the ring of fortresses around Cologne declared in 1916 the expulsion of fortunetellers who predicted concerns about Germany winning the war and therefore disturbed general society (Capitain 1929, 35; Korzilius 2005, 45). The city of Leipzig also prohibited fortunetelling on 5 July 1916, in similar connection to the war and the social, political, and military instabilities that concerned the general public (Korzilius 2005, 44).

This analysis demonstrates that, in step with the emergence of the modern state apparatus, local laws and prohibitions of fortunetelling were created. As documented on the level of ideas, the context of the periods of both the Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution is important for linking "fortunetelling" to fraud. However, it was the specialized discourse of criminology and penology that paved the way for legal measures and state repression.

Measures against Fortunetelling Female "Gypsies" during the Nazi Regime

In 1934, under National Socialist dictatorship, several police decrees were made by different regional administrations. On 26 January 1934, the police criminal law of Württemberg introduced a revised version of the police criminal law based on the criminal code of December 1871, thereby introducing Article 28b that prohibited fortunetelling (Münch 1962, 502). In February and June 1934, the Cologne's police authority prohibited the announcement and exercise of fortunetelling through police decrees and fined violations with 50 Reich Mark (RM) or one week imprisonment (Fings and Sparing 2005, 107). Other local measures followed in Berlin, Bremen, and Hamburg (Schendel 2011: 133–134). All district police offices in Cologne were ordered in June 1934 to report any people who perform fortunetelling. One hundred fifteen people were listed in this card index of fortunetellers in Cologne by the end of 1936 – the majority of them were women and among them appeared one Sinti or Roma woman (Fings and Sparing 2005, 107).

The individual files kept at the local criminal police authority (*Kriminalpolizei, Kripo*) in Magdeburg further reveal how female Sinti and Roma were persecuted according to such decrees. On example is Anna L., who was convicted on 22 February 1937, to one month of imprisonment because of fraud and to 40 RM fine or alternatively 10 days imprisonment because of fraud and doing business without a trade license for travelling salespeople (Landesarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt (LASA), Rep. C 29, Anh. II. No. 6, fol. 7, 32).

Other examples of exercising police force over female Sinti or Roma under the suspicion of fortunetelling included depriving them of their license as traveling sales people and thus taking away means for their income. This was, for instance the case for Ernestine P. who traded in lace and haberdashery (LASA, Rep. C 29, Anh. II. No. 229, fol. 19). The Kripo accused her of also practicing fraudulent business by fortunetelling (chiromancy), occasional theft, and other kinds of fraud. Her husband was described as "work shy." The Kripo officers concluded that it was impossible that she could feed her family of eight children with this kind of business and thus deprived her of her legal means. For Sinti or Roma women fortunetelling could be an important source of income due to high demand from dominant society due to cliches from popular discourse.

In 1934, the publicist and private detective Lehmann-Lamari described the difficulties of courts to convict fortunetellers according to decrees that criminalized fortunetelling as a form of fraud, and he demanded stricter regulations of fortunetelling per se on the level of the state through harsher prohibitions like in Italy, Japan, or Turkey (Lehmann-Lamari, 21–24). One of the difficulties for the criminal court was to prove that the delinquent intended to deceive and defraud the aggrieved party, as fortunetelling was connected to the concept of fraud. Another difficulty was the judicial tradition of establishing the burden of proof, whereby suspects were innocent until proven guilty (*Ibid.* 22). Lehmann-Lamari's rhetoric against fortunetelling was on a par with National Socialist ideologies, equating fortunetellers with "varmint-people" (*Volksschädlinge)* (*Ibid.,* 22).

The decree by the RSHA from November 1939 against fortunetelling female "Gypsies" was related to the beginning of the Second World War. In the decree the "preventive police detention", that is, incarceration in a concentration camp, was justified by repeated reports of how women designated as "Gypsies" made use of the beginning of the conflict to spread "considerable concern within the population." This line of argumentation underlines the interconnection between an assumed increase in fortunetelling in times of political and social unrest as well as war and regulations against this practice. A report by the Security Service (*Sicherheitsdienst, SD*) from the same day served as the basis for the RSHA decree:

> The rumor-making by fortunetellers, clairvoyants, Gypsies, has again recently been observed, especially in rural areas. The rumors mostly deal with the end of the war, which is still usually presupposed at a short-term appointment. Similar fortunetelling was spread around Reichenberg, Salzburg, and Bayreuth by traveling female Gypsies. From Königsberg it is reported that a Gypsy village situated on the outskirts of the city is overrun. From Silesia it is reported that the immoral custom of creating horoscopes is spreading (BArch, R 58/145).

This decree joins a long tradition that connects an increase in fortunetelling to times of social and political instability and wars, and it also can be seen in relation to the perception of fortunetelling as a dishonest or fraudulent profession in outskirts and rural areas. Thus, the RSHA decree from 1939 crystallizes all the aforementioned dimensions of this gendered antigypsyist motif and demonstrates the persistence of these projections throughout different periods and socio-political contexts.

Karola Fings and Frank Sparing observed that the Kripo of Cologne (*Kriminalpolizeileitstelle*) held one woman into preventive custody in a concentration camp in October as a "fortuneteller constituting public

danger" even before the central decree from November 1939 was issued by the RSHA. They go on to assume that this local incident was significant in the formulation of the central decree (Fings and Sparing 1005, 105–107).[3] The criminal police in Cologne also combed through their card index of fortunetellers in Cologne, which they had maintained since 1934, in order to find female "Gypsies" that fell under the decree from November 1939. The officers only found one woman and she was released – spared the fate of deportation to Ravensbrück concentration camp because she had not been convicted by a court (*Ibid.*, 107–108).

The situation was somewhat harsher in the criminal police district police in Magdeburg, where at least two women were deported to Ravensbrück upon the announcement of the 1939 decree (LASA, C 29, Anh. II. No. 1, No. 6). In addition, two more requests for concentration camp transfers were made by the Kripo in Magdeburg at the highest police authority in Berlin. Incarceration in a concentration camp had to be requested by the local *Kriminalpolizeistelle* and approved by the *Reichkriminalpolizeiamt* (RKPA) according to the decree on "preventive police detention" from 14 December 1937. The Kripo in Magdeburg also requested to put 69-year-old Hulda L. in "preventive police detention" according to this RSHA on 18 January 1940 (LASA, C 29, Anh. II. No. 241, fol. 63), but the RKPA did not grant permission because of her age and she was released from police detention on 3 February 1940 (*Ibid.,* fol. 73–75). Maria L. was not transferred to a concentration camp because she was seventh-months pregnant. The police's medical professional attested that she could not be incarcerated at the end of May 1940 (LASA, C 29, Anh. II. No. 525, sheet 18), so she was released from police custody.

Another request for the detention of a "fortunetelling female Gypsy" was made by the Kripo in Magdeburg for Emma K. (LASA, C 29, Anh. II. No. 460, fol. 44). She had been arrested by the police on 17 May 1940 after being denounced by a housewife who accused her of fraud through fortunetelling (*Ibid.*, fol. 41). Emma K. was detained in the court jail until she was presented to the judge on 10 June, who did not issue an arrest warrant. Nonetheless, the Kripo arrested her again on 12 June, placed her in a police prison, wrote a request for "preventive police detention" in a concentration camp on the same day, and argued to the RKPA: "It is therefore urgent to take her into preventive police detention on the basis of the aforementioned legislation in order to protect the population from further harm and also to have a deterrent effect on other Gypsies" (*Ibid.,* fol. 44). This request was drafted by low-ranking Kripo officers but not signed by their director Overbeck. A corresponding letter from the RKPA to confirm or reject the request is missing, and this case hints at an intervention by the head of the Magdeburg Kripo. The case was closed on 14 June 1940 with the remark that Emma K. was handed over to the labor office to place her in permanent work (*Ibid.*, fol. 50).

The case of Lina S. demonstrates that the implementation of this decree was rather arbitrary. She was accused of targeting elderly women at home and in nursery homes and providing fortunetelling or "healthy prayers" for them in March 1941 (LASA, C 29, Anh. II. No. 493, fol. 30). The Kripo in Magdeburg did not rely on this decree to transfer her to a concentration camp but kept her in the police custody until she was

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3 In contrast Martin Luchterhandt emphasized the context of the outbreak of the war and that the Nazi regime wanted to contain rumors about the war.

trialed by the district court. She was sentenced to five months imprisonment on 24 April 1941 for theft (*Ibid*., fol. 42). Fortunetelling was in this case regarded by the Kripo as trickery and preparation for theft. The handling of these two cases from 1940 and 1941 reveals that the Magdeburg Kripo initially asked for incarceration through conviction at a court. As this was not achieved in the case of Emma K., the police relied on their own measures of repression such as "preventive police detention" in a concentration camp or repressive labor measures together with the labor office.

The November decree from 1939 was a measure by the police apparatus that combined the persecution of "fortunetelling" with measures against Sinti and Roma. It is less to be regarded as a measure against fortunetelling and more as one against female Sinti and Roma: in other words, a gender-based and intersectional measure against female Sinti and Roma. The context of the beginning of the war and the areas on the peripheries of the German Reich are crucial: borderlands generally had been regarded as areas of increased threats to state security by the state apparatus (Luchterhand 2000, 144). It is furthermore crucial to highlight its context and the series of measures against so-called "Asocials" such as the *"Aktion Arbeitsscheu Reich"* between 1938 and 1939, in which a great number of male Sinti and Roma, who were perceived as not working "properly," were deported to concentration camps. They thus aimed at creating a racially and socially segregated performance community (*Leistungsgemeinschaft)* (Buggeln and Wildt 2014, IX–XXXVIII).

The practical implementation of this decree in Magdeburg furthermore highlights an ambivalent police practice. This decree appears mainly to serve as a basis for incarcerations in the period of winter 1939 to spring 1941. In the local police records the explanations for incarcerations are linked to the perception of fortunetelling as a fraudulent profession rather than as a security threat during the course of the war, as the *Sicherheitsdienst* (Security Service, SD) perceived it when it triggered the RSHA decree in November 1939 with its report from the German borders. This new decree seems to have little changed the local criminal police officers' perception of fortunetelling in the new context of war. Similar to the early 1930s, fortunetelling was regarded as a fraudulent profession, but the means of persecution were different due to the decree that enabled "police preventive detention" in concentration camps since 1937.

Conclusion

This article shows that fortunetelling has been a marker of social deviance in the popular discourse throughout the centuries. It was the specialized discourse of criminology and the attribution of fortunetelling with criminality in this discourse that was very influential for the police decrees to criminalize fortunetelling. It was not regarded as proper work but as dishonest and often was connected to fraud. The notion of work was loaded with cultural and moral valence, and it was regarded as not improper. Connecting the motif of fortunetelling with antigypsyist ideas serves as a marker for Otherness and superstition and is predominantly ascribed to female Sinti and Roma in the peripheries, and females and aged women, in particular. In the main, police have been active in trying to ban fortunetelling through local decrees.

This article also shows that for decades there had been a close connection among the rise of fortunetelling, measures against it, and times of social and political instabilities. For the police and security apparatus this

may have indeed been the trigger to implement larger persecution measures that were based on a set of older beliefs and stereotypes about fortunetelling female Sinti and Roma and others who were stigmatized as "Gypsies." The Cologne example highlights the influence of local criminal police authorities on an overall policymaking that was to be applied across the Reich. The number of incarcerations were, as regional studies show, fairly low as it was a decree unconnected to a specific deportation "action" that the criminal police implemented on a larger scale like in June 1938 during the course of the "*Aktion Arbeitsscheu Reich*." However, the Kripo always could refer to this decree when exercising power over female Sinti and Roma, and then threaten to incarcerate them in a concentration camp, especially when other forms of repression such as imprisonment following a conviction after a court sentence were not applied.

The gendered motif of fortunetelling also was attributed in the representation of Roma women in other periods and geographical contexts, for example, Poland or the Soviet Union (Dunajeva 2021; Matkowska 2021, 64–67), which opens a question on its transnational dimensions. Such a transnational and cross-temporal approach would be fruitful for future studies to question the specificities of this motif on the level of ideas as well its consequences for the social reality of affected Sinti and Roma communities in different socio-political contexts.

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Gypsy Tales of the Welsh Kale Wood Family

Reinvigorated and Humanized by Today's Storytellers

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Frances Roberts Reilly is a Romani poet, storyteller, playwright, and award-winning filmmaker on human rights. She is of mixed Welsh Kale Gypsy-English heritage and a direct descendant of Abram Wood, a family noted for its musicians and storytellers. Her latest book is *Parramisha* (Cinnamon Press 2020). A Poetry Wales winner, she is published internationally. She contributes to the Roma Peoples Project at Columbia University and the European Roma Institute of Arts and Culture's Archive of Romani Women Filmmakers. She earned a degree in English Literature (Hons) at the University of Toronto.

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Within a mid-nineteenth century stone-built museum located in a small Ontario town, I took the microphone to tell one of my family's Gypsy tales, "The Leaves That Hung but Never Grew." After all, I am a direct descendent of Abram Wood, the Welsh Kale storyteller and fiddler who brought this and many other stories with him when he arrived in Wales in the eighteenth century. Now here in Guelph and outside Wales, I was questioning how this story would be received by a Canadian audience. I need not have worried, for although I was next after the best-selling children's author Robert Munsch – a tough act to follow – he gave me two thumbs up and the reading was a success. The evening's storytelling ended over snacks and coffee. I was surprised at the interest and respect for my unfamiliar Gypsy tales from the other storytellers. It seems that we all share the same human story.

This article acknowledges a notable aspect, a caveat about permissions for citing the Welsh storytellers under investigation: namely, Peter Stevenson, Fiona Collins, and Daniel Morden, while not belonging to the Romani community, who have obtained explicit authorization from the Wood family to recount Gypsy tales. Conversely, Richard O'Neil, a Romanichal storyteller, adheres to a nomadic storytelling tradition that he has preserved dutifully as an ancient cultural heritage.

To get to the root of the issue of why others began tell our story about us Welsh Kale, we must look to the Victorian Lorists. Bob Dawson, Romani educator and author,[1] has a moderate point of view. He asserts that many of them (Lorists) "had the attitude of Victorian colonists meeting the strange natives, which certainly does not excuse them, but it was the custom of its time. There was also sexual exploitation which was not excusable." He clarifies that "not all Victorian Lorists engaged in such questionable practices – some were very honourable."

As a member of an oral culture, my Romani ancestor Abram Wood carried our Gypsy tales with him during his diasporic travels – the *lungo drom*. The origins of these tales are unknown, yet they were memorized as per the traditions of our oral culture. A handful of the tales were recorded by John Roberts, a fluent speaker of Romanes, Welsh, and English who was taught reading and writing in the army. His letters containing Welsh Kale Gypsy tales, addressed to Lorist Francis Hindes Groom, contained tales that Groom published with the aid of his wife, Esmeralda Locke, in the book *In Gipsy Tents* in 1889.

However, not all Lorists worked to preserve the original material, content, or spirit of the tales in question. Common practices such as whitewashing the Romanes language and editing out the more gruesome details within the stories were used to suit Victorian morality. Our Romani stories are *not* as new today as they were when they were first told because they have been bowdlerized and their authentic meanings and teachings mislaid. The impact of such alterations reach beyond literature and storytelling, "precisely because it shapes the public imagination. It's a complex network of misinformation, racism, and prejudice" (Potter forthcoming).

1 Bob Dawson is the author of over 20 books on Romany Gypsies. He is an educationalist, genealogist, and president of the Romany and Traveller Family History Society.

Enter today's contemporary storytellers who are no longer misled by a fragmented mish-mash of secondary sources for our Gypsy tales. They are taking up the challenge of reclaiming and reimagining what has been mislaid, intentionally or unintentionally. Respect for oral storytelling comes from storyteller, author, and children's storytelling workshop leader, Richard O'Neil. He has lived a traditional Romani nomadic life, stating that "some stories will always remain secret and never be put into books." When sharing these secret stories, he will change the names and even the location. It is this secrecy that anthropologist Judith Okely is correct in identifying as "our personal and political autonomy" as Welsh Roma (Okely 1996, 09). Therefore, the sensitivity for cultural accuracy required when telling our Gypsy Tales is a huge responsibility "to make sure you do no harm to your community or give away their power," according to my personal conversation with Richard O'Neil.

We are fortunate to have a trio of splendid storytellers of Welsh Gypsy tales in Wales. The first of these is the multi-talented Peter Stevenson, who is also an illustrator, writer, artist, folklorist, filmmaker, crankiemaker, and lecturer. When did he first become aware of Abram Wood's Welsh Kale stories? He began to meet Welsh Romani in Aberystwyth and Machynlleth, and read books by the A.O.H and Eldra Jarman and E. Ernest Roberts when they were published. All this culminated in an invitation from Newtown Council to create a show about the life and stories of John Roberts, *Telynor Cymru* – Royal harpist.

Our second author is Daniel Morden, a professional storyteller. His popularity and strength as a storyteller of Welsh Kale tales comes from reimagining seven Gypsy tales attributed to Abram Wood. He has published the tales in his book, *Dark Tales from the Woods* published in 2006. The book garnered the Welsh Books Council's *Tir na n-Og Award.* Nowadays, Daniel tells these Gypsy tales internationally.

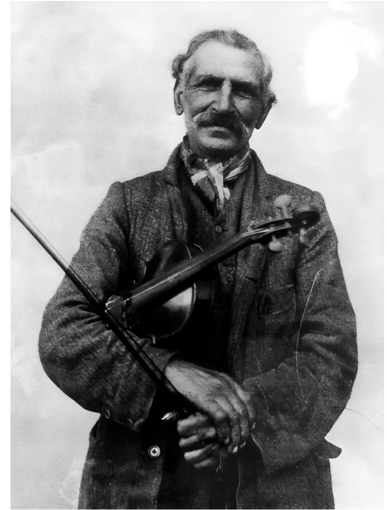
Fiona Collins rounds out our trio – a roster of three Welsh storytellers, plus O'Neil who is Romanichal. Recollecting how the Gypsy tales came to her through Daniel Morden, she first heard stories from Abram Wood's tradition when Daniel Morden toured a storytelling show with the musicians of the company *The Devil's Violin* in 2006. She learnt more about the provenance of the stories and the Wood family's connection to her adoptive home, just outside Corwen, north Wales. The stories had been collected by family, Nia Evans and Teleri Jarman.

On visiting Teleri Jarman in Cardiff in 2015, I was enthused by her passion for our family's stories and tales. A teacher herself, Teleri regularly travelled throughout Wales, telling our Gypsy tales to schoolchildren. Her mother is Eldra Jarman (1917–2000), a great-granddaughter of Abram Wood and a fluent English and Romany speaker. She was an author and harpist. Eldra learned the Welsh language from her husband, A.O.H Jarman (1911–1998),[2] a professor of Welsh at University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire. She and her husband collaborated on research into the history of Roma in Wales, drawing on the work of Lorists, and she added her knowledge, which had been passed to her in the

2 A.O.H Jarman, professor of Welsh at University College, Cardiff, where he specialized in the study of the earliest Welsh and Latin sources and made a distinguished contribution to their interpretation. Obituary available online: https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/obituary-professor-a-o-h-jarman-1181263.html

memories of her parents, both representing two major branches of Roma in Wales, the related families of Abram Wood (1699? –1799) and his great-grandson John Roberts. The resulting two volumes, *The Welsh Gypsies: Children of Abram Wood,* were published in 1998. The content is both intensely personal and of wide-ranging significance to the study of the lives and influence of Roma in Wales. Previously, Eldra wrote and published two books on Welsh Gypsy storytelling: *Y gof a'r Diafol* – The Blacksmith and the Devil (1989) and *Storïau'r sipsiwn i blant* – Gypsy Stories for Children (1991).

Five tales are printed in the book, *The Welsh Gypsies*, from which four are attributed to Matthew Wood and one to John Roberts (Jarman 1991, 160). These stories have evolved within the tribal imagination, deriving from many sources, including India in the earliest period of the diaspora some 1,000 to 1,600 years ago. Typically, some Welsh Gypsy stories do contain references to fortunetelling, hedgehog-hunting, and living in barns, but these are additions, although incidental. It was Lorist Dora Yates who admitted that the tales recited by Matthew Wood (1845–1929) had lost much both in transcriptions and translations. She describes Matthew's oral delivery that would "come tumbling from his lips at a terrific speed, almost too fast to be recorded," adding that the style of the folk-tale was "peculiar to every Gypsy idiom in Europe [is] a succession of short, crisp sentences, consisting … a single word, strongly accented: *rati´* – 'night fell' and *'chale´, kedi´ te chan´* – 'they ate, meaning they made an end to eating'. Matthew's dramatized delivery was punctuated with 'Lo' and 'Now', the verbs also vividly presented" (Jarman, 1991, 160).



Matthew Wood

Daniel Morden followed an in-depth research approach. But first he needed permission to do so. He contacted a descendant of the Woods, Teleri Jarman, who willingly gave him permission to attempt to put flesh on the bones – to return these synopses to stories worth telling, with characters whom readers and listeners could care about. He went about this in two ways. He found more developed versions of the stories in European collections and drew inspiration from them. Sometimes he added characters, sometimes he removed episodes. Then he told the stories as often as possible, to as many kinds of audiences as he could find. In front of an audience, he discovered what was missing from a story. A new, more satisfying version soon evolved.

Fiona Collins tells most frequently the Wood stories "The Three Tasks" and "The Leaves That Hung but Never Grew," saying, "I love them both." What Fiona finds inspiring about these tales is that they are rich in traditional motifs, feature resourceful young women at their centres, and both bring a taste of the vibrant Welsh Kale culture to readers and listeners. How are these old Welsh Kale tales received by today's audiences? For Fiona, the answer is favourable. The more she tells and talks about the stories, especially locally, the more she learns about the Wood family. Indeed, the Wood family lore and knowledge run deep in the telling of our stories. Fiona doggedly pursued other sources, as it seems that today there are still family members who have collected the tales. For Fiona, this involved learning more from *Buddug*

Medi in Bala, who remembers the family and has many photos of them in her home. After they met through *Merched y Wawr* (Wales' version of the Women's Institute), Fiona was kindly invited to tea, where she was told some family memories.

We know that storytelling is universal to all cultures around the globe. What is the enduring strength and potency of oral storytelling? "It is about what's been passed down," Peter Stevenson observed in personal conversation in 2014. He tells the tales, noting the description of Matthew Wood telling a story. His was very powerful, he threw back his head and the words poured down. "At that moment, he was able to speak from the heart, connect with his audience through his passion and shared experiences, be spontaneous and follow his own ideas, referring to anything that occurred to him in a moment," said Stevenson in 2014. Contemporary audiences seem to understand that the tales provide strong links to the people who told these tales: Matthew of Elin Ddu (Black Ellen Wood), Abram Wood or John Roberts, and also the members of the Roberts, Wood, Vaughan, and Lee families.

Academia have likened these Gypsy tales to Brothers Grimm, stories which are a mix of local folk tales from Hesse-Kassel and stories from literary sources. The motifs in these tales are found almost everywhere, including Welsh and Welsh Romany tales. Readers will find the usual patterns and echoes of fairy tales: the number three is configured into trials, animals talk, maidens shape shift, magical helpers appear, witches are wicked, wise women are wisdom keepers, older brothers compete, disguised heroes appear, and so forth. Offering a world cultural perspective, Peter Stevenson references the *1001 Tales of the Arabian Nights* as appearing to be even closer to the Welsh Gypsy method of oral storytelling. The idea is that the storyteller knows hundreds, maybe thousands of motifs, and can piece them together in the moment of telling to create a long epic story. In this way Black Ellen Wood (1854–1945) was reputed to know 300 to 400 tales by heart by improvising from memory motifs that fit both audience and occasion.

An interesting aspect of Welsh Gypsy tales is the way our storytellers navigate those tales that lie outside of temporal time. What impact does this have on contemporary audiences? Fiona Collins, whose adopted country is Wales, looks to contemporary research about Gypsy, Romani, and Traveller community members who all experience a degree of *othering* and prejudice far beyond anything she has experienced. This is where empathy is central and applies globally to other storytellers and all humans as the only way to understand the personal experience as *others*. Peter Stevenson is equally empathetic, commenting that "unquestionably when stories are told, they create a sense of belonging (Stevenson 2023, 6). He likes the feeling of movement in Welsh Romany tales, of travelling across borders, and how it reflects the lives of travelling people.

Most of Daniel Morden's stories take place in a forest, with the dark woods serving as a liminal and undifferentiated ground of being, a place where our psyche has its first life experiences, a place of danger and ordeals, secrets, inversions, or as a sanctuary to hide and find safety within. Perhaps even serving as an *atchin tan* – stopping place. It is certainly a place outside of temporal time – an evocation and reminder of where a Romany Gypsy must learn to navigate a world of inversions that is often hostile to us. These tales nurture and sustain our collective memory.

The central character in many of these tales Welsh Kale tales is Jack, a rascally *chavo* – boy and survivor – who shows the reader his cunning and good fortune, succeeding in triumphing against powerful adversaries and winning gold and the pretty girl. Morden retells stories where Jack appears in "The Squirrel and the Fox," "The Fiery Dragon," and "The Green Man." The traditional rule breaker, the *trickster*, appears in "The Master Thief." In these tales, women have strong characters, practicality and wisdom, and often save the day. Mary the maid proves a wily and heroic adversary, spinning riddles and outwitting her handsome deadly suitor. Arwen is guided by her *Romni Dya* – mother – into listening to her dream that becomes a frame story – a story within a story – showing the power of storytelling to transform. An ancient woman guides Jack into his fortunes. The dark feminine is configured as a cruel, murderous, and devouring *chóvihánni* – witch. While there are princesses to woo and marry, they are certainly not Disneyfied nor cast as compliant.

The Green Man
by Peter Stevenson

Peter Stevenson begins his telling of "The Green Man" by always illustrating the characters and landscape first. It anchors his memory of real places and also his paintings of the characters he refers to when storytelling. His recent children's book, *Illustrated Welsh Folk Tales for Young and Old*, features a whimsical "Green Man" illustrated on the cover. Peter illustrated *the Green Man* for a children's book of Welsh folk tales because he wanted to ensure that Romany tradition was included, and the illustration process is essential to the entire book. He deliberately tried to show the fantasy and fun behind the story, rather than paint a recognizable Welsh landscape. Peter and I shared the stage at the Aberystwyth International Storytelling Festival in 2022. Before he told the "Green Man" story, he respectfully requested my permission as a family representative of the Abram Wood line.

Fiona Collins's translation and telling of "The Three Tasks" began with Fiona reading through the original many times to get a sense of the tale and the style. She notes that a translation is not an exact copy but a rendering, as indeed, is an oral telling. As a bilingual storyteller, Fiona tells the story to keep the flavour of the Welsh for her listeners, both Welsh speakers and non-Welsh speakers alike.

In contemporary Wales, what role does storytelling play in arts and culture? Fiona Collins observes that contemporary Wales has two distinct cultures, each of which flourishes in one of the two official languages of Welsh and English, with little or no overlap or interplay between them. A pan-Wales report completed by the Romani Cultural & Arts Company in 2022 concurs. The Sites of Inclusion report compiled by Romani artist Daniel Baker raises the issue of exclusion of non-dominant communities from the arts, culture, and performance in Wales. It notes that the arts sector in Wales is locked into an older model of promoting a *unitary identity.* Despite changes in migration including migration of Roma from Europe and others now working in the arts sector, the report summarizes a largely ignored reality of the fundamental changes that Roma from Europe have brought to Welsh society. The reality of this new

reality of diversity for Dr Adrian Marsh, a researcher in Romani Studies[3] and a Welsh-born Romany, encourages people to recognize that Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities are part of diversity, as are other minority ethnic communities. Says Dr Marsh in conversation in 2022: "We have added our unique voice to Welsh culture and arts in many ways, not least in the field of traditional storytelling, harp music, dance, and performance."

How does diversity play a role in nomadic storytelling? "It humanizes outsiders and is as simple and powerful as that," comments Richard O'Neil. "In the U.K and Wales we have an amazing history and so many people are intrigued by it and often astounded to learn the many facts and links to history, from Flamenco music to Gypsy characters in Shakespeare's works."

These Gypsy tales have travelled far and wide, and they came to rest in Wales; however, the appeal of Welsh Gypsy tales is now international. These tales have captivated audiences beyond Wales and not only in Canada. When Daniel Morden began his process some years ago, Teleri Jarman and one other individual were telling these stories. Today, Gypsy tales are told all over the world. Ogutu Muraya is telling them in Kenya, Len Cabral and Alton Chung in the USA, Nuala Hayes in Ireland, Marin Milenaar in Amsterdam, Kathleen Rappolt in Germany, and Tom Van Mieghem in Belgium.

Our Welsh and Romanichal storytellers have succeeded in reinvigorating and reinventing cultural innovation and adaptation as part of diversity in contemporary society. We know there is not one singular definition of what it means to be Romani. Storytellers have transformed the Lorists' narrowly defined and misinformed perpetuation of a fictional oneness into an art form that tells of our shared human experience. They have done so with humanity, empathy, and compassion while maintaining what it means not to be a trope in Romany tales.

3 Dr. Adrian Marsh, researcher in Romani Studies and Romani Early Years, is of Romany-Traveller origins, who works with Roma, Gypsy, and Traveller communities in the CEE and SEE, Egypt, Sweden, Turkey, and the UK.

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Outside the Frame: A Critique of Chad Evans Wyatt's *RomaRising*

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Abstract

Photographer Chad Wyatt's *RomaRising* is an extensive series of black and white portraits of middle-class European Roma who have a wide range of professional occupations. By constituting the Romani subject as middle class, the exhibit defies stereotypes about this maligned group. Two key questions may be raised about its implications: does *RomaRising* infer that acceptance of Roma in European society is conditional upon gaining admission to the middle class? And does the way in which the images are framed exclude their social context? Specifically, does it neglect the powerful barriers to Roma's class mobility caused by widespread anti-Roma racism in European society? When these questions are positioned in the foreground and analyzed, emphasis shifts from the content of the images to the social and political consequences of representing Roma through the photographic image.

Keywords

- Gaze
- Photography
- Representation
- RomaRising
- Social mobility

Introduction

Roma have been made into a quintessential photographic subject. Whether romanticized or vilified, historical or contemporary, the group is so customarily objectified, its exonym Gypsy crystallized so long ago, that it sunders the relationship between representation and lived experience. The rise of human rights organizations and the politicization of Romani people in Europe (see Vermeersch 2005; McGarry 2010a, 2011) have stimulated new approaches to their representation informed by social justice sensibilities. While not necessarily in accordance with the principle "Nothing about us without us," some photographers have succeeded in producing images whose value have less to do with their mass popularity than with community empowerment, public recognition, and the assertion of rights-based claims in national and international forums. Diverse contemporary examples include Jeremy Sutton-Hibbert in Scotland; Nihad Nino Pušija, a Bosnian Romani photographer who works in Berlin; and perhaps the Montenegrin, Dusko Miljanic. Magnum, the renowned photographers' cooperative founded in 1947, represented Josef Koudelka whose 1975 book, *Gypsies*, stands as a seminal photo-essay of the twentieth century.

Chad Evans Wyatt's RomaRising falls into this category. The creative project of this American photographer, RomaRising is a series of black and white portraits of more than 300 Romani individuals from eleven countries in Central and Eastern Europe as well as Canada, the Netherlands, and the UK. Deliberately stripped of colour and set in ordinary poses with simple backgrounds, subjects' names and occupations are posted alongside the portraits or obtained via a QR (Quick Response) code with a smart phone.

Premiered in June 2004 at the *Muzeum Romské Kultury* in Brno, Czech Republic, RomaRising has been shown in over thirty-five countries and is available in two books of photography (2000, 2005). In 2013 and 2014, Gina Csanyi-Robah, then Executive Director of the Roma Community Centre, Toronto, invited Wyatt to the city where he took a series of portraits and exhibited his collection. As part of my ethnographic research on Toronto groups (Levine-Rasky 2016a), I met the photographer in 2013. Over a period of six years, I was able to view and discuss the project extensively with him. In this critique, my aim is to interpret RomaRising by raising questions about its meanings, its social and political implications, and what it includes and excludes as its subject. I consider its possible effects on Roma, both those photographed and the many more who are not. With his permission, I draw liberally from Wyatt's writings and remarks about his work, both published and unpublished.

Scholarship has produced a range of theoretical frameworks for visual methods. In this exploratory discussion, I first approach RomaRising as a cultural text, drawing from semiotics' palette of analytic tools. Binaries, framing, gaze, and narrative are the concepts of sharpest relevance in analyzing the four images I sampled from the hundreds in Wyatt's RomaRising portfolio. I then turn to critical discourse analysis for an examination of the latent politics of Wyatt's work. Interpretation of the images reveals that what is hidden from view is as salient as what is displayed. My analysis specifies the invisibility of the European context for Roma as photographic subject. In doing so, it emphasizes not the content of the images but their purpose and their consequences. First, however, I provide an overview of Wyatt's RomaRising project and the issues raised in this critique.

1. The RomaRising Project

The aim of the photo series is, in Wyatt's (2013b) words, to "reduce the psychological experience to its fundamental. An often-ordinary context is intentional." The photographic subjects gaze at the camera captured in a simple presentation of self, identified by a shared ethnicity but diverse occupations. Wyatt wishes to prompt a direct engagement between the photographic subject and the viewer. The "psychological experience" to which Wyatt refers is not that of his subjects but of the viewer. His aim is to disarm the, presumably, white European viewers of their prejudice through an honest encounter with the racialized Other.

Wyatt seeks to represent Roma in "a manner in which they are seldom presented in the media," that is, as "middle class and professional class." Through this approach, RomaRising advances a social justice agenda for world Roma by defying stereotypes about them as an abject underclass incapable or unwilling to engage the labour market beyond a very limited range of low-income and precarious work as entertainers, unskilled labourers, collectors of recyclable materials, and the like. Wyatt describes his purpose:

> RomaRising has but one simple premise. If one's stereotype about the Roma is true, then who are these now more than 300 people, representing far many more… These are people mostly unremarkable, who achieve in life careers that society understands. In defying prejudice to accomplish the improbable, they demonstrate that human aspiration to achieve is not limited to any one ethnic or cultural group (Wyatt 2013a).

Achievement and aspiration serve as key themes in Wyatt's talk. Yet the artist, who often refers to his own mixed racial identity as Black and Euro-American, is wholly aware that racism functions as the barrier to Romani achievement and aspiration. Without inferring that racism exclusively defines Romani experience, it cannot be refuted that normalized racism in European society interrupts the fruition of Roma's formal rights under the law and prevents their substantive equality. RomaRising challenges anti-Roma racism head on by seizing the engagement with middle-class employment – a capacity, typically, in public discourse decoupled from what it means to be Roma – and exhibiting it in public spaces.

Accomplishment among the Roma, in business, law, historical and political study, medicine, literature, music and the plastic arts, especially by students in higher education, is obvious to open eyes. Dynamic Romani folk culture is universally admired. It also is a complex survival strategy… The fundamental societal creation today by an incipient middle and professional class will bear profound positive outcome for this transnational ethnic minority. RomaRisingV4 celebrates the aspiration and bravery of these achievers (Wyatt 2013b).

Wyatt's honourable intentions notwithstanding, it is instructive to step away from them and emphasize the implications of the RomaRising project. That is, it is important to move from the content of the images to their purpose, to the gaze, and to the political potential embodied in representing the oppressed in the photographic image. As Rose (2007) (and many others) advise, photographs do not reflect reality unaffected by interpretation. Images have their own visual effects that are not reducible to their content. They produce pleasure, outrage, and other emotions. They can galvanize viewers into action or lull them to quietude.

They can both reinforce and resist oppression (Azoulay 2008). While the study of images should be taken seriously in its own right, their effects mobilize ways of seeing reality. Productive of social difference, images are always affected by their context, and they are always subjected to viewers' interpretations. Photographs, therefore, are artifice, and they are a result of deliberate choices made by the photographer, who affects the subject matter by use of a camera, choice of location or background, lighting, pose, and the cultivation of the subject's facial expression to name just a few elements. The subject matter is affected by the photographer's purpose, history, values, and cultural norms. While reflecting the attributes of people, objects, events, relationships, or feelings that can otherwise be missed, in the end, photographs are a way of knowing the social world.

The effect of Wyatt's images is contradictory. They advocate for the irreducible equality of a maligned group, European Roma. But they also obscure the reason it is necessary to do so, a reason embedded in Roma's inferior social status produced by entrenched racism (see Levine-Rasky 2016b). Is RomaRising consistent with a liberal politic by urging viewers to curtail their prejudice and replace it with respect for Romani ethnicity? Or does it encourage a literal colour-blindness in which these Romani individuals' status has nothing to do with their having overcome systemic racism and everything to do with their life choices? These questions – provocative though they may be – obscure a critical observation: the wish for Roma to look like other Europeans and to have occupations with which other Europeans may identify. They imply the value of inclusion but on the condition of ignoring the powerful barriers to inclusion, diverting the locus of change away from anti-Roma racism to Roma themselves.

2. Pushing the Binary

European Roma are often depicted in a binary fashion. Regarded as outsiders to white European society, they are dark not light, uncouth not urbane, dark not light, uncouth not urbane, detriment not advantage. Binaries always confer a positive valence on one side; in the case of Roma, it is the dominant society. The qualities ascribed to Roma – natural, essential, fixed, causal – racialize them. Their underclass position is attributed to their culture rather than to their expulsion from dominant society. RomaRising is intended to disrupt binary-making because it introduces the Romani individual – hundreds of them – who, by straddling racialized class divisions, reside in a liminal space between categories. They are positioned in a middle zone of intelligibility, or perhaps they refuse the strictures of category altogether. They face Wyatt's camera and name themselves.

RomaRising frames the subject of Romani identity ambiguously. It is unclear whether it is emancipatory, by framing Roma as having the same potential as other Europeans (as the photographer often intends), or whether it is complicit with states that seek demonstration of their Roma integration strategies' alleged effectiveness (as per the gaze of some state actors/viewers). Without any trace of the consequences of anti-Roma racism, the portraits could furnish such states with "proof" that no institutional inequities against their Romani populations exist. This question implies the absence of any singular authoritative meaning of RomaRising images. Not inherent to the images, their meanings are made through the complex interaction between viewers in an increasingly fraught social space. Meaning hinges on gaze. For Roma, the power difference could not be more stark. The narrative told by RomaRising is also ambiguous. On

the one hand, it challenges the meaning conferred by the very category 'Roma' in the European common imaginary. It destabilizes the ideological foundation of that meaning by exhibiting Romani potential in unimagined ways: Roma in whom (white, middle-class) European neighbours can see themselves. But it also obscures the reality of the racism that impelled the creation of RomaRising. It is one narrative of some Roma, told at the expense of the narrative of many, many more.

The four images selected for analysis in this article are of two men and two women representing four Central and Eastern European countries and a range of middle-class occupations. Tibor Csanya (figure 1) is an Hungarian attorney; Erika Ptáčníková (Horňáková) (figure 2), a Slovakian author; Olga Rostášová (figure 3), a Czech endocrinologist; and Asen Manchev Slavchev (figure 4), a Bulgarian electrical engineer. On the one hand, they challenge the conventional binary of powerful white European versus the powerless racialized Roma. Their countenances, positioning of their bodies, faces, hands, and choice of location, props, and settings, suggest self-determination. Note Csanya's professional attire, his slightly raised left eyebrow, and the open white door in the background; Ptáčníková's demure smile and highly polished fingernails as she sits at her manuscript; Rostášová's lab coat and name tag as she sits by the window in her office; Slavchev's right hand posed to frame his face just as the abstract artwork above him frames the portrait. Given the small number of images included here, it is impossible to convey the diversity presented by the 500+ subjects in the assembled RomaRising folios. The emphatic impression is one of a multiplicity of identities, of communities, of social-class expression, and so on.

While deprived of public recognition and facing forms of discrimination other than poverty, RomaRising subjects are not excluded from society if exclusion can be defined in purely economic terms. On the other hand, the very use of black and white film affirms a stark, even absolute, contrast. For Wyatt, there is the colourful Gypsy, and then there is the austere Roma in black and white. The former occupies a negative position and the latter a positive position in a binary. Social status is divided on a larger scale as well. Belongingness to dominant culture is achieved through social mobility and professional accomplishment. Roma who are too downtrodden, too uneducated, or too disaffected are not represented at all. In the public galleries and halls where RomaRising has been exhibited, such as the Embassy of the Czech Republic in Washington, D.C., the Museum of Romani Culture in Brno, Czech Republic, and the European Parliament in Brussels, the gaze of the subjects meets the gaze of the viewer. What transpires? Who looks at Csanya, Ptáčníková, Rostášová, and Slavchev and sees something revolutionary? Who sees exceptionalism? Who sees the outcome of a meritocracy? Who is relieved and who is shocked? Whose narrative is told? And how is that narrative heard?

Wyatt describes his photographic approach as truthful, an antidote to the falsehoods produced by many others who are fascinated by the Gypsy romantic. Wyatt believes that he offers the authenticity of his subject, removed from the "Gypsy" narrative. In this excerpt from his introduction to an exhibition catalogue, he positions himself against other photographers who render their Romani subjects in mythical or stereotypical ways.

> Consider the "gypsy" photograph as text. What are its usual elements? The first ingredient is exoticism, an "otherness" separating a group from its majority context. This style of photograph… produces a theatre of grotesque characters, unresolvedly different, without redemption, often emphasising poverty, unbridled ecstasy, rootlessness, irresponsibility….

> But what if this received wisdom were only partly true, speaking falsely even of this partial truth? What if there were substantial parts of the Roma community, thought not to exist, who currently lead lives of accomplishment, on terms society can understand? … This is the work of RomaRising, to discover and portray a significant number within this minority for whom family and education are of paramount importance. Who have risen to rank of attorney, doctor, teacher. Who have crafted businesses, met payroll, who have published works….
>
> RomaRising strips away conventional portrayal technique of the Roma… Mostly those you find here are anonymous people who quietly, below the media's glare, are building brick by brick a middle and professional class, [an] answer to the historic outsider status of this suffering minority (Wyatt 2005).

In general, two narratives prevail in the traditional representation of Roma: a romantic view of Roma as wanderers with common roots and common traditions, and a pathetic view of Roma as eternal victims of degradation, exclusion, and persecution (Vermeersch 2008, 363). In film and literature, the image of the enigmatic Gypsy has endured for centuries. "In the sixteenth century, as today, the wandering, free, musical, thieving, lustful Gypsy appears at once as uncivilized, animal-like and predatory (and hence in need of punitive vigilance); and as generous and noble yet child-like (and hence in need of vigilant socialization and preservation)" (Gay y Blasco 2008, 298). The myth conveys the strange admixture of love and hate; desire for the exotic and rejection of the wretched, the Gypsy lover-dancer-fortuneteller versus the Gypsy thief-vagrant-welfare-abuser. Mythical imagery constructs Roma as the embodiment of Other.

Roma are understood in the public imaginary as being of a certain "kind", irrespective of the particularities of their experience, whether they are represented in European newspapers (see Kroon et al. 2016) or American television (see Schneeweis and Foss 2016). Even where representational frames may be pluralistic and even sympathetic (Kroon et al. 2016), social categories for Roma are highly restricted. Siren, mystic, beggar, crook, philistine, anachronistic (Matras 2014), they are offered up to a public eager for sensationalized reality TV (Richardson and O'Neill 2012). Moreover, the dominant framing and narratives of Gypsy bodies on reality TV always intersect ethnicity with class and gender (Tremlett 2014). Romani women, for example, are read not only as "sexually regressive and backward" (Jensen and Ringrose 2013 cited in Tremlett 2014, 327) but also as located on the wrong side of the class divide. They engender a particularly bad example of tastelessness in which bold is brazen and sexy is raunchy.

These images are ones that the traditionally constricted meanings of 'Gypsy' have filled. Wyatt challenges hegemonic representations of Roma by selecting one segment of their international population and portraying its heterogeneity. He desires to present a unique image of Roma, not an added dimension to a hackneyed image but one in which colour has been subtracted. Viewers are struck by the candidness of the subjects who seem to share something significant of themselves with the photographer. Wyatt's ability to draw out authenticity from each of these subjects – all strangers to him – seems extraordinary. The subjects' expressions, the way in which they entrust themselves to the photographer (and the way they connect, in turn, with the viewer) is the cog on which RomaRising turns. We meet fresh Romani faces that have always been among us but never quite this way. It is this "unfamiliar conversation" into which Wyatt wishes to draw viewers.

3. Problematizing Social Mobility

Anti-racist in intent and uplifting in impact, the purpose of RomaRising seems beyond reproach. Wyatt describes his purpose in liberal democratic, even humanitarian terms:

> RomaRising makes visual the ideal that the human spirit can, despite prejudice and denial, rise to its level of ambition and excellence. Stereotyping causes us to overlook the dedicated among minorities, people of talent and courage, who succeed on society's own terms (Wyatt 2013b).

Despite its self-evident virtues, the photo series has drawn criticisms from viewers and reviewers alike. From the perspective of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 2014), what questions may be raised about the project and what it does, or does not do, for its subjects? One frequent challenge to RomaRising is the problem of representation. Wyatt's participants comprise a tiny proportion of European Roma. These middle-class, educated Roma have embodied a mobility that is utterly inconceivable for the vast majority of Roma. The visibility that RomaRising confers upon one segment of Roma signifies the general denial of their visibility. Ironically RomaRising testifies to Romaphobia. Throughout Europe, Roma are the targets of a virulent public racism. To take one flagrant example, Neo-Nazi groups are the chief perpetrators of organized violence, but ordinary Europeans express their hostility with impunity. Ljujic et al. (2012) distinguish "Romaphobia" from other forms of racism due to the particular forms of persecution they have endured including slavery, forced sterilization, expulsion, profiling, and violence. From France to Ukraine, Roma are subjected to all forms of violence and discrimination, often with the support of the national police (European Roma Rights Centre 2018).

The ongoing violence – and racism in all its forms – exacerbates social inequalities. Research on national employment, housing, education, and healthcare for Roma indicate significant lags behind the majority. Consolidating research from the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, the United Nations Development Programme, the European Commission, and the World Bank for twelve countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (2013, 27) confirms the precarious or substandard living conditions for Roma. Reports by numerous international and non-governmental organizations like Council of Europe (2012), Norwegian Helsinki Committee (2013), European Roma and Travellers Forum (2015), and Human Rights Watch (2013) describe enduring patterns of discrimination in housing, education, employment, and in public space. Human rights abuses of European Roma persist today. In a 2020 report, the U.S. Department of State notes high rates of evictions, camp demolitions, police harassment, sex trafficking, and forced labor as well as low levels of education, access to social services, and adequate housing in numerous European countries. The Council of Europe (2020) describes widespread antigypsyism that aggravates their economic and social deprivation despite ongoing efforts to eliminate it. The European Commission (2020) notes similar patterns of discrimination, antigypsyism, and socioeconomic exclusion for many of the continent's estimated 10–12 million Roma. This is the context in which most European Roma live, including those whose portraits are seen in RomaRising. Obscuring it promotes a silence around it, an invisibility of oppression, and a ready justification for state actors to limit their support for institutional initiatives for better practices.

Even though RomaRising subjects are exemplars of success, and even if they offer themselves to a public willing to set aside their prejudice in a moment of identification, this is not, Wyatt affirms, to be confused with their having overcome racism. Wyatt discounts any claim that RomaRising subjects are heroes in defeating systemic inequalities. The participants have not escaped racism, he urges, their successes notwithstanding.

> There has never been acceptance of my subjects into the dominant society… Nothing could be further from the real. In fact, all have struggled, have had to be better than their majority counterparts, in order to gain their success… They have no illusions of acceptance… It is quite important to emphasize that all of those willing to come before my lenses exhibit a certain bravery… Just an example, one who posed for me was interrupted by a call: her daughter had been hospitalized by an attack on the street by skinheads. She didn't recover normal sight in one eye for two years (Wyatt 2016).

Wyatt notes that Roma he photographs are not protagonists of self-made success narratives. Racism of the most flagrant kind holds them back from further achievement, circumstances imposed upon them by systematic barriers to their integration in the mainstream labour force. Wyatt's subjects are overrepresented as workers in a labour silo that Wyatt (2016) calls the "Gypsy bubble," an industry of sorts generated by the network of NGOs and government projects funded by national and supranational agencies to address the social exclusion of Roma. In this, they – along with the other middle-class subjects of RomaRising – contribute to the emergence of an intellectual class and, in some cases, directly to the international Roma movement.

Despite Wyatt's knowledge of Romaphobia, RomaRising may be criticized for overlooking the systemic oppression of Roma by exaggerating the possibility of an improvement to their social status. While consistent with an emancipatory agenda for an oppressed people, RomaRising ultimately fails to expose the roots of their oppression. The rampant exclusion, institutional discrimination, and public marginalization of Roma go unchallenged. RomaRising neglects the powerful barriers to the class mobility of Roma that it celebrates. Safely diverting attention from the anti-Roma racism that is widespread in all sectors of European society, it takes the risk of commending the policy initiatives dedicated to improving Romani life despite their general failure.

Interpreting the photographs beyond their face value compels acknowledgment of the political work they do, work that is entirely unintentional. Wyatt acknowledges the problematic conclusions that viewers may draw: "This has been a hazard of the project. In fact, one curator/scholar in Budapest characterized the work as 'utopian.'" While the hope and pride that RomaRising inspires for some is crucial and cannot be dismissed, it is a false hope and an empty pride for most. If the purpose of RomaRising is to show the world what some Roma have achieved, then it directs attention to only a handful of individual exceptions. If it shows what Roma may become, it is silent about the contingencies in place that contributed to the success of such individuals, the resources from which they drew, and the process of accomplishment and setbacks in which achievement is just one phase. In short, it is silent about the social milieu in which all of the individuals in RomaRising circulate. If it is an act of advocacy aimed at policymakers who are being encouraged to improve opportunities for Roma so they may produce more achievers, is it successful? Or,

as Wyatt has indicated to me, do politicians see in RomaRising evidence of their success in integrating national Roma? Is it, in effect, an excuse for those with power *not* to do more?

On the question of whether the purpose of RomaRising is aimed at social change through policy reforms, Wyatt responds:

> Given current stresses upon economies everywhere, and the recent chaos of the international refugee crisis, I have little hope for immediate impact in any general way for RomaRising… interest [in RomaRising] has once more become heated, and internationally… Does this portend use of the portraits to greater impact?… I don't know. [The images] certainly already have empowered a certain class amid the Roma. Questions of social change, even public education remain to those who might use the images (Wyatt 2016).

On the one hand, Wyatt has modest hopes for contributing to change, acknowledging the intransigence of economic downturns and new sources of social conflict. On the other hand, he notes the increased demand for RomaRising exhibits. If the measure of success is empowerment, Wyatt has reason to claim satisfaction at least for a "certain class" of Roma. As for policy sectors in which enduring change might be implemented, Wyatt cannot speculate.

One level on which RomaRising operates is that of emotional identification. In describing his work, Wyatt declares: "In addressing us with respect and dignity, we are allowed an authentic interaction." This interaction is between two parties – Romani subject and the (assumed) non-Romani viewer. But it is unclear whether the "address," and the "respect and dignity" it requires, flows in one direction or two. Wyatt suggests that since the nakedness of his lens honestly renders the subject's demeanor, the viewer may forge a previously unimaginable relationship with the Romani subject. Setting aside the assumption of a viewer as generically middle-class, white, and for whom such interaction with Roma has been non-existent, Wyatt offers a symbolic reciprocity between the viewer and the Romani subject based on shared characteristics. Aimed at closing the psychic distance between 'us' and 'them' that lies at the core of all racisms, this strategy has its merits. But it is impossible to say what everyone takes from the experience. Are 'they,' the subject of RomaRising, the exception and never the rule? Do they stand as proof of what an individual quest to dismantle a legacy of racism can do? Or is RomaRising proof of the absence of a problem? Other problematic questions follow: Does RomaRising imply that inclusion of Roma in European society is conditional upon gaining admission to the middle class? Does it say to Roma, "this is what you should strive for?" Only then, when they overcome formidable odds in their "aspiration to achieve," will viewers see them as equals. The implication is that 'they' are acceptable only if they look and act like 'us.' Is the accordance of dignity and respect to Roma conditional upon their abandonment of their identities, culture, and language, in short, to stop being Roma and to replace that biography with another: middle-class white European?

This line of criticism places the onus of social change upon Roma themselves. It implies that they are responsible for their own inequalities since all they need to do is choose to step away from those conditions. RomaRising suggests that Roma must seize opportunities and surmount daunting barriers to education in order to be accepted into European society. They must, in effect, join the RomaRising club.

Only those individuals warrant public attention, and only they evoke pride in their community. Emblems of integration, they are adopted as benchmarks for successful public policy, the signs of expenditures for programs well allocated. Inclusion, where it occurs for the scant few, looks like the portrait-sitters for RomaRising. But if the Romani individual in the photograph is someone who gains respectability by dint of their middle-class employment, it does nothing to eradicate the hostilities that remain towards the millions who stay unrespectable. No attention is paid to the "widespread failure" (Farkas 2010, 188) to effectively implement programs aimed at improving the quality of life for European Roma. The problem is removed from the level of policy and political accountability and shifted to the objects of policymaking, a group with only a nascent political voice and scant resources to lobby on their own behalf.

At this juncture, it is necessary to resist the implication that all Romani individuals' experiences are the same, or that they all endure identical manifestations of anti-Roma racism in identical ways. European Roma are entirely diverse in culture, identity, language, religion, histories, and practices; experiences are unique. Individuals exercise agency in dealing with the barriers they face, in struggling against racism, and in managing the conditions of their everyday lives. Moreover, the gains made by international and non-governmental organizations like the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, the Council of Europe, and the Open Society Foundations, and Romani advocacy organizations like the European Roma Rights Centre, the European Roma and Travellers Forum, the Roma Education Fund, and the coalition Alliance Against Antigypsism cannot be overlooked. Initiatives generated by these organizations have profound and measurable effects on Romani lives. But until the proportion of middle-class and securely employed Roma in RomaRising is equal to that of their non-Roma counterparts in the dominant society, it is premature to regard the social context in which they live as extraneous to their social mobility.

Conclusion

RomaRising continues to exhibit throughout Europe in sites such as the Sládeček Museum of Local History in Kladno in Czech Republic, the Heidelberg Forum Für Künst, and both the Bulgarian and Czech Republic embassies in Washington, D.C. Wyatt's portraits appear in the RomArchive launched in 2019 to create "a reliable source of knowledge that contrasts perceptions, myths and stereotypes about Roma with counter-narratives that are told by Roma themselves based on established facts." The site posts a short interview with the photographer (RomArchive 2018). Making no claim to function as a comprehensive portrait of international Roma, the collection represents one segment of this population – those who attained middle-class status. It stands as a powerful assertion of dignity, despite pervasive Romaphobia.

A semiotic analysis highlights the project's radical challenge to the usual binary in which Roma are positioned. It tells a different narrative to the viewers who gaze at these faces that are rendered in black and white, faces that are familiar yet unfamiliar in this atypical frame. From one perspective, it is activist art pitched to a public caught unawares of the potential for meaningful connection to unwelcome compatriots. From another perspective, it promotes the status quo – systemic inequality interrupted by the occasional instance of Romani social mobility. Critics may even describe RomaRising as oppressive in its insinuation that the subjects' acceptance into mainstream European society is conditional upon

their emulating non-Roma, a chance for which they are expected to be grateful. This position conflicts with the reality that some of Wyatt's subjects deliberately present themselves via Romani cultural forms, such as dress. Some occupy eminent leadership roles in various sectors where they dedicate themselves to promoting uncompromising Romani identities. Like any frame, the exhibit both includes and excludes elements from the broader picture. When its European context is summoned, critics are compelled to reconsider the purpose of the project and its consequences. It compels an obligation to act (Azoulay 2012). While abandoning the banal forms of Gypsy visuals, RomaRising contributes to a new narrative, some dimensions of which remain ambiguous and not all of which are innocent.

In an anthology in which Wyatt's photographs are published, Pusca (2016) avers that photography is always a political act that, in framing the subject, transforms it. By affecting the perception of persons and the perception of history, photography influences how we look at the world and how we look at others. But it is in "its ability to resist objectification and stereotyping by aesthetically transforming its narrow subject into something that carries a wider meaning and value" that photography is politicized. To what extent that Chad Wyatt's RomaRising resists the objectification of its subjects is a question that deserves deeper analysis, not only by non-Roma observers but also by Roma themselves. Its complexities notwithstanding, RomaRising has social and political effects that require sober reflection.

Figure 1

Tibor Csanya
Attorney (Hungary)

Figure 2

Erika Ptáčníková (Hornáková)
Author (Slovakia)

Figure 3

Olga Rostášová
Diabetes Specialist
(Czech Republic)

Figure 4

Asen Manchev Slavchev
Electrical Engineer
(Bulgaria)

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