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Critical Romani Studies

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 the 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 significant barriers in engaging with academic knowledge production. The Journal considers only previously unpublished manuscripts which present original, high-quality research.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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Timeo Danaos – Blaming the Victim in Roma Inclusion Policies

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Abstract

In this research I examine the integration strategies submitted to the European Commission (EC) starting in 2011 by the five countries with the largest Romani populations: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia. Using a mixed methodology that draws primarily on content analysis, I show that all integration strategies employ a discriminatory approach known as "blaming the victim." I refer to qualitative data gathered from the strategies as evidence for this approach. I conclude by recommending that a change be made in policy evaluations, and analyze the extent to which NGOs and social science researchers also frequently, even if unconsciously, blame the Romani people for a large part of the problems they face.

Keywords

- Victim blaming
- Roma policies
- Antigypsyism
- Roma integration strategies
- Culture of poverty

Introduction

Why Roma integration policies do not work is a thorny question frequently raised in discussions across all Roma-related[1] domains. Most analyses provided by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) point to the lack of tangible, practical results in most fields; and even when there is progress – illiteracy has ceased to be a hot topic, for example – it eventually may turn out that the change was not the result of government policies and/or that it is nominal progress at best, which means that the gap between Roma and non-Roma either has not changed significantly or it has even increased in some instances.[2]

Answers to this question about the failure of Roma integration policies mostly point at what I will call *technical details* in policies. One of the most frequently mentioned problems is the lack of ethnic data, a topic which has received much attention in recent years (Decade Secretariat 2015; OSF 2010; OSF 2012). This attention, however, is problematic because it usually comes without evidence-based arguments. There is no evidence showing that it is impossible to create a successful Roma integration policy that lacks precise ethnically based data and relies only on estimates. We have yet to see evidence (as opposed to assumptions) that the failure of these integration policies is caused at least partially by the lack of data. Other problems that are mentioned by most evaluations include the lack of clear budgeting, the failure to include and to reach out to Roma, or that discrimination and anti-Gypsyism are not addressed properly by policymakers. These are important and relevant points to consider in future research, but in this paper, my objective is to show that there is an even larger problem with Roma integration policies that affect the very foundations of policymaking and is consequently the issue that requires priority attention. The specific problem I am referring to is what William Ryan (1976) calls "blaming the victim," a phenomenon both embedded in but also distinct from processes of pure discrimination and racism. This issue of "blaming the victim" is especially dangerous because it is not easily recognizable but nevertheless can cause as much damage to those targeted as other forms of discrimination.

This paper builds on the results of a larger research study that I carried out between 2013 and 2016. Since then, a few of the participating countries have prepared new versions of their national Roma integration strategies. Although some parts have changed, and even a few strategies have been revised and updated, the main approach has remained the same among the majority of the National Roma Integration Strategy (NRIS) documents that still are valid today. Victim-blaming is a phenomenon that does not disappear easily: it was present in minority policies almost 60 years ago when William Ryan conducted his research, and we have reason to believe that it was not a novelty even then. I would like to show that victim-blaming is present in modern Roma policies today at least as much as it was in policies for "Negroes" in the 1960s

1 In this paper I use Roma and Gypsy interchangeably primarily because in my community (Hungarian Gypsies) we exclusively use the Hungarian equivalent for Gypsy to refer to ourselves.

2 This has been the case in regard to the completion of primary school and higher level education completion. A "widening gap" is repeatedly mentioned in policy analysis reports, see Decade Secretariat 2015 or the Roma Education Fund's regular reports at: https://www.romaeducationfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/bg_country_assessment_2015_web.pdf or one of the World Bank's analysis about Romania at: http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/eca/romania/OutputEN.pdf.

(the population that Ryan originally wrote about), even if the wording has partially been modified in a second version of some of the documents that I have examined.

1. Victim-blaming and its Context

William Ryan coined the term in his book *Blaming the Victim* in the mid-1960s. "Blaming the victim" has been used across numerous disciplines since, ranging from psychology to political science, in addition to its integration into everyday language. To blame the victim, according to Ryan's (1976) definition, is the act of "justifying inequality by finding defects in the victims of inequality" (xiii), and at the same time "justifying a perverse form of social action designed to change, not society, as one might expect, but rather society's victim" (*ibid*. 8). Blaming does not usually happen in an explicit manner. Instead, it tends to involve indirect implication, although in most cases, the blaming is very clear and unmistakable after careful research and analysis. Such is the case, writes Ryan, when,

> in education, we have programs of 'compensatory education' to build up the skills and attitudes of the ghetto child, rather than structural changes in the schools. In race relations, we have social engineers who think up ways of 'strengthening' the Negro family, rather than methods eradicating racism. In healthcare, we develop new programs to provide health information (to correct the supposed ignorance of the poor) and to reach out and discover cases of untreated illness and disability (to compensate for their supposed unwillingness to seek treatment). Meanwhile, the gross inequalities of our medical care delivery systems are left completely unchanged (*ibid*.).

Shockingly, these words remain valid for contemporary Roma integration strategies to this day. Ryan argues that victim-blaming is not necessarily a racist exercise and that it does not have to be driven by discrimination. Blaming is very often carried out by "sympathetic social scientists with social consciences in good working order" (*ibid*. 7), the difference being that while racism and open discrimination attribute inferiority to inherent, sometimes genetic characteristics, the latter points to the circumstances or environmental causation. These environmental causes will lead to a scenario in which it is the excluded groups or individuals that are unable to achieve results, rather than pointing out that it is exclusion and discrimination that prevents them from succeeding.

There is an abundance of academic literature dealing with Gypsy environments and analyzing how detrimental they are to the group's educational progress (the type of socialization, the lack of a culture of literacy, or the "cycle of poverty" – a term which was already criticized by Ryan and others more than half a century ago) or how Roma culture prevents Roma people from using medical services the way they are designed to be used (i.e., the way everyone else is using them). Most, if not all, (pro)-Roma NGOs think mediation is not only useful but necessary between Roma and non-Roma people in education, healthcare, and other fields, which implies that there is something "special" about the Roma that requires the use of interpreters: the extraordinary element is linked to Gypsies and not to the healthcare professional or the educator/teacher. All these are instances of blaming the victim, even if it is not obvious at first sight: it identifies something out of the ordinary, something that is "out of place," related to the Roma population,

and not to majority society. Intervention measures are thus expected from the part of the Roma since they are allegedly the ones who have qualities (or circumstances) that hinder progress.

It is important to note that what Ryan wrote about the African-American population in the United States in the 1960s/1970s also *precisely* describes what is happening currently in Roma policies across Europe. Extracurricular activities and "compensatory education" is what most policies, together with many professionals and NGOs, recommend as one possible solution for educational problems, but without targeting the school or the educational system as such. Racism and discrimination on the structural and institutional levels play almost no role in action plans but "race relations" do. What happens in healthcare for black people in Ryan's analysis is also *exactly* the same as what happens in healthcare policies for the Roma: even Roma NGOs and advocacy groups will find it a suitable measure to educate Gypsy people about the importance of education, health, and even basic hygiene – just like in the case of the "Negro" family in Ryan's book.

The central mechanism of victim-blaming is closely related to problem definitions and framing. Some of today's policy analysts also deal with this aspect of problem definitions, such as Carol Bacchi (2012) who writes about gender income inequality, claiming that besides explicit definitions in policies, recommended actions also serve the purposes of problem definition and framing. To cite Bacchi's example, if policies for gender equality propose training programs for women, with this, they are also saying that at least one of the causes of the inequality in wages is that women lack the necessary qualifications. Similarly, if Roma policies plan to educate Roma parents about the importance of education, they define the problem as Gypsy parents' unwillingness, negligence, or ignorance, which means that the failure is caused by the Roma and not by the segregation and the racism present in the school or the (educational) system more broadly.

What purposes does victim-blaming serve? To find an answer, we may turn to more recent developments in policy analysis, such as Schneider and Ingram's (1993) theoretical framework called the social construction of target groups. The fundamental idea behind this approach is that one of the most important goals of governments is to be re-elected. While solving public problems also is expected to be at the center of their activities, when trying to address problems, governments distribute benefits and burdens to different groups on the basis of two parameters: power and deservedness. The former may seem more like an obvious variable in this equation: powerful groups have an influence on policy decisions either through mobilization of voting power or in some other forms, and decision-makers can gain benefits from giving advantages to these groups (and suffer disadvantages in the opposite case), while powerless groups do not possess such qualities.

The latter parameter, on the other hand, is less obvious. The notion of deservedness is connected closely to the image of the given group among the general public. These public images have a strong influence on decision-makers in devising policies and in distributing benefits to and imposing burdens on groups. Schneider and Ingram (1993) look at this phenomenon as something that necessarily follows from the political and social situation, writing that, "there are strong pressures for public officials to provide beneficial policy to powerful, positively constructed target populations and to devise punitive, punishment-oriented policy for negatively constructed groups" (334). Public opinion holds that some

societal groups are deserving (positively constructed), while others are undeserving and should be punished (negatively constructed). Public policies are also expected to send a clear message in line with this public expectation if political gain is to be achieved. The policy and the distribution of burdens and benefits can thus be described in a matrix entailing two axes: power and image. The result is four types of target groups: advantaged, dependent, contender, and deviant groups (see Table 1).

Table 1. Types of Target Populations – Based on Schneider–Ingram (1993)

		IMAGE	
		POSITIVE	**NEGATIVE**
POWER	**STRONG**	**Advantaged** business people scientists veterans	**Contenders** the rich minorities big unions
	WEAK	**Dependents** children mothers disabled	**Deviants** criminals drug addicts gangs

For the purpose of this article, the most important group is the contenders. The image that is available about Roma today is one of the most negatively constructed images that exist in Europe. This would imply that government policies should explicitly target Roma with punitive policies. On the other hand, Gypsies do have considerable power in today's societies, mostly originating from supranational and international sources: the European Commission, the Council of Europe, large international NGOs, advocacy groups, as well as several human rights organizations. Ideally, this should make governments cautious about explicitly targeting Roma in a negative way. One "solution" for governments is to blame the victim since it is normally done implicitly, but in a way which is clearly understandable to the general public.

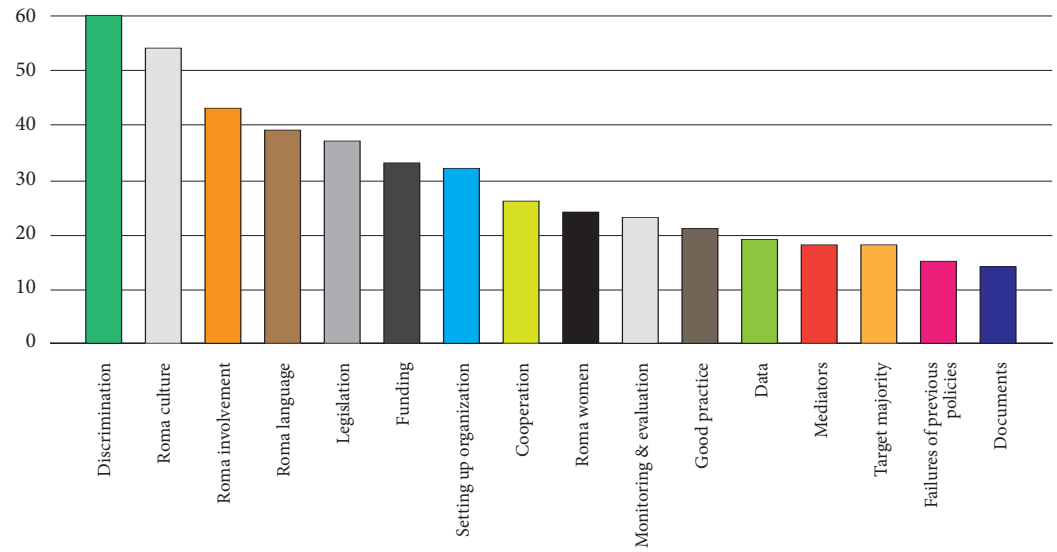
2. Roma Culture and Language

A simple look at the frequency with which topics are mentioned in policy documents[3] shows that language and culture are two of the most frequently mentioned topics.

The figure below shows the result of an analysis of all the documents that I have included in the coding, which explains why discrimination is the most frequently mentioned topic: international policy documents and analyses place it at the top. Roma involvement is another topic that most policy recommendations prepared by international institutions emphasize. If we account for these two topics, what we have is that language and culture are the most often mentioned topics in policy-related national documents.

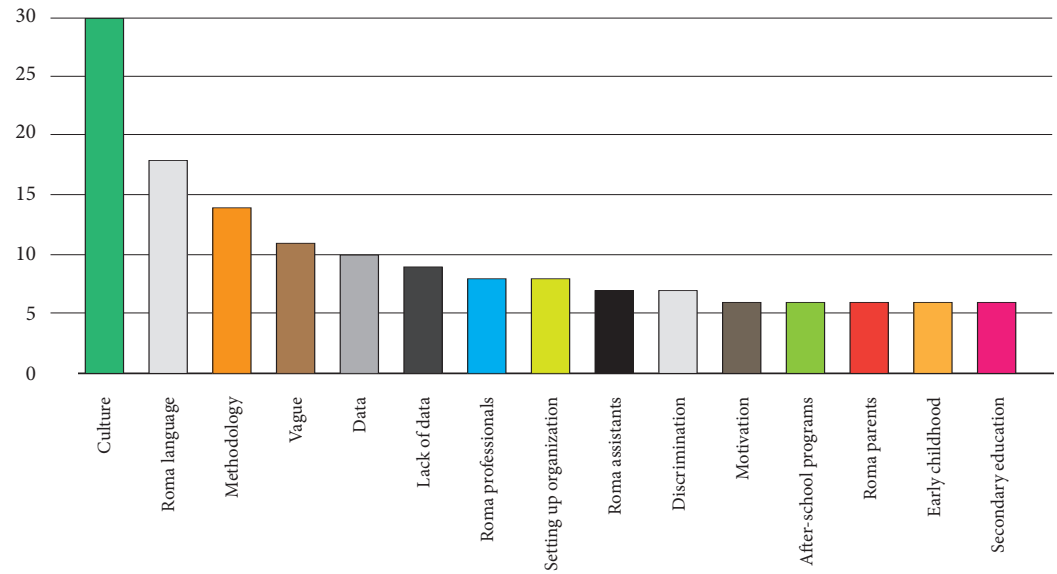
3 I have included 49 documents in the analysis (Council of Europe, European Union institutions, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe (CoE), and national integration strategies from 2011).

Figure 1. Frequency of Topics Mentioned in All Policy Documents Analyzed (First 15 Codes)



If we limit the scope of analysis to only include national Roma policies, the situation becomes even more interesting.

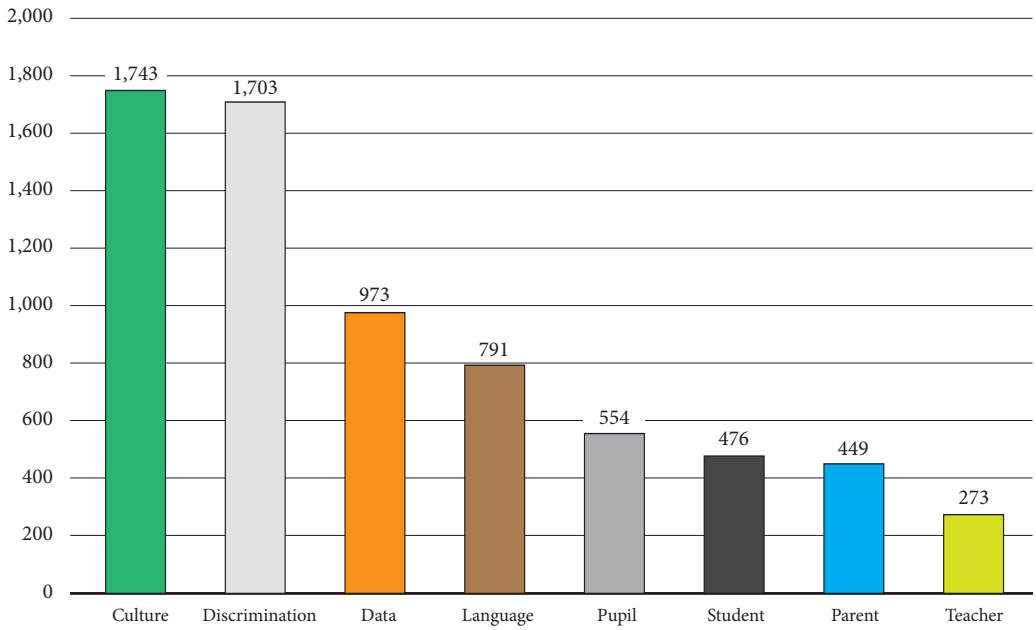
Figure 2. Frequency of Codes in National Roma Integration Strategies 2011 (First 15 Codes)



Roma culture and language are already at the top of the list, with culture mentioned more than twice as often as the next topic, methodology, which itself is something that we are surprised to find in a prominent role. The material examined includes both the policy documents and the action plans, but this does not account for the strange fact that culture and language are mentioned many times more than the topic of discrimination, which is at the top of the list in the overall analysis.

In the above analysis, I used the classical coding technique of content analysis. A simple lexical analysis may also be revealing, especially because we can include documents not covered by the coding analysis. The figure below shows the results of a lexical search run on all the documents submitted to the European Commission in 2011 or later, including the annexes (37 documents).

Figure 3. Lexical Search on National Roma Integration Strategies (28 Countries, 37 Documents)



What is surprising is that "cultur" (culture, cultural[4]) is used more often than "discrimination" and related words and many times more than some of the words expected to be highly important like "student" or "teacher."[5]

4 In the lexical search, I have used truncated words to find all occurrences of derived words, e.g., "cultur" for both "culture" and "cultural," "discriminat" for "discrimination, discriminatory, discriminating."

5 Obviously, I did not include some of the most frequently used words, but it could be interesting for a comparison. The word "Roma" is used 15,300 times in the 37 documents, while "educat" (education, educating, educator, etc.) is used 4,178 times. The word "school" is used 2,457 times, less than one and a half times more than culture.

"Culture" is thus a term that is extensively used, including in academia and NGO communication. One would expect that such a central term at least would be defined in policy documents, but this is not the case. None of the policies I have analyzed tried to define or at least clarify what they mean by "Roma culture." What is at stake here is much more than mere philosophical speculation or academic perfectionism. This word is obviously used as one of the central technical terms in policy papers and strategies, and consequently we should be able to see what the authors want to convey through their use. In the following section, I will show how Roma policies look at Roma culture and what role they assign to it.

The Romanian strategy lists its cultural goals as follows: "preserving the minority language / languages, preserving / developing the ethnic written culture and media, preserving their material heritage (museum and ethnographic collections), preserving their intangible patrimony (performing arts, traditional crafts, living human treasures, holidays, festivals)" (RO-11, 9). This goal is obviously a welcome one, but later the Romanian strategy does not only aim to preserve Roma dances and music but also includes an interpretation of culture: it claims that Roma culture is basically oral, *the result of a lack of training*. Roma culture, the policy says, is "low-literature folk culture" as opposed to the mainstream Romanian "modern culture," which can be characterized by "contemporary values" – and by logical consequence, Roma culture lacks such contemporary values. What "contemporary values" might mean unfortunately is unexplained, but it is clear that this type of values is more desirable than non-contemporary values such as those found in Roma culture. Consequently, not all parts of Roma culture are to be protected, and moreover, some parts of it are harmful according to the Romanian strategy. This is made very clear in the document: "a reconstruction of values is urgently needed, by promoting measures to fight against the social and *cultural gap between the Roma culture and the Romanian culture*" (RO-11, 13, emphasis added). Sadly, the Romanian strategy stops at this point, and we are left without an explanation of what particular values are to be "urgently reconstructed." But one thing remains obvious: Roma culture is responsible for at least some of the problems that Roma face – otherwise there would be no need to change or extend it.

Attempting to change "Roma values" and/or ways of behavior seems to be a standard aim in most Roma policies I reviewed and analyzed. Making Roma parents understand the importance of education, and making Roma women understand health- and reproduction-related issues are just some of the more surprising examples. This goal does not simply fail to employ an evidence-based approach (we have yet to see in-depth research to prove that Roma parents do not understand how important education is or that Roma women are unaware of reproduction issues), but more importantly, it has a framing effect, and ultimately serves the purpose of victim-blaming: the root of the problem is Roma people's attitude and culture. Since other reasons are mentioned rarely, these policies construct an image where Roma are responsible for most, if not all, of the problems they face.

Another way of blaming Roma culture is to classify certain negative conditions and tendencies as traits that are inherent to the culture of a group, even if it is not explicitly stated that way in the documents. One way of doing this is when the policy is talking about attitudes or *mentality* in Roma policies. The Hungarian strategy aims to "*encourage* the parents of children with multiple disadvantages *to start enrolling their children* in kindergarten" (HU-11, 74, emphasis added), which essentially means that the reason why Roma children do not attend kindergarten is because Roma parents are not motivated to enroll them, implying at the same time that kindergarten education would otherwise be readily available

for them – which is a factually false statement for the Hungarian case. The Hungarian strategy also uses the "mentality" card several times throughout the strategy, for example, claiming that there is a need to "induce a parent mentality that places the learning of their children in the focus" (HU-11, 77), with which it claims that these parents do not regard their children's education as highly important on the one hand, and that the problem is to be found in *their* mentality on the other hand. The Romanian strategy also claims that there is a need to change the "mentality" of Roma (RO-11, 5), although it adds that the mentality of the majority also needs to be changed. The focus, however, is placed on Roma mentality, another example of how policies blame the victim.

Talking about the "culture of poverty"[6] or even "the subculture of criminals" is also part of some of the policies under review. The Hungarian Strategy includes the following,

> Due to abject poverty, hopelessness and the lack of contact with people in a higher social status, these individuals [Roma] more frequently reject the goals and means of the middle classes and are therefore unable to take part either in production or in the creation of social values. They follow the specific *values and goals of the sub-culture of the poor* which the public opinion associates with the *sub-culture of criminals*" (HU-11, 101).

The sentence is problematic in various ways, starting with the fact that it is talking about individuals rather than groups (a characteristic feature of the Hungarian strategy, which is unwilling to even acknowledge in the title that it is a Roma strategy after all) all through to claiming that the Roma reject the supposedly desirable (but unspecified) goals of the middle class. But the most relevant point in the context of this article is that this statement identifies the root of the problems in the culture and the values of Roma, which is labelled by the Hungarian policy as the subculture of the poor and criminals, thereby placing the blame on them for the problems they face. Moreover, the problem is defined here not as the exclusion of Roma by institutions of mainstream society, but as Roma people's failure to take part in the production of values.

Roma policies are sometimes surprisingly obvious about connecting criminal behavior to Roma. "Crime" itself is a term that we should be highly surprised to find in social inclusion policies in large quantities but appears frequently nevertheless. A lexical search reveals that in the 28 national Roma inclusion strategies, the word "crime" and its suffixed forms are used 307 times. The Czech Republic strategy alone uses the word 51 times, with Hungary taking second place with 41 occurrences. Most of the instances are descriptions of Roma communities and locations, where "Crime and ethnic conflicts are particularly rife" (HU-11, 25). It is shocking to see how some of the policy documents openly blame Roma for even the most blatant crimes that are targeted *against them*. The Hungarian strategy claims that the "paramilitary organisations against Roma" and the spread of "uniformed crime" against Roma was partly due to and a response to "crimes committed by Roma perpetrators with a presumably ethnic motivation that intensified the existing conflicts" (HU-11, 29), essentially trying to find an "explanation" (or legitimization) for the serial killing of Roma people. This is also an example for how

6 On the culture of poverty, see section four of this article.

policymakers can turn the tables on human rights advocacy groups, international and supranational bodies, and a long list of human rights treaties and declarations to which they are signatories and how they are using even legal measures meant to protect human rights against Roma themselves rather than for protecting them: in Hungary some Roma individuals were the first to be charged with and sentenced for the newly introduced "racist or ethnically based crimes" claimed to have been committed by Roma against majority Hungarians.

According to the policies reviewed, crime is prevalent in Roma communities and amounts to a large part of the problems. The Hungarian document claims that the strategy cannot be successful without crime prevention and means for ensuring public security. To be clear, the crime, according to the policy, is committed by Roma and the state of insecurity is also caused by Roma. The Hungarian strategy admits that the "the Roma do not only emerge as crime perpetrators but, *by virtue of their* social situation and *specific socio-cultural features*, also constitute the most endangered victim group" (HU-11, 101, emphasis added). That is, the Roma are mainly the perpetrators, but if and when they happen to be the victims (exceptionally, one should understand, see the use of the phrase "not only," and the occurrences of texts about crimes against Roma), it is caused by their social situations and their *culture*, which has already been labelled by the policymaker as the "culture of criminals" (HU-11, 101). The Czech strategy also claims that Roma live in "an environment where crime and other high-risk forms of behaviour become *the norm*" (emphasis added) and that this is "dangerous from the viewpoint of the upbringing and integration of children and young people from excluded Roma localities who can adopt and apply these behavioural models in their own life in future" (CZ-11, 63, *sic*). This is *exactly* the same approach that policies used in and prior to the nineteenth century, when Gypsy children often were forcibly separated from their families and transferred into the care of non-Roma. This kind of argument is repeated several times throughout the strategy, and claims that excluded Roma environments are home to criminal behavior, drug abuse, and other crimes – that is, Roma ghettos are a problem because of the prevalence of crime committed by Roma and not for other reasons such as the violation of human rights (segregation) by local authorities and others from outside of the minority group. The Bulgarian strategy blames the "traditional practices of the Roma community that violate the rights of women and children" (BG-11, 11), which, similarly to the Czech policy, claims that it is Roma themselves who act against the best interest of Roma children. Talking about "traditional practices" suggests that this is what they are used to: it is in their culture – the responsibility rests on them.

As we have seen above, even when a strategy acknowledges that Roma are the victims of racially motivated crimes, there is usually an important note that indicates how Roma themselves are at fault. The Slovakian strategy uses another way of blaming Roma for becoming victims of discrimination by stating that, "surveys show a high extent of Roma discrimination on one hand, and a low level of awareness of their rights and defense mechanisms, accompanied by low trust in institutions and the police as a public interest service on the other" (SK-11, 42, *sic*). The claim that Roma are unaware of their rights is frequently cited in many integration strategies. However accurate the fact might be, the wording and the context still strongly imply that there is something wrong with Roma themselves, rather than the institutions or those who discriminate against Roma. After all, it is *they* who do not know something that they are expected to – a cynical approach, to say the least, but a good tool to blame the victim.

In most cases, policies try, to some extent, to be careful to not *explicitly* blame Roma culture for most failures. One policy paper, on the other hand, leaves no doubt at all. The Croatian strategy talks shamelessly about what is only suggested or implied in other strategy papers. Since it summarizes much of what has been said above, I will quote at length from the Croatian policy strategy paper talking about Roma culture and how it is to be regarded:

> The cultural marginalization of the Roma is apparent at the level of value systems and way of life. This marginalization comes down to the fact that Roma customs, behaviour and attitudes appear as an obstacle to the greater participation of the Roma in the dominant culture of society, because they are qualified as deviant, or the entire culture is viewed as having lesser value in comparison to the general culture in society. The cultural traits of the Roma reflect a specific way of life, and its manifestation in outside appearances, everyday conduct and institutions and interpersonal relations. The Roma originated in a cultural/civilisational sphere that is fundamentally different from that of Europe. They brought numerous customs and attitudes with them from their original homeland which did not fit into the way of life of the European population. They also brought with them a different system of values in which Western materialism was not a supreme value, which dictated their attitude toward employment and work. By accepting the value orientation of the societies in which they live, the Roma were condemned to live in an anomalous situation and thus forced to exploit 'informal' ways to exercise generally accepted values.
>
> The differences between the Roma and the majority population are also great in the areas of family and education. Some Roma marry early, leading to pregnancy among minors, which is also one of the causes for their absence from the educational process. Thus, most of the Roma population experiences an abbreviated adolescence and youth and does not participate in the adolescent sub-culture which plays an essential role as a transition period prior to assuming social roles (HR-11, 33-34).

The government of Croatia is so unambiguous in its description of Roma culture and how it is the obstacle for any integration, that there is hardly any need for interpretative comments. It is worth pointing out that this report repeats almost verbatim what William Ryan and other researchers were calling a racist agenda in the 1960s in the United States and which has no place at all in the Europe of the twenty-first century.

3. The Culture of Poverty and Victim-blaming

There has been a lot of research and debate related to the culture of poverty since Oscar Lewis (1966) introduced the term in the 1960s.[7] A number of authors point out that the idea of the culture of poverty in itself is a form of blaming the victim, as far as it suggests that individuals could improve their chances if

7 Originally phrased as "the subculture of poverty," but in most publications it is mentioned as "the culture of poverty."

they gave up their cultural traits. Even though this seems like an oversimplification, it is undoubtedly true that the term itself may be used and abused for such purposes. It is especially true for policy documents and political arguments (as opposed to academic debates), where "the culture of poverty" very often stands for some inherent lack of desired behaviors or attitudes: "it is in their culture to be like that" – and this consequently leads to blaming the victims for any hardships they may face. Many authors (see, for example, Emigh and Szelényi 2001) draw attention to how the original idea of a subculture of poverty became adopted by right-wing actors who used it purely for the purposes of victim-blaming. Even though there are arguments in defense of the notion of the culture of poverty (e.g., Harvey and Reed 1996), it cannot be denied that the idea today is synonymous with dependence on welfare, avoidance of employment, and attitudes, time-frames, and views that have a negative influence on a large number of important factors such as education, health, and employment.

A central problem in the culture of poverty debate is the definition of culture, a topic that has received more than its fare share of attention during the last decades but without reaching a consensus in the meantime. Here, it is only relevant to point out the fact that in the area of policymaking and even in policy analysis, the term is very often left undefined. I think this is impermissible in the case of such terms, especially because this allows for attributing a wide range of *ad hoc* elements to culture, without feeling the need to examine cause-and-effect processes, such as strategies that communities or individuals follow to escape the hardships of poverty, and instead regarding these as elements of culture.

Another serious problem with the idea of the culture of poverty is that it focuses on poverty, and thus explains an entire range of behaviors, attitudes, priorities, strategies, and other aspects through poverty as the one single factor or cause. We know from existing research (see, e.g., Lamont et al. 2010) that even within communities with the same economic conditions there may be various attitudes and behavioral patterns. It is thus necessary to avoid pathologizing certain minorities while also ensuring that they are not portrayed as one uniform group. The idea of a culture of poverty itself carries this danger.

However, Lamont et al. (2010) also point out that culture, or rather cultural and culture-related aspects, do have an important role for researchers studying poverty and related phenomena, but the idea of a possible culture of poverty requires revisiting – in fact, they do not employ this notion or use this particular terminology at all. Instead, they offer a system with seven aspects of analysis: values, frames, repertoires, narratives, cultural capital, symbolic boundaries, and institutions. While all of these aspects utilize the notion of culture to some extent in the analysis, Lamont et al. emphasize the importance of heterogeneity, and rather than accepting a simple cause-and-effect relationship, they focus on probabilities.

There is one further important criticism explaining most, or at least many, of the problems that Roma face through the culture of poverty approach which leaves no room for accounting for the considerable differences between the situation of poor Roma and poor non-Roma: for instance, some groups of Roma who can be considered anything but poor, face challenges that are common to all Roma like discrimination, racism, and segregation that are based on ethnicity and not financial or economic health. The "culture of poverty card" seems an easy tool for policymakers to use as a way of deflecting responsibility of problems of segregation, racism, discrimination, and antigypsyism more generally. One example for this is the Hungarian strategy, which is unwilling to even title the strategy as a Roma inclusion strategy and places

poverty at the center of attention, only including the Roma as a third target group ("Extreme poverty, child poverty, the Roma").

Poverty seems to be linked to the Roma in other spheres, too. Timmer (2010), for example, shows that NGOs often use the topic of poverty for tactical reasons, to "construct a needy subject" and to ensure their ongoing (financial, moral, and other) support. While poverty is a very serious problem for many Roma, we cannot account for the overall problems on financial and economic grounds only.

4. Targeting the Excluded

Targeting in problem-solving should be based on the same general principles. Most importantly, attention should be directed towards the root of the problem, which is to be identified through root cause analysis. Even if there are disagreements regarding the details, there seems to be consensus among academic researchers, practicing professionals, and international organizations that one of the major root causes of the problems that Roma face is exclusion and segregation, which in turn is caused by ethnic discrimination.

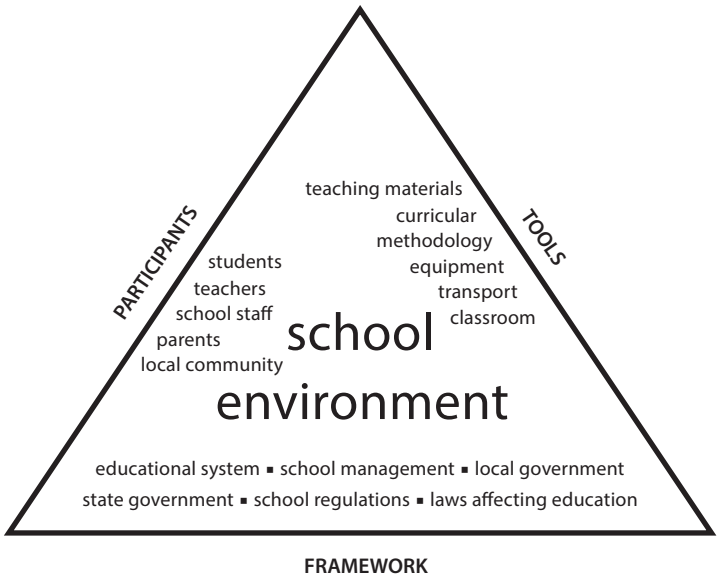
This should imply that the lion's share of policy attention must be directed towards discrimination and racism, together with segregation, in major policy areas. This would also imply that it is the segregator and not the segregated, the excluder and not the excluded who should be targeted in the first place. This is not the case in national Roma integration strategies. In fact, more often than not the opposite takes place: most actions aim to target the Roma, and not always with a benevolent approach, as previously shown. In healthcare, policies plan to give advice to Roma people about how important it is to visit a doctor or teach Roma women about reproduction and sexual health; in employment, there are plans to offer Roma courses on self-employment. In education, Roma parents are educated on how to become better and caring parents who understand the importance of education, while Roma children are offered out-of-school extracurricular remedial classes or tutoring. When it comes to special schools, some policy papers claim that it is the Roma parents themselves who send their healthy children to special schools for financial gain and, ironically, the parents are even threatened with legal consequences for this (SK-11A, 17). None of these strategies want to target or even mention the role of widespread discrimination on the part of the system at large, which includes schools, health institutions, and workplaces. This is in line with the aims of victim-blaming: the focus of attention is obviously where action needs to be taken, and consequently, that will be the area (or people) where it is perceived that the problem originates.

To show how distorted the targeting is and how it serves the purposes of blaming the victim, one of the most important policy areas, education, offers particularly convincing evidence of the fact. While it is possible to analyze the educational environment from different perspectives, I will be using a structure with components that are most likely to appear in educational policies.

I have constructed this frame of analysis (see Figure 4) with the formal school system in mind (most often found in European countries today). The formal educational environment includes three tiers: participants, tools, and framework. Participants include recipient parties (students, pupils, trainees, etc.), teachers, parents, and local communities. The list is incomplete and could include other actors. The second tier is

labelled tools and refers to the infrastructural setting. This includes material and non-material components, mainly teaching materials, curricula, methodological resources on the one hand, and the actual physical environment on the other hand, from classroom equipment to transport provisions. These together make up the facilities that are designed to support the educational activities. The third tier is the framework for educational activities or the institutional setting. This includes local, regional, and higher levels of legislation, as well as the country's general legal environment that has an influence on education, but also school regulations, school management solutions, and other organizational tools.

Figure 4. The School Environment for Educational Policies



The educational environment is not built up of separate parts: what is inside the triangle is one indivisible system, albeit with different modules that still can be identified. This system is influenced by several factors, which may arrive from three angles. But once they become part of the system, they may influence the other "modules" and thus the entire system as well.

But most importantly here, this system also can be interpreted as a kind of typology, especially when viewed in the framework of policy interventions. The policy tools used for the three different sides may differ considerably and require different theoretical, organizational, and practical solutions. However, since they are not separate modules, policy interventions in any one of them may and very often do require interventions in one or both of the other two. Consequently, it is expected that policy interventions targeting one side only will be an exception rather than the rule if policies are to achieve tangible results.

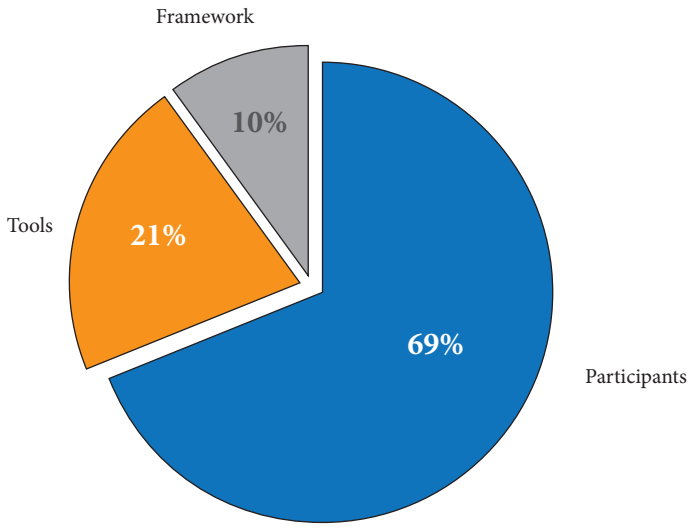
At the same time, policies must also decide which sides of the triangle they want to primarily focus on. This should depend on where they identify the most acute problems and where they think actions are expected to have the most effective influence. Let us now examine which sides Roma education policies usually select as the target of interventions. I have examined the action plans of the 2011 inclusion strategies of five countries

with the largest Roma populations. Where the action plan was missing, I have used the action plan prepared within the Decade of Roma Inclusion. The figure below shows the overall results for the five participating countries (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia). This shows that the vast majority of actions target participants, which is followed by tools, and only a very small proportion of actions are directed towards the framework. Actions targeting participants typically include second chance programs, extracurricular activities, scholarships, mentoring programs, counselling, on the job trainings for teachers, special places for Roma students (positive discrimination), summer schools, or Romani language classes. The common element of all these types of actions is that they aim to provide *remedial* assistance to Roma people, implying that the problem lies in *their* inability to achieve results – the typical approach used by victim-blaming in general.

Actions targeting the tools tier include providing school meals, developing (or supporting the development of) Romani language teaching, incorporating information about Roma culture in educational materials, revising tests for school competency, or developing other teaching materials. This group of actions already includes elements that may, theoretically, target the majority, such as the inclusion of Romani culture in teaching materials, but practically these measures rarely are carried out, and they constitute a negligible part of all the recommended actions.

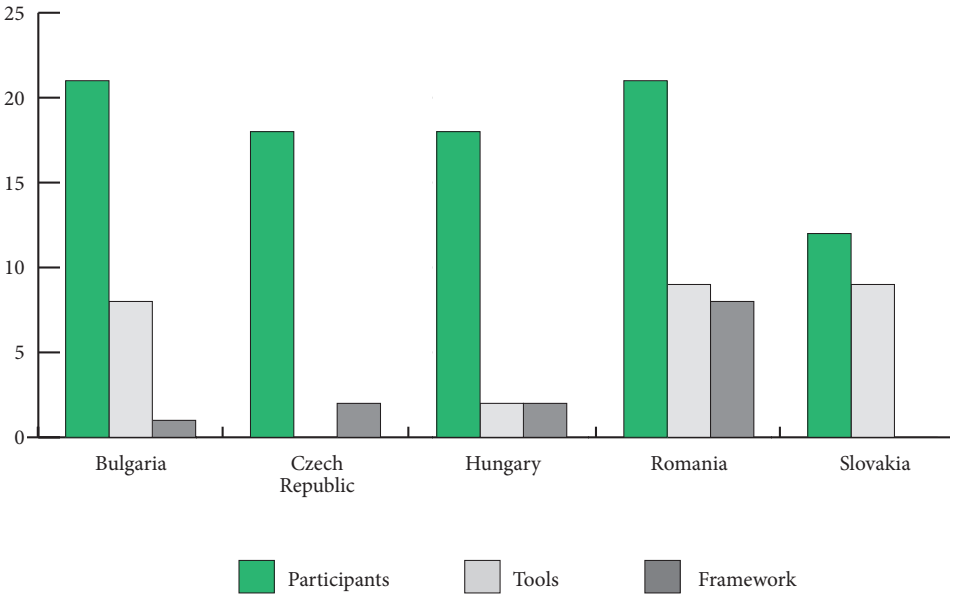
The framework tier is targeted by actions such as proposals for school advisory centers in connection with diagnosing children with special needs, revising the contents and requirements of teacher training, developing desegregation plans, training school inspectors and school management with a focus on inclusive education and desegregation, or making kindergarten education compulsory. This may look promising, but again we find that the implementation very often fails, and these types of actions are the exception rather than the rule in action plans of this kind.

Figure 5. Actions Targeting Participants, Tools, or Framework (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia)



If we look at the detailed diagram, we can see that although there is a slight difference between individual countries, the distribution is very similar in most of them.

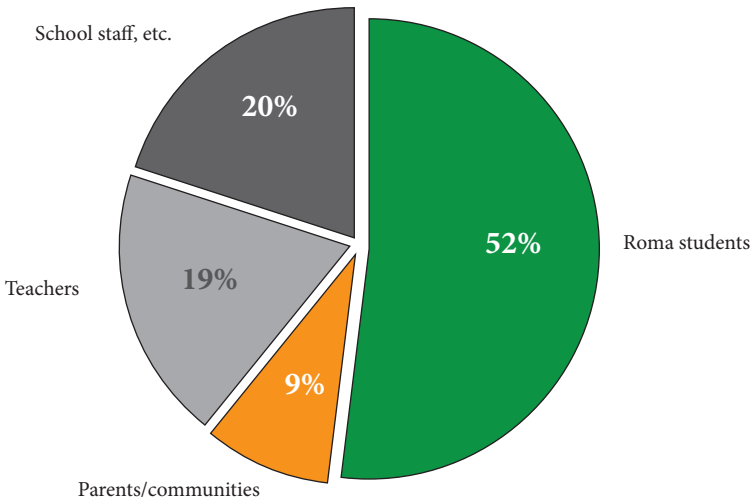
Figure 6. Number of Actions Targeting Participants, Tools, or Framework – Disaggregated Data



All Roma inclusion strategies focus their attention primarily on participants. Only in the Romanian strategy do we find a noticeable amount of attention devoted to framework, but again I do not see a considerable difference between the situation of Roma in Romania and the rest of the countries examined.

There is still a possibility that discrimination (although not segregation) could be addressed this way, for example, targeting the majority students, the teachers, or the majority community and the community in general on the participants tier. But the results show a different picture.

Figure 7. Actions within Those Targeted at Participants in Five Countries (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia)



In Figure 7, I have looked only at actions that target participants, aggregated for all five countries. Out of the 90 actions, 47 items or 52% target Roma students, with the ratio approximately the same in each of the national strategies examined. The actions themselves show great variation, ranging from organizing contests (Romania) and even sports activities (Hungary) through scholarships and other financial benefits (Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania) to providing extra classes or extracurricular activities to Roma students (almost all strategies). Most of the actions are clearly not suitable for addressing the most pressing issues that have been identified by researchers or professionals, but they are perfectly suitable for blaming the victim: if it is Roma students who need to be targeted the most, then they must possess some qualities that prevent them from achieving results.

If we look at the breakdown of the data for the remaining 48% of actions, we find that parents (and communities) are also targeted, but almost all of these actions also target the Roma only,[8] rather than majority communities and parents or both (e.g., through community building), again suggesting that a large part of the problem stems from Roma themselves.

Conclusions and Recommendations

When the Greeks presented their famous horse to the Trojans as a gift, Virgil writes that Laocoon rushed down to warn the people, since they had already seen what the real intentions of the Greeks were. This is when he utters the famous lines: *Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes* (I fear the Greeks even when they bring gifts).

In 2007, Romanian President Traian Basescu referred to a Roma journalist as a "stinking Gypsy." In 2017, Hungarian top minister Zoltán Balog, who was also responsible for Roma integration in the country, said that "the government still hasn't decided whether Hungarian speaking Roma living in the neighbouring countries are a burden or a resource." Romanian prime minister Victor Ponta repeatedly tried to distance Roma from Romanians in a BBC interview in 2013, and he could not be deterred even when the journalist reminded him that those Roma are Romanian citizens anyway. The list could go on: leading politicians from all five countries examined in this paper have enacted discrimination and racism against Roma in their public appearances or even official statements.

Roma inclusion policies are prepared under the guidance and political leadership of these same people. This already should be alarming even if the policies themselves were technically well designed – we should be careful with the "gifts" presented by people who already have shown their racism and discrimination before. And as we have seen above, it is worth remaining watchful. The inclusion policies analyzed in this paper are full of either open or covert forms of discrimination and racism. But what can we do when the wooden horse turns out to contain an army ready to attack?

8 One exception could be a point in the Bulgarian strategy: "Organizing seminars and other training forms for parents with the aim to overcome negative stereotypes and develop tolerant interrelations," but it is not clear whether the action is targeting Roma or non-Roma parents, or both.

First of all, this state of affairs must be explained to all parties concerned. The policymaker must understand that the policies ultimately blame the victim – as Ryan (1976) points out, victim-blaming does not necessarily happen knowingly or in a planned way. Therefore, we must make the policymaker aware of what is happening, sometimes perhaps behind the scenes or even unknowingly. Any meaningful policy work can only start after this stage has been completed – the stage of agenda setting and problem definitions.

Epilogue: The Responsibility of Intellectuals

A very important point is related to policy evaluations, most of which deal with technical details such as the lack of data or budget figures. The people responsible for evaluating policies should stop highlighting details and start focusing on the most important aspect: policies employ an approach that blames the victim, which reinforces discrimination and antigypsyism.

Discrimination and racism still do not get enough attention in academic literature compared to other aspects like culture, data, or languages. This shifts the focus away from much more important problems. As an example, the latest evaluations of the Civil Society Monitoring Reports always start by highlighting some positive results, and even more importantly, they want to evaluate the *implementation* of strategies, in particular the ones that are rife with antigypsyism and discrimination – a move that is as useless for achieving progress as it is detrimental to it.

This is not helped by the fact that various NGO-run programs such as after-school programs and employing mediators in both education and healthcare get too much attention relative to what they are able to and what they are designed to achieve. Hungary, for example, already considers the so-called "tanodas" (after-school remedial programs for Roma children) their flagship program, while they are clearly not a solution to the widespread, systematic, and systemic discrimination and racism which is the number one cause of segregation, poverty, health problems, and unequal access to quality education. We should certainly welcome NGOs and small teams of volunteers in various localities who devote their resources to helping the Roma however they can – but a government is not a small NGO: it has vast amounts of legal, financial, and human resources to plan and implement large-scale and efficient programs, ones that would or should be capable of changing the system of discrimination as well. Tanodas, mediators, sports clubs, and Roma dance and song contests at select primary schools obviously are unable to achieve these goals.

These and similar programs and ideas may only be relevant if one wanted to "strengthen" the Gypsy family instead of eradicating racism.

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Documents

All references to National Roma Integration Strategies can be found online at the following address: https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combatting-discrimination/roma-and-eu/roma-integration-eu-country_en.

References are titled with the international initials commonly used to refer to the individual countries.

BG-11: Bulgaria: *National Roma Integration Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria (2012–2020).*

CZ-11: Czech Republic: *Roma Integration Concept for 2010–2013.*

HU-11: Hungary: *National Social Inclusion Strategy – Extreme Poverty, Child Poverty, the Roma (2011–2020).*

RO-11: Romania: S*trategy of the Government of Romania for the Inclusion of the Romanian Citizens Belonging to Roma Minority for the Period 2012–2020.*

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"They're Saying That to Us?" The Unspeakable Racism of Spanish *Gadjo* Feminism

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Abstract

The Spanish state advertises itself internationally as a leading example of "Roma inclusion" and takes particular pride in its policy towards women from the Kalé minority, the main Romani group in Spain. This is reflected in a carefully deployed political communication that centres on the trope of the "empowered Gypsy woman" who will soon reach emancipation thanks to state-funded programmes. On the ground, however, Kalé women's persistent social marginalisation is imputed on them, while antigypsyism remains unaddressed by institutions. This paper investigates the discursive strategies mobilised by institutional actors in order to rule out discussions on racism. Based on eight months of ethnographic observations as well as semi-structured interviews with professionals in Madrid, I argue that this occurs through a translation of feminist agendas, particularly on intimate partner violence (IPV), into discourses that stigmatise Kalé "culture" as intrinsically patriarchal while promoting a *gadjo* (non-Romani) norm. This phenomenon, which I refer to as "gadjo feminism," manifests itself within the justice system, where professionals disproportionately resort to culturalist representations of IPV in Kalé communities, and also within NGO-piloted empowerment programmes for Kalé women which rely upon racial hierarchies while systematically dismissing women's experiences of institutional racism.

Keywords

- Feminism
- Culture
- Race
- Romani women
- Intimate partner violence
- Spain

Introduction

In August 2018, *El Diario Aragón* published an interview with María Esther López, a gender equality professional working for the largest organisation implementing "Roma inclusion" policies in Spain, *Fundación Secretariado Gitano* (Sánchez Borroy 2018). Referring to women from Kalé communities – the main group of Romani people in Spain – and to what she believed was holding them back from gendered emancipation, López argued:

> The heaviest burden for Gypsy[1] women is the risk of being guilty of 'gadjo-isation' (*apayamiento*). […] When a Gypsy woman builds herself a gender identity more in line with majority society norms, […] with autonomy, freedom of decision, […] she ceases to be recognised as Gypsy by her group. […] It is easy for [Gypsy women] to gain recognition outside of their community, where it is expected that they work for another employer, have a professional career, share family responsibilities with their partner, take their children to day care from the first months on… But […] seeking recognition within their group causes very strong internal conflicts.[2]

Shortly thereafter, Kalé feminist researcher Patricia Caro Maya wrote an opinion piece condemning a "vast repertoire of colonialist and exclusionary metaphors" that portrayed "gadjo-isation" as an "intra" rather than "inter-group stigma" and failed to consider instead the institutional violence historically inflicted by the Spanish state upon Kalé women (Caro Maya 2018).

The idea defended in López's interview – that women from the Kalé minority carry the weight of their culture and community as a burden, while aspiring towards the "modernisation" and emancipation that women from "majority society" reportedly enjoy – remains widespread among Spanish society and regurgitates colonial thinking. What might be more surprising is that, as illustrated by López's professional background, the "patriarchal Gypsy culture" rhetoric, or what López herself called "Gypsy patriarchy" in her doctoral thesis (Sánchez Borroy, *op. cit.*), is remarkably prevalent among feminist-identifying professionals, particularly those employed within so-called pro-Gypsy organisations (*organizaciones pro-gitanas*). In a country that has been referred to as at the vanguard of state feminism in Europe (Valiente 2008), in particular with respect to state response to intimate partner violence (IPV) (Casas Vila 2017), the framework of state-NGO partnerships – which historically was set up to aid socially marginalised Kalé populations – now is adopting a discourse on gender empowerment that, however, translates systemic

1 My use of the word "Gypsy" is limited to quotes to remain faithful to the wording of research participants or to the original names of the various institutions I am mentioning. Although *Gitanos/Gitanas*, literally "Gypsies," was reappropriated by Kalé people, it is a word that bears racist connotations, and translation into "Roma" or "Kalé" would misleadingly embellish the meaning that many ascribe to *Gitanos/Gitanas* in Spanish. Besides quotes, I prefer *Kalé/Kaló/Kalí* over *Gitanos/Gitanas*, in line with several Kalé activists from Spain, to give credit to a word that comes from the community rather than to a term coined by majority society.

2 Ana Sánchez Borroy. 2018. "La mayor carga para las gitanas es la culpabilidad por 'apayamiento', esa sensación de que tú ya no pareces gitana" [The heaviest burden for Gypsy women is the guilty feeling of "gadjo-ization," that feeling that you no longer Seem Gypsy]. *El Diario Aragón*. August 11, 2018. Author's translation.

analyses of patriarchal oppression into culturalist ones in order to justify paternalistic state policies. Relying on Romani language, I refer to this framing strategy as "gadjo feminism": a reinterpretation of feminist agendas, notably on IPV, that stigmatises Kalé culture as intrinsically patriarchal while actively, albeit surreptitiously, promoting a *gadjo* (non-Romani) norm. Interestingly, gadjo feminism in Spain goes beyond the white saviour attitudes of state agents working in colour-blind institutions. It also reveals itself in projects implemented by NGOs that work specifically with Kalé women and claim expertise on their "culture."

In the winter of 2017, I worked as a volunteer for one such organisation in the suburbs of Madrid. Funded and piloted under the authority of the Community of Madrid, its daily operations are run by gadje social workers and Kalé mediators, all of whom are women. One morning, as I return to the premises after attending a documentary screening with the NGO's beneficiaries, I find myself in the middle of a heated discussion with staff. Shaking their heads, they argue that the documentary, which tells the stories of Romani genocide survivors, had the wrong kind of impact on the beneficiaries. The social workers report to me, appalled, that a couple of women, after watching the film, walked into the office and claimed: "After everything you *payos*[3] put us through, we should all be getting EUR 2000 compensation!" Shocked at what she sees as ungratefulness, one of them asks rhetorically: "And they're saying that *to us*?" While her colleagues nod, she stresses how "shameful" it is for women living on social benefits thanks to their NGO to then come and request extra money. When I try to argue that they were referring to the lack of compensation offered to Romani survivors of concentration camps, I am asked to avoid talking about racism and ethnic persecution with them in future. "It isn't a good idea to bring up these topics," one of them says, "In this organisation, we don't want to encourage victimisation. They need to stop referring to themselves as victims."

This scene powefully reflects the dynamics at play within the organisation and within Spanish society. It is common to believe that Spanish Kalé, and Kalé women in particular, benefit from a very generous institutional framework which provides them with all the right tools to improve their living conditions and social status (Maya and Mirga 2014). The "Spanish model" often is considered as one of the best in Europe for Romani minorities (*ibid.*; Magazzini and Piemontese 2016), as well as in terms of gender equality machineries (Bustelo 2014; Morondo Taramundi 2016). Following this line of thinking, in a context where Kalé women are sent to empowerment programmes and racism allegedly has disappeared, there should be no reason why they would remain unhappy – those who do so are just unwilling to move forward, despite everything that was handed to them. Underlying the question "They're saying that to us" is the assumption and expectation that Kalé women should be pleased to be where they are and grateful to those making it possible. How dare they complain while living in generous and emancipatory Spain? Carolina Moulin argues that expressing ingratitude is an act of insubordination that may be tolerated among citizens as "participants of their political communities" but is not permitted among refugees "who are not entitled to climb the steps towards properly authorized citizenship status" (Moulin 2012, 55). Although the binary opposition between the right to protest for rightful citizens and the

3 *Payos/payas* or *jambos/jambas* is a term used by Kalé people in Spain to refer to non-Romani people. An assumption of whiteness also underlies its use – i.e., in the Spanish context, it refers to the dominant (and oppressive) ethnic group.

expectation to keep silent for "undeserving […] others" (*ibid.*) makes sense if we take on board that racialised groups of citizens such as the Kalé remain "guests" in the collective mind of Spanish white society, the fantasy of a "happy" place goes beyond a mere prohibition to protest by making discontent outright absurd. Drawing from Marilyn Frye's argument that oppression requires the oppressed to be cheerful and complacent with the status quo (Frye 1983, 2–3, cited in Ahmed 2009, 48–49), Sara Ahmed claims that being invited into a white institution as "[embodied] diversity" implies "[showing] signs of happiness, as signs of being or having been adjusted" (*ibid.*). In other words, any issue that groups who are considered outsiders may encounter would be due to their failure to adapt to their otherwise perfectly welcoming environment – not the other way round.

The tolerance that majority society claims to show Kalé women materialises in a feminist mission to rescue them from their allegedly patriarchal culture and to guide them towards emancipation. Portraying this endeavour as benevolent reinforces the power dynamics which prevail at the societal level and makes it practically impossible to speak out. Based on extensive research conducted within state and state-funded institutions working with IPV and/or Kalé women, including within the justice system, this paper unravels how discourses on IPV are used to avoid addressing antigypsyism. I argue that the politicisation of feminist discourses on IPV as a manifestation of systemic power relations of men over women in Spain was reframed into culturalist terms by institutional actors in their approach to Kalé communities, with a view to maintaining discrete control over them and with total impunity.

My research findings show that this occurs on three different levels. First, professionals working within networks of protection against IPV disproportionately adopt culturalist discourses on violence against Kalé women, as opposed to reflecting on interactions between the interpersonal and structural forms of violence that affect them. Second, Kalé women are coerced, through welfare schemes, into attending gender empowerment programmes where strong racialised hierarchies prevail. Finally, I provide an account of the various efforts on the part of professionals to dismiss personal experiences of institutional racism whenever they are being voiced, whether publicly or in more private settings.

1. Methods

Data used for this article were collected through semi-structured interviews and participant observation in 2016–2017. I interviewed about 40 professionals in courts, police stations, health facilities, specialised support services, social services and NGOs, all based in Madrid. I also spent approximately eight months volunteering at an NGO which is entrusted by the Community of Madrid regional authorities to implement social projects specifically directed at Kalé women. My position as a researcher was made explicit there, and my role largely consisted in observing activities rather than truly assisting the staff in their everyday work. I routinely attended the organisation's activities as well as the monthly "excursions" (*salidas*) the beneficiaries were taken to, many of which revolved around gender equality and empowerment. The opinions and experiences of NGO beneficiaries were gathered through group interviews I organised within the NGO premises, daily participant observation, and informal conversations we had socialising outside the NGO space.

As far as interviewees were concerned, besides a few exceptions among NGO leaders or mediators, all were gadje. Because of my perceived gadjo complicity,[4] interviewees tended to speak freely about Kalé and what they thought was problematic about their "culture." The accomplice role I was assigned spontaneously may be a powerful way to subvert racism by making explicit the conversations dominant groups hold behind closed doors, although it can also lead me to fall into racist stereotypes or reproduce colonial research patterns. For some, identifying me as a feminist or a Gender Studies researcher curiously reinforced their assumption that I would agree on their culturalist reading of patriarchy and IPV.

2. Towards a Critical Race Critique of "Gadjo Feminism"

Over the past decade, the work of Romani feminist scholars has started to gain traction in academia and beyond. Drawing from postcolonial and black feminist streams and from specific and diverse experiences of Romani women across the world (e.g., Kóczé 2009; Bițu and Vincze 2012; Brooks 2012), they expose culturalist representations of Romani women "as sexually available objects of fantasy, […] as old witches […], as passive victims of patriarchy who need saving and as thieves and beggars getting rich off of the welfare state" that prevail in many societies (Brooks 2012, 3). They describe different manifestations of state violence that such representations can lead to, such as the neglect and lack of intervention on the part of state authorities when Romani women reach out for support (Oprea 2004), or paternalistic programmes that reify them as a "vulnerable group," construct certain forms of violence as "Romani problems" (Jovanovic 2015), and do not take their real needs into consideration (Kóczé 2009). In December 2015, a group of Romani feminists translated these analyses into a political statement they issued in Brussels, notably demanding that European Union institutions and members states address "the intersectional discrimination affecting Romani women in relation to their access to social services, such as women's shelters" (Caro Maya et al. 2015).

In Spain, the body of literature that focuses on antigypsyist attitudes towards Romani women in state institutions remains scarce. Briones-Vozmediano, La Parra-Casado, and Vives-Cases recently conducted an analysis of the discourses of health professionals throughout Spain with regard to Romani women experiencing IPV (Briones-Vozmediano et al. 2018). Their research shows that a few professionals' narratives depart from the "dominant" ones but a vast majority rely on culturalist discourses that portray Romani women as either the perpetual victims of a patriarchal violent culture or unaffected by IPV. These "dominant narratives" support the view that Romani women experiencing violence do not access support from state authorities because their families prevent them from doing so or because they do not need it (*ibid.*). Nevertheless, an increasing but timid tendency to look into institutional obstacles – including discursive ones – that Romani women, Spanish Kalis and migrant Romnia alike, confront in Spain, often fails to consider "counter-hegemonic feminisms" (e.g., Santa Cruz et al. 2017) and their critique of normative assumptions underlying feminist agendas. Among

4 "Gadjo complicity" here refers to the tendency for members of the dominant group – gadje – to systematically support each other, discredit Kalé people's experiences, and fail to take responsibility for the ways in which we benefit from racism. For further reading on the notion of "complicity," see the work of Barbara Applebaum, for example from 2010: *Being White, Being Good: White Complicity, White Moral Responsibility and Social Justice Pedagogy*. New York: Lexington Books.

them, some Kalé feminist researchers are offering an important counternarrative that points at the feminist values that are specific to Kalé culture and that feminists from majority society only started to defend later, sometimes in a commodified form, such as child-minder support networks (Agüero 2019; Caro Maya 2019). In February 2019, Silvia Agüero went so far as to launch a Twitter campaign called "#MentorAGadji" (*#AmadrinaAUnaPaya*), to mock the paternalistic attitude that many gadje women adopt towards Kalé women and to demonstrate that the former have a lot to learn from the latter in terms of feminist practices (Agüero 2019).

One of counter-hegemonic feminist discourses' great contributions is the fact that they encourage majority society to engage in profound self-reflexivity instead of superficially addressing whether or not certain groups of women can access its rules and institutions. The sole focus on institutional obstacles to accessing services has certain shortcomings. Although Kalé women are not alone in being affected by poor treatment and secondary victimisation by state administrations, they are Spanish citizens, who not only identify as Spaniards but also enjoy the same rights as any other Spanish citizen on paper. Therefore, issues that European feminists tend to investigate when researching access to justice and services for minority women, such as legal status or language barriers, bear little relevance here. Without turning a blind eye to the various forms in which institutional violence manifests itself, calls for self-reflexivity show that it is a larger and more systemic phenomenon. Addressing race as an institutional and social order, which is traditionally ignored in Spanish politics, is crucial to grasp what is at stake, and this is what I endeavour to do in my analysis of "gadjo feminism."

As Angéla Kóczé and Margareta Matache argue, the tendency to disregard race and instead focus on ethnicity and the study of Romani people as a marginal ethnic group and "culture" is symptomatic of the colonial traditions underlying Romani Studies and continues to obscure racial hierarchies (Kóczé 2018; Matache 2016). In line with Critical Race theorists who unveil the whiteness at the foundation of legal language in the United States (Wing 2000), Matache refers to epistemological "gadjo-ness" in scholarly work on Roma: "Categorizing Roma as an inferior, subordinate race fixed white cultural norms as the standard against which Roma were described" (*ibid.*). Moreover, in her critique of traditional Romani studies, Kóczé draws from Etienne Balibar's account of "neo-racism" or "racism without races," which shifts its focus from biological to cultural hierarchies and does not recognise itself as a form of racism (Balibar 1991, as cited in Kóczé, *op. cit.*). As demonstrated by Eduardo Bonilla-Silva who revisits Balibar's expression as "racism without racists," claiming the inexistence (or disappearance) of racism and analysing inequality as exclusively caused by nonracial factors is a strategy deployed by whites to support white hegemony while imputing responsibility on racialised minorities (Bonilla-Silva 2003). Similarly, in what she calls the "culturalization of racism" and the "culturalization of gender" in educational and legal practices, Sherene Razack points at the less overt forms of racism which, under the guise of benevolent treatment and often in pluralist contexts, essentialise minority groups as intrinsically inferior and patriarchal (Razack 1998, 60). Razack's work shows that this phenomenon is profoundly gendered and marginalising for racialised women – also illustrated in Philomena Essed's groundbreaking analysis of "micro," cumulative experiences of "everyday racism" among black women in the United States and Netherlands, and the discourses which are deployed by "White-dominated society" to deny their accounts of racism and contain their resistance (Essed 1991, 10).

Based on these theoretical considerations, I refute the claims according to which the use of *gadje/gadjo/gadji*[5] to refer to non-Romani people, including myself, would be reverse racism and therefore should be avoided. Once again, claims of reverse racism disregard the inherence of whiteness within social structures and focus on individualistic and psychologising definitions, whereby racist speech acts would be taken out of their social context and could target white people just as much as racialised and minoritized groups. On the contrary, I see the use of *gadje*, or *payos/jambos* in Spanish, as an attempt on the part of Romani people to make oppression explicit and resist it. Likewise, referring to gadje people as "non-Romani" exacerbates the tacitly racist assumption that whiteness (and gadjo-ness) is the norm and thus does not need to be named.

Particularly when celebratory politics are attempting to keep structural racism invisible, it is urgent to adopt a Critical Race approach to Romani Studies and name the gadjo-ness of institutions that are permeated by the state – even though they self-promote as advocates for Kalé communities. My analysis of "gadjo feminism" thus goes beyond a critique of liberal feminism and its blind spots with respect to race and other axes of social domination: it points at the strategic reframing of feminist discourses on women's emancipation from patriarchal violence in policies targeted at Romani women, in order to mask antigypsyism and its gendered manifestations.

3. The Culturalisation of *Violencia Machista* in Spain

Although the Spanish state and regional authorities had developed gender equality machineries since the 1980s, and gender equality policymaking in general peaked during the 2004-2011 mandate of the Socialist Party (Lombardo 2017), it is largely through the adoption of the 2004 law on IPV[6] that the institutionalisation of feminist discourses came about. This "pioneering law" (Casas Vila, *op. cit.*) was the result of a partnership between civil society and the Socialist Party, and is, alongside the abortion law, the only piece of legislation that truly originated in feminist mobilisations (Lombardo, *op. cit.*). Internationally known as an example of feminist jurisprudence, this text aims to address comprehensively the gendered dynamics at the roots of IPV, notably through the creation of specialised institutions, a series of protective measures, as well as gender training for professionals working in the field. State feminist discourses progressively crystallised around the concepts of *violencia hacia la mujer*, *violencia de género,* and *violencia machista* (literally, "violence against the woman," "gendered violence," and "sexist violence"). This feminist-inspired wording is used widely among bureaucrats, legal professionals, and across most political parties – albeit with various interpretations of what it means and entails. It has

5 *Gadje* is masculine plural; *gadjo* is masculine singular; and *gadji* is feminine singular. Despite its gendered form, I use *gadje* to refer to people in plural, and *gadjo* for singular abstract nouns. Not only is this more faithful to Romani language, as Matache explains (*op. cit.*, 2016), but also, Patricia Caro Maya, who coined the term "gadjo-centrism" to refer to the gadjo bias of institutional frameworks, argues that using the masculine form more adequately reflects the patriarchal nature of social institutions (Caro Maya, e.g., 2017).

6 The 1/2004 Law on Comprehensive Protection Measures against Gendered Violence (*Ley orgánica 1/2004 de medidas de protección integral contra la violencia de género*) was adopted on December 29, 2004, and entered into force on January 28, 2005. Its current definition of "gendered violence" focuses on male intimate partner violence against women.

influenced the discourses of the professionals working within the justice system and support services for survivors of IPV whom I interviewed for the purpose of this research. However, I found that, regardless of their ideological orientations and professional backgrounds, they tended to use feminist terminology in order to support stereotypical representations of what they referred to as "Gypsy culture" (*la cultura gitana*) or "Gypsy ethnic group" (*la etnia gitana*).

The professionals I interviewed across various institutions do not all identify as feminists and can be divided into two groups: those who adopt the feminist reading of IPV as a reflection of systemic gendered hierarchies and an instrument of male domination over women; and those defending a rather gender-neutral, psychologising approach to the phenomenon. Contrasting problematisations of IPV are easily mobilised within one same institution. Yet these sometimes radically opposite interpretations as to how IPV should be understood and how the law should be implemented to respond to it tend to concern exclusively gadje. Although the victims' (as well as perpetrators') gadjo ethnicity is never named, the gadje *vs*. Kalé dichotomy easily stands out as soon as the discussion drifts towards violence perpetrated within Kalé communities. The structural and psychological complexities of IPV upon which they base their reflections and professional practices then largely fades away, and disproportionately concurs in a culturalist reading of the issue. Whether or not they subscribe to a systemic gendered framing of IPV, at the mention of Kalé women, interviewees almost automatically switch to discourses oscillating between victim-blaming to justify neglect on the part of authorities and rescuing endeavours to justify forced intervention.

This culturalist shift is particularly surprising on the part of professionals who usually defend a gender-sensitive approach to tackling IPV and are critical of secondary victimisation caused by gender biases in the justice system. While the dominant feminist understanding of violence lays emphasis on structures of masculine domination within the state and the need to deconstruct deep-rooted male bias within policy and legal frameworks, most of them pay little to no attention to structural racism. They instead construct the "Gypsy woman" as trapped in the patriarchal cultural traditions of her community and unwilling or unable to catch up with the emancipated way of life of "the (gadji) Spanish woman." A professional working at a helpline for survivors, for instance, makes the following claims:

> The truth is, women of Gypsy ethnicity, I think 90 percent of them experience violence. They don't resort to any service, they settle it among their families, and often the remedy is worse than the disease […] because there the one who decides on the norm and solution is the patriarch, who is like 100 years old! […] and the girls, […] well 30-year-old girls [with] seven children, you would think wow […] they look like old ladies! […] and in addition, they themselves transmit it to their daughters! Because they also don't fight to get their girls into school, because they don't think these things are important, what they think is important is […] all those rites they have… […] Because no one really works with them, they keep transmitting the same values!

In addition to stereotypes of Kalé women having too many children and failing to send them to school – which reflect racist family planning and assimilationist practices that are historically enshrined in Spanish society – the informant here essentialises Kalé culture as intrinsically patriarchal and violent

towards women. What is more, she claims that Kalé women are responsible for reproducing harmful norms and can only stop doing so if someone finally starts to "really work with them."

Similarly, several professionals working at the IPV courts explicitly refer to Kalé "ethnicity" as a "factor of vulnerability," thus presenting culture itself as problematic rather than institutional violence. One of them regrets that Kalé women "do not resort to gadjo law":

> Relationship problems of this type are resolved within the Gypsy collective. […] So, it is an offence for the family […] [if she] abandons Gypsy law and resorts to… gadjo law. And I think that those are women who can be very endangered.

Another colleague tells me about a victim who "opened her eyes" thanks to social services and other state support but was reluctant to testify for fears of retaliation from her in-laws – which she reads as an impossibility for Kalé women to resort to the conventional criminal system because of barriers imposed by their community rather than a usual pattern of IPV. I also am told that awareness-raising campaigns and other prevention measures "do not reach" Kalé women "because Gypsy communities are not integrated," their "sociocultural environment [is] damaged," and many of them remain "light years away from equality."

These professionals disproportionately support state institutions and the criminal system as the only way out for Kalé women – including when intervention occurs against their will. Even "intersectionality" is understood as the inclusion of minority groups of women into the dominant, allegedly gender-equal system. Ironically, a concept developed by Critical Race scholar Kimberle Crenshaw to unravel the complex intersections of power dynamics at play within institutions, and notably to point at the whiteness of specialised support services for women experiencing violence (Crenshaw 1991), is now mobilised to promote uncritically this very framework and support white saviour endeavours. This "depoliticised" reframing of intersectionality (Roig 2018) is symptomatic of the "political racelessness" which characterises white feminist groups in Europe and their paternalistic attitude towards minority women (Emejulu and Bassel 2017). It is this reluctance to question white biases that leads some feminist actors to shift from structure to culture in their reading of violence against Kalé women.

4. Teaching Gender in a Racialised Setting

Gadjo feminism does not only strive within the colour-blind justice system. State and regional authorities increasingly fund NGO projects on gender equality and IPV designed for Kalé women that, despite the stress that is laid on community empowerment and Kalé culture, are framed in a paternalistic and equally culturalist mind-set, and contribute to safeguarding racial power relations within institutions and beyond. As was shown elsewhere, the implementation of "Roma inclusion" policies in Spain is delegated to NGOs which are identified by state and regional institutions as experts in the field (Cortés 2016; Magazzini and Piemontese 2016). Since the Spanish state officially does not collect ethnically disaggregated data, those NGOs are expected to define who their beneficiaries are going to be (Magazzini and Piemontese 2016). Although the state and regionally funded projects that they work with were designed originally for

Spanish Kalé, some have incorporated migrant Roma from Central and Eastern Europe into their target populations recently (*ibid.*).

In the Community of Madrid, one of the most important projects that NGOs have been running is the "basic income programme," an outsourced welfare programme that requires all recipients of state benefits from Kalé communities, usually women, to register with an NGO based in their neighbourhood and participate in its activities on a weekly basis. Following the neoliberal turn taken by Spain in terms of welfare provision, and particularly the 2002 and 2003 reforms in its legislation (Aragón et al. 2007, 180–181), this programme conditions social benefits upon a demonstrated willingness to work and participation in mandatory training programmes – a new understanding of social services which is now widely known as "workfare" (Peck 2001). The workfare model not only intends to increase economic productivity by nudging welfare recipients into employment through a system of sanctions but also aims at the moral reformation of the poor and socially deviant through "therapeutic" programmes (Soss et al. 2011). As was shown by a stream of scholarship that originated in the United States and that still is under-addressed in Europe, this often leads to racialised people being constructed as welfare burdens in need of tougher surveillance and therapeutic intervention, which becomes a convenient way for state administrations to continue targeting them in a legal framework that in theory prohibits direct discrimination (*ibid.*). In Madrid, social workers regularly portray Kalé welfare recipients as living off social benefits and unwilling to work, whereas a majority of Kalé still exercise their traditional economic activity, street-trading, and must resort to social services to complement their income because of ever-stricter regulations and constant police repression. The implicit purpose of the training activities that NGO beneficiaries are required to attend is to promote other forms of labour considered more suitable to society and construct street-trading as "not real work." Since the overwhelming majority of welfare applicants are women who provide for their families, the activities increasingly target women and become reframed from a gendered angle (Ayala Rubio 2014; Vrăbiescu and Kalir 2018). More ethnographic research conducted in Madrid shows that both migrant Romani women and Spanish Kalé women attending these programmes are subjected to paternalistic and arbitrary practices and then blamed for "failing to integrate" when the project does not seem successful (*ibid.*).

Rather than a mere gender bias, however, I argue that the growing emphasis on gender empowerment within social projects designed for Kalé beneficiaries is a consequence of the institutionalisation – and most probably misguided reception – of feminist politics. As one of the mediators once told me, "Gender is in fashion." Despite the initial focus on "employability" in welfare policies, the NGO provides limited training on professional skills and prefers to emphasise activities in which gadje facilitators intervene to teach Kalé women how to become emancipated from their patriarchal families and customs. Sexuality, family planning, early marriage, and particularly IPV are topics around which workshops, lectures, public performances, and even protests – all of which are mandatory for beneficiaries – are held regularly. These programmes are more akin to school than work – palpable in staff's scolding and infantilising tone and terminology used by the beneficiaries themselves: they are "students" coming to "class," and social workers are their "teachers." All activities, whatever form they may take, are formulated in culturalist terms. Kalé women are pressed to be role models for their daughters and exit their allegedly patriarchal culture, following the example of gadje women who, it is claimed, have "fought for their rights" and achieved equality.

The framing of these "empowerment workshops" and other gender-related activities echoes the discourse of professionals working with IPV survivors, with the exception here that Kalé women are obliged to attend on a weekly basis, as failing to do so would result in a suspension of their welfare benefits. Moreover, the gadjo feminist rescue endeavour is no longer acknowledged as external intervention into their lives, since it is presented as a community initiative to the wider public. Indeed, despite being an integral part of the state's discipline apparatus, many of the NGOs entrusted to implement these projects are advertised as representatives of the communities in which they are working. This takes us back to the "they're saying that to us" rhetoric and Sara Ahmed's argument that those who "embody diversity" are expected to show complacency to the system that takes them in: the racialised punitive framework that Kalé women are subjected to, and institutional racism in general, are silenced on the grounds that the programmes are community-based and empowering.

5. Silencing and Resisting Racism

As I argued, adopting an intersectional approach to institutional practices is subverted regularly as the need to incorporate women from "cultures" that are deemed to be intrinsically patriarchal. One of the consequences of this reframing is that gender is once again, or still, carefully separated out from racism. Although the issue of IPV increasingly is gaining ground in the "pro-Gypsy" institutional framework, it only emerges in the form of lectures defending a gadjo perspective. Whether within the NGO premises or during public events, beneficiaries are not given the floor. If they do get to speak for themselves, however, they are expected to support the self-stigmatising discourse they hear in their empowerment workshops, regretting that Kalé women are "30 years late" compared to their gadje counterparts, or celebrating those who managed to assert their independence regardless. Pointing out gadjo domination and the gendered impact it has within their personal lives, families, and communities is not an option.

The most explicit example I observed was during a public event entitled "Gypsy Women: Reflecting Together to Combat Violence," co-organised in November 2016 by the City of Madrid and the network of NGOs that implements regional programmes for Kalé women. Among the activities in which beneficiaries of the "basic income programme" are required to take part, are publicised events, held in collaboration with state, regional, or local authorities, to showcase the empowerment of the "Gypsy woman." Typically, the women are informed that an "excursion" is coming up and that they should attend, often with the incentive that they will be allowed to "miss class" once or twice afterwards. They sometimes are asked to perform a song or read a poem on stage but otherwise are sitting in the audience and not involved in the panel discussions. This event was organised on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, which has become institutionalised in Madrid and is now celebrated every year. Nuria Varela, a popular gadje feminist author, was invited to give an opening lecture and explain the mechanisms of IPV to an audience of NGO beneficiaries brought in by social workers. Kalé feminist activist María José Jiménez responded to Varela's keynote by pointing at the importance for Kalé women to represent themselves in this kind of event, so they could put forward their own role models and openly speak about the racism they encounter within institutions and social movements. Her intervention was booed by professionals in the room, while Varela felt personally attacked and regretted that Jiménez wanted to "reject difference." The NGO staff argued that they were being treated unfairly and not given

any credit for their benevolent work: "We help them, and we are criminalised for being gadje!" The grudge that social workers held against Jiménez still could be felt months later and even led to the boycott of an event she and her movement organised. Beneficiaries present that day, on the other hand, mostly remained quiet, as expected in the presence of media and political representatives.

Nevertheless, many have shown resistance to this paternalistic set-up. Several social workers, to justify the fact that the time dedicated to literacy classes has been reinvested into "gender workshops," claim that Kalé women who attend their programmes do not want to become literate or that they could not possibly learn in "such little time." On the contrary, many beneficiaries report that they repeatedly voiced their endeavour to learn, "but they just won't listen!" – or that they would rather get a job that pays enough to stop coming to the NGO's "classes" where they hear "only nonsense." In their words, they are forced to hear repeatedly about IPV – "We are sick of it, we already know what it is!" Despite the infantilising rapport that is established and beneficiaries' necessary compliance with the rules in order to continue receiving their welfare benefits, they regularly challenge the staff or external speakers for attacking their culture and trying to impose a gadjo view upon them. Rather, they are eager to mention the violence perpetrated within majority society, including against them, and tell their experiences of everyday racism – to the disbelief of social workers.

Social workers regard the discussion of racism as a topic to be tolerated only when it refers to Kalé women's stereotypes towards gadje or other groups within society. On several occasions, they tell me that the beneficiaries "are the ones who are racist," and that some work on the issue is needed to teach them otherwise. Conversely, racial hierarchies underlying the welfare programme as well as the broader institutional framework largely are disregarded and, on the contrary, the staff see themselves as enlightened enough, since they chose to work within an organisation dealing with Kalé women. Referring to the stigma that prevails among some social workers, a Kalí mediator bitterly confides: "They too often forget that these women are their bread and butter." The pattern does not deviate much: in the NGO's communication, Kalé women are expected to show gratitude and make amends, not the gadje professionals employed within the "pro-Gypsy" system or state institutions. The reification of Kalé "culture" as an object of policy without acknowledging structural racism, as well as the comforting idea that Kalé women are being empowered through state-funded programmes, rule out genuine discussions on structural oppression that the latter seek. One cynically might argue that the eager emphasis on "the emancipated Gypsy woman" that increasingly is put forward during political ceremonies in Madrid not only contrasts with institutional practices disciplining Kalé women and constructing them as fierce opponents to gender equality but also exists as a conscious strategy to obscure institutional racism and its gendered forms.

Conclusion

This article went beyond challenging the common assumption that Spain constitutes a safe haven for Kalé women and is an example of "good practice" for other European states in that regard. As I showed, existing academic literature has begun to debunk this myth – and it is now especially hard to continue its support, considering the devastating effects of austerity measures that the Spanish government has

implemented since the late 2000s. Relying on semi-structured interviews and participant observation I conducted across various institutions in Madrid, I argued that claims of exemplarity – rather than a mere misconception of policy impacts – are strategies deployed to exempt institutions from taking responsibility for the social marginalisation of Kalé people.

Erasing race and self-advertising as a post-racial society discredits the negative everyday experiences that Kalé and other racialised minorities are trying to address. It turns their stories into fiction, a misunderstanding at best. To reflect to the scene with which I opened this paper, the NGO staff's wish that Kalé women would "stop referring to themselves as victims" illustrates how their dissent is dismissed as anachronistic, misdirected, or bluntly ungrateful – "They're saying that *to us*?" This lack of gratitude, in their view, justifies the shaming that Kalé women are put through regularly.

The blame is then redirected towards Kalé women in a "gadjo feminist" framing strategy that culturalises IPV within Kalé communities and constructs women, in particular, as trapped within the confines of patriarchal traditions, unable to move forward, dragging their children down with them. Within the colour-blind justice system, cultural racism transcends divisions between (structure-focused) gender-sensitive and (individual-focused) gender-neutral approaches to IPV, as professionals disproportionately concur that judicial neglect and secondary victimisation affecting Kalé women find their roots not in institutional racism but in the latter's reluctance to "resort to gadjo law" and leave their patriarchal culture behind. Even in NGO programmes that are designed for them and expected to be culturally sensitive, Kalé women routinely are shamed for reproducing patriarchal norms, especially regarding their daughters' upbringing, and encouraged to espouse the "emancipated" lifestyle of gadje women. This occurs as part of a disciplinary welfare scheme that financially sanctions women who fail to partake in the mandated activities or to abide by their rules. This discursive twist, in turn, portrays state institutions as emancipatory champions that are there, in the words of one of the interviewees, to "open [Kalé women's] eyes." It conveniently legitimises forced intervention, be it at the administrative or judiciary level, and shifts the attention away from racism.

It is worth noting, meanwhile, that these silencing strategies – denial of traumatic experiences, victim-blaming, financial control, display of a happy face – strongly resemble mechanisms of abusive relationships. In other words, gadjo feminism that developed in the Spanish institutional context, misusing feminist endeavours to help women out of IPV for racist purposes, is quite ironically, another manifestation of violence against women.

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A Transatlantic Perspective on Romani Thoughts, Movements, and Presence beyond Europe

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Abstract

This article first aims to establish a genealogy of critical stances on knowledge construction on, about, and from Romani groups in academia. It focuses on critical perspectives that have challenged Eurocentric binary categorizations. Such categories have resulted in the historical perception of a universal "Gypsy"/"non-Gypsy" divide despite the diverse contexts in which Romani identities are negotiated in daily life. The text addresses the writings of authors who have been critical of how central this divide has been to the constitution of Romani Studies as a field, most of whom have relied on insights from Edward Said´s *Orientalism* (2003 [1978]) and other postcolonial theorizations. The theoretical insights brought into conversation come from ethnographic work with Romani individuals and groups whose mobilities exceed imagined European borders. Based on this work, the second part of the article gives an example of the consequences of Eurocentric categorizations: a review of how Romani transatlantic migration and presence in the Americas has been conceived in academic texts. To conclude, the author puts forward engagements with Romani transatlantic passages as one of the ways in which postcolonial stances can actually be operationalized in academic practice. Throughout the argument, transatlantic experiences become not only an epistemic tool but also a case study for a refined understanding of Romani life worlds.

Keywords

- Transatlantic
- Orientalism
- Postcolonialism
- Eurocentrism

Ronald Lee: I lived two years in England, around 1971…
E: Why did you travel to England?
R: I wanted to be there, to help start all of this.
E: How did you learn about the possibility of doing it? Who did you contact?
R: The Roma network. My partner Vanya, who was with me in Montreal working together as coppersmiths, his brother lived in Paris. And that's how I knew about all of this. So I got in touch with them through his brother …

Esteban Acuña Cabanzo in conversation with Ronald Lee, June 12, 2013.

Introduction: Distance and Suspicion

In 2013 I met Ronald Lee: prolific Romani writer, journalist, activist, and recently, honorary doctor at Queens University. I had been working in Toronto, gathering interviews for my doctoral thesis on Romani transatlantic mobilities and connections. Only when I reached his house in Hamilton, Ontario, did we have time to talk about his life. Sitting in his living room, we discussed his take on the situation of Romani refugees in Canada and how he became a member of the board of the Toronto Roma Community Centre. The above quote refers to his time as part of the nascent Romani activist scene in Europe in the 1960s and 1970s, a period of his life that would affect him deeply thereafter. Placing himself between two worlds, Romani and non-Romani education institutions, throughout his youth he looked forward to aid the budding movement in Europe with his experience as a Romani intellectual in Canada. Two years later he would come home discouraged. One reason he gave for returning to Canada is precisely one of the subjects of this paper: Eurocentric ideas and interests. These had materialized in European agendas by eclipsing more international approaches to Romani activism, despite historical Romani presence beyond Europe.

The purpose of this article is to shape critical insights in Romani Studies into a working genealogy. It fulfills this aim by emphasizing the role of transatlantic awareness, or consciousness, as a building block for the distance and suspicion necessary for this approach. The argument concentrates on one of the Eurocentric assumptions about which Lee became painfully aware during his journeys, an idea that has been particularly influential in knowledge production about Romani groups: even in times of Romani activism, the messy and multiple experiences that inform *Roma*/*gadje* divisions in concrete contexts where Romani lives take place have been simplified to an "us" versus "others" rhetoric detached from such realities. The principle of this divide is an intrinsic division between "Gypsies" and "non-Gypsies" that underlies even nuanced approaches to knowledge creation.

While sitting in Ronald Lee´s living room, listening to his life story, and reading from his scrapbook, I was able to see how his life was inscribed by others in such binary opposition so many times:

> [Ronald] Lee was born in a tent in east Montreal, his father a Russian Romany, his mother an English Romany. Just before the war he was sent off to northern England to his maternal grandmother´s, and it was there that he got his schooling. But when Lee was 21, he decided that he must go back to live as a gypsy among the gypsies. For five years he led the nomadic gypsy life

> in eastern Canada, picking up basins to plate, finding garages to work in, joining carnivals and leaving them. His quest to do something about Canadian gypsies may be wildly idealistic, but he has two weapons: he has an education, and he has kept contact with his people (Wells 1962).

He kept such articles in his scrapbook as pieces of his past but remained critical towards how their authors portrayed his own experience. Lee kept a distance from labels such as "petty thieves" or "nomadic," each part of the "Gypsy" trope. His life, like those of most of the respondents of the research that had taken me to Canada, was more complex and dynamic than such categories could suggest. Lee even put together a course for the University of Toronto with the intention to, in his words, "… demolish the mythology of the literary Gypsy, and replace it with the reality of the Roma." The critical stances that Lee developed during this process, I argue, mirror, and in fact have been aided by, active distance from and suspicion of the process of knowledge construction, fueled by his comings and goings between both geographic and discursive contexts.

The importance of these analytical practices became evident after several conversations with Ronald Lee and other thinkers who participated as respondents in my doctoral research, a multi-sited ethnography (Marcus 1995) of Romani mobilities across and beyond the Atlantic.[1] In this endeavor, in order to shift the usual perspective from national or European borders, the Atlantic took center stage. It was conceived as geographic and social space, created by shared experiences, that also granted awareness of specificity and difference. Among the people who shared their experiences and trajectories with me were academic and empirical thinkers whose life stories provided grounded insights into how to understand Romani mobilities and im/mobilities.[2] These included how these movements were given meaning in a constant, unequal negotiation between people who moved or stayed, and non-Romani people.

"The nomad," "the migrant," or "the refugee" have been common metaphors used to give meaning to the exchange between mobilities and im/mobilities that resulted in Romani presence in the Americas. Although inadequate and problematic, their influence is felt in every life story. Through analysis of the roles that the categories – what Lee calls "tropes" and "myths" – had on people's lives, it was possible to add nuance and continuity to descriptions and analyses of Romani presence in the Americas which ahistorical metaphors did not provide. Such findings, I argue, also provide insights for Romani Studies as a whole, since they speak to critical self-reflection; the need to be aware of, and to deal with, presuppositions, power relations, and biases.

To exemplify this approach, this article details the consequences of Eurocentric categorizations in theoretical models, through a review of how Romani arrivals to the Americas have been understood

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1 This article is based on sections of the author's doctoral thesis. The goal of the dissertation was to describe the intertwined practices, experiences, and discourses that comprise Romani mobilities across and beyond the Atlantic. The methodology employed was a multi-sited ethnography, aided by trajectory interviews, participant observation, and discourse tracing. Three sites, hubs in Romani networks, were selected as starting points for following strategies (Marcus 1995): Bogota, Budapest, and Toronto. Several biographies were selected to exemplify Romani mobilities in each setting. Ronald Lee's own life story was one of the main examples in which changing epistemic contexts motivated a critical awareness that reflected on his own intellectual approach, which was key for the project's theoretical contribution.

2 Mobilities and im/mobilities can be understood here as comprehensive terms that deal with experiences, practices, and discourses of human movement and stasis, in this case from a Romani standpoint (see Acuña, forthcoming).

in academic texts. While weaving together the historical context for my dissertation, these recurrent metaphors were ubiquitous. The specific critical framework that was developed to tackle them became the first building block for sections two and three of this article. Section two is devoted to a description of concepts from critical studies of representation and race that have made their way into Romani Studies and that inform my stance. Section three details the proposed genealogy that details how critical studies have informed Romani Studies. The fourth section gives an example of how the principles identified in the genealogy inform research through a description of how transatlantic journeys of Romani people have been studied. Finally, the conclusion reaffirms that a transatlantic perspective has granted, since critical theories have informed the discipline, continuous insights into how the "Gypsy"/"non-Gypsy" divide underlies most academic understandings of Romani lives. Such awareness adds to current trends in Critical Romani Studies and becomes an asset: a way to grasp complex lived experiences and histories.

1. Orientalism, European Particularisms, and Transatlantic Disconformity

This proposal arises from work with, in-between, and among Romani groups with histories of movement between Europe and the Americas, groups whose community formation processes have transcended imagined European borders. I argue that constructions such as the "Gypsy"/"non-Gypsy" divide have a "special place in European Western experience" (Said 2003). This divide resembles Edward Said´s analysis of "the Orient" as opposed to "the Occident." The relationship between opposite poles is based on inequality, on the subordination of one to the hegemonic other. A transatlantic perspective implies exchanges and connections between discursive contexts where these oppositions are shaped in different ways. Therefore, it aids efforts to describe and analyze the productive sensibilities to power inequalities in knowledge production. The argument echoes the call to "provincialize Europe" (Chakrabarty 2000) by thinking and weaving together locations, peoples, discourses, and concepts that have been kept apart by the powerful epistemologies sustained by the institution of "Western" or "North Atlantic" academia. In the case of this article, it became important to incorporate knowledge-building efforts on either side of the "Gypsy"/"non-Gypsy" gap.

Underlying these divides, as Cultural Studies scholars have noted, are "racializing discourses" which reduce human difference and experience to "binary oppositions" (Hall 2003, 243). In this framework one category always is assumed to be above the other, while the other is marked in people's embodied experiences. In Paul Gilroy's words:

> The especially crude and reductive notions of culture that form the substance of racial politics today are clearly associated with an older discourse of racial and ethnic difference which is everywhere entangled in the history of the idea of culture in the modern West. […] European particularisms are still being translated into absolute, universal standards for human achievement, norms and aspirations (1993, 7–8).

The need for universal standards designed to fix and naturalize difference is explained by Michel Trouillot as "geographies of imagination." These discursive structures have allowed for the expansion of "the West" into the rest, justifying a "global geography of management" that gears power-wielding institutions and regimes towards active attempts to control what is perceived as "other" (Trouillot 2003, 2). In this framework, the Atlantic remained a crucial site for colonialism and imperialism, a site where acts of constant imposition brought instability, and with it the awareness of otherwise naturalized hierarchies. As Ronald Lee learned to his own disappointment, for Romani groups this has meant a transnational dispersion that can enable strong ties and connections but can also bring considerable differences and friction.

The genealogy in this article covers a selection of the small number of authors in English-speaking Romani Studies who have assumed critical positions in their work. They are placed in a framework that considers transatlantic experiences as a possible source of critical disconformity; "… one single, complex unit of analysis in their discussions of the modern world [useful] to produce an explicitly transnational and intercultural perspective" (Gilroy 1993, 15). I have chosen to take into account scholars who could be characterized as: (1) transatlantic "Romani intellectuals" as Ronald Lee describes himself, or Romani thinkers, my preferred use given its wider meaning;[3] (2) transatlantic non-Romani scholars; and (3) critical scholars that focus on particular epistemic communities in their own localities. This fluid analytical classification is employed as a way to group the wide array of works that I argue are useful to understand the politics of knowledge from, on, and about Romani groups. It is a guide to note the difference in approaches that will be considered below, although all needed to be included for a comprehensive review.

This grouping has been designed to describe the complex Romani and non-Romani experiences and interconnections, immersed in power relations, that have inspired critical thought in Romani Studies. The first category includes Ronald Lee and a growing number of authors who are immersed in Romani networks themselves. Their experiences of changing epistemic contexts from one side of the Atlantic to the other have indeed impacted their own critical approach to thought and scholarship. The second grouping includes authors who, although through a non-Romani gaze, have been able to place their preconceptions into perspective. This in great measure thanks to the unique standpoint of being part of scholarly communities in both Europe and the Americas. Finally, the third group gathers the ever-growing number of critical scholars who, from their own localities and grounded work, have begun to question issues of power and knowledge. All three share a will to make Eurocentrism visible, even when this has been an uncomfortable topic for academic disciplines which historically pushed such reflections to the margins. They also share a will to prioritize interconnections between peoples, places, and ideas, instead of assuming racial and other binary categorizations. Their writings are an account of the silence, fear, and isolation that such assumptions have caused. They are also an introduction into the lived experiences of Romani peoples, and the consequences of such discourses of difference – and often of misunderstanding, terror, and hatred (Taussig 1987, 8–9). Keeping in mind the concepts and principles of critical approaches detailed in this section, the following genealogy presents how they have been employed in Romani Studies in the last four decades.

3 Although in this article I concentrate mostly on scholars, a "Romani thinker" category also allows for the recognition of knowledge creation outside of academia, which has been the inspiration for plenty of the insights compiled in this article.

2. A Genealogy of Critical Stances towards Representation in Romani Studies

1970s and 1980s

The 1970s and 1980s saw the popularization of studies on how representations went hand in hand with power relations, provoked by works such as Said's *Orientalism* (1978). During this time, Judith Okely was the first to write extensively about misrepresentation of the British "Traveling-Gypsies" she described in her influential *The Traveller Gypsies* (Okely 1983). From the perspective of social anthropology, she laid the groundwork for understanding the assumptions that were implicit in how Romani groups have been represented historically. Okely focused on one of the components of the "Gypsy"/"non-Gypsy" divide, that of understanding the "Gypsy" category as opposed to modernity. She problematized the notion of isolation implicit in previous understandings of "Gypsies" as only "one culture." It is important to note the limits of her approach, mainly downplaying shared Romani experiences beyond stigmatization and isolation, including a shared language, as well as scholarship that has focused on that front (Matras 2004). As noted in the previous section, her emphasis, although localized, lies in the unequal relations of her respondents with others, especially governmental institutions, through the space of the camp. It is no coincidence that close encounters between a feminist anthropologist and Romani groups would result in such insights on representation, together with positionality, key trends for critical Romani Studies in the following decades (Okely 2011 and 2014).

1990s

During the 1990s another series of encounters between Romani and critical academic thought occurred. Katie Trumpener started to unravel these processes as she studied Romani literature, concretely, *Goddam Gypsy*, Ronald Lee's autobiographical novel. Lee's life course had inspired Trumpener to understand how ideas about Romani peoples had consequences in action. In her words: "there has, to date, been little corresponding literary, cultural, or political analysis of the racism and Orientalism historically surrounding the Western construction of the 'Gypsy Question'" (Trumpener 1992, 848). As a precursor, Trumpener took the first steps in theorizing what she calls the "linked apparatuses of repression and representation." Images such as the carefree "nomad" or the backwards "noble savage" within Europe historically have been used to justify a brutal history of oppression. In this discursive realm, "Gypsy life [is seen] as a carefree, defiant, disruptive alternative to Western culture" (1992, 860). She notes how "Gypsies" have been relegated, like other populations, to a realm outside of time, history, and writing, outside of "the West," and as such cannot be part of modern societies. Their lives demand intervention, either through betterment or civilizing projects, and often through violence. What I deem her main contribution is her engagement with literature, not only about Romani groups but also authored by them. In this way she steps out of postmodern solipsism into Ronald Lee´s exploration of alternative representations of Romani lives and realities in the midst of such exclusion.

This step was missing in the field, given the proclivity of other academics in the European circuit to rely mostly on sources written *about* Romani groups. Looking through this lens, names such as Willems come

to mind,[4] who had called into question what he considers a "one-dimensional picture" to determine who is a "true Gypsy": "In contemporary socio-historical research […] they [Gypsies] only make the scene in a context of penury, mendacity, vagabondage, marginality and criminality" (Willems 1997, 9), another aspect of the "Gypsy" trope. Unfortunately, the limits of engaging only with historical sources and his aversion to Romani politics precluded him from noting that across the ocean, his critique overlapped with that of Ian Hancock in the 1980s: "It is presumptuous to assume that Rom need to be told how to manage their own affairs, and who is or is not a Rom" (Hancock 2010, 40–41). The only alternative Willems provided was to turn our eyes to "integration" processes, which tend to assume the familiar binary fracture mentioned earlier by situating Romani groups as a "them" that need to be integrated into "us," despite centuries of shared histories.

On the other side, the purpose of Hancock's writings in the early 1990s seems to have been to use scholarship to dive into the ambivalence between diversity and unity that "řomanipe ("Gypsiness")" entails (Hancock 1991, 254). It was important for him to discuss both the gaze of the "*gadzé*" (non-Roma) and the sense of unity in diversity that underlies belonging to Romani groups. Based on the history of – and his own experience participating in – Romani self-organization in both Europe and the Americas, Hancock opened another window to critical assessments of representations in Romani Studies: "When non-Gypsies go from wagon to automobile, it's called progress, when Gypsies do the same thing, it's a disappointment" (Hancock 1991, 255).

Later in that decade he emphasizes what he calls "prejudice" evident in the reduction of "Gypsies" to "images" that have more to do with a Western canon of representation than actual Romani lives (Hancock 1997). The anecdotes that he uses to explain this point include the encounters of American scholars with racial categorizations in Europe,[5] a recurrent circumstance that will continue feeding this trend of scholarship. Hancock continues to rely on his own experience in order to include agency into his reflections. He details how Romani people around him react to these images, hiding their belonging, or having to face prejudice evident in daily life and expert discourse, including attempts to challenge these fictions.

The Turn of the Century

A continuation of Trumpener's and Hancock's projects came from Australia as Romani-Irish Ken Lee took Said´s premises further. His writings made explicit the place of the "Gypsy" and "Gypsylorism" in orientalist discourse; "the construction of the exotic Other within Europe" as opposed to "Orientalism" which mostly dealt with "the exotic Other outside Europe" (Lee 2000, 132; Selling 2018, 49). There were intimate relations between the creation of "The Orient" as subject and that of "The Gypsies," an oriental

4 Note that Willems's work has been grouped with that of Leo Lucassen and Anna Marie Cottaar in the so-called "Dutch School," which was one of the first to bring Michel Foucault's thoughts to Romani Studies (see Lucassen et al. 1998; Stewart 2013, 423–424). Unfortunately, the scholars associated with this school are usually only given credit for noting the importance of power relations in the construction of Romani ethnic identity. What is usually not mentioned is how they managed to put a mirror to the academic craft in Romani Studies and its connection with the practice of governance in Europe.

5 Hancock cites the example of Diane Tong's visit to Greece. The author of *Gypsy Folk Tales* encountered normalized racism in an orthodox priest who brushed aside comparisons between racism in the United States and the situation of Romani people in Thessaloniki (Hancock 1997).

manifestation inside the European continent. Lee is keen to note how this premise feeds knowledge creation about people labelled as such and serves institutions to manage their governance.

Together with Ronald Lee, Ian Hancock, and other Romani thinkers, Ken Lee criticized and confronted institutions such as the Gypsy Lore Society (GLS). After an 18 year gap, this same organization relaunched its journal in 2000 under a new banner, changing its title from the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, published until 1982, to *Romani Studies*. Anthropologists Gropper and Miller (2001) used the opportunity to engage the topic of knowledge production as well, especially questioning ethnographic authority: "We scholars are in error when we assume that the Roma have had only a passive role in this process" (2001, 107). Their text did not address, however, the continuity of these reflections or relate their criticism to others in Europe and beyond. Ken Lee did engage with his European counterparts, while also engaging with reflexive anthropology. His writings reflect upon questions of power at the center of ethnography, including the use of text to negate a group's coevalness with "the West," that is, its participation in modernity and the present time (Fabian 2002) or as a way to fixate, preserve, and standardize the dynamism of orality through writing (Lee 2000, 144).

Ronald Lee's work was published simultaneously with that of other transatlantic scholars who focused on performance and performativity; the actual things that representations do. While Sonnemann (1999) mapped the "migrating metaphor of the Gypsy" throughout literature, ethnomusicologists such as Van de Port analyzed how these metaphors actually were built in daily interactions. Through his work in Serbia, this author notes how "Gypsyness" is then a "construct on the perceivers' part, but which is elaborated and commodified by Gypsy musicians" (Van de Port 1999, 292). Lemon, another ethnographer working in Russia, delved deeper. Her writings went to the very heart of the "Gypsy"/"majority" divide, bringing together the construction of an ideal, Orientalized "Gypsy" with quotidian practices of "authenticity" and "tradition." "Gypsies have […] been ascribed a reputation as natural performers" (Lemon 2000, 4) – performers of the very exotic and romantic ideals that sustain that gap. "Roma who do *not* engage in such work are seen to be assimilated or as no longer authentic" (*ibid*.). This realization is key for understanding the consequences of the categories created through the work of experts (academic and otherwise).

The First Decade of the Twenty-first Century

It is difficult to understate the importance of these early writings on "Gypsy" representations, since they opened the gates to a number of collections and articles with these constructions in mind (see Lyon 2004; Saul and Tebbutt 2004; Glajar and Radulescu 2008; the 2008 edition of *Third Text: Picturing Gypsies: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Roma Representation;* and Dearing 2010). It is also important to note how some of these works were pioneers in emphasizing the need for an assessment of "whiteness." Anikó Imre, in this vein, uses the case of the representation of Romani groups in post-socialist Eastern Europe to signal the specificities of "whiteness" in the context of new nationalisms. Studying first in Hungary, then in the United States, Imre mentions her own experience of being warned not to compare racist violence in Hungary with racial politics in the United States. In fact, Imre does the complete opposite when she analyzes the usefulness of concepts such as colonialism and "whiteness" in a context where ethnicity, race, and the nation are deeply intertwined in central Europe. This awareness leads her to question the foundations of state formation in Hungary, as a case study, showing how "the Gypsy" trope serves to

"expose unstable national boundaries" (Imre 2005, 86). While the foundational myth of Hungary claims that nationals were "nomads" who "settled," "Gypsies" are stigmatized as "nomadic" and "backward," frozen in time but dangerously close. She also pioneers considerations of Romani self-representation in music and film as a way to present ways to challenge prejudice through hybridity, and transnational and multicultural forms (Imre 2005, 2006, 2008).

Simultaneously, geographers in the United Kingdom explored how "whiteness" and its locally specific counterparts had actual effects on how space is understood. The first step was to note the importance of color, especially black and white, and dirtiness, to signify a threatening difference, and therefore justify exclusion of "Gypsies" (Sibley 1995, 22 and 102). The second step was actually to engage with actions that create this racial line of difference in daily life. Analysis concentrates on the mechanisms through which these stereotypes are recreated in daily life, including the "discursive efforts" of respondents who use "bodily and cultural markers" to erect boundaries in social and physical space, such as the use of "figures" of "true" or "real Gypsies," and their opposite, as a tool to racialize Romani groups among inhabitants of Appleby, where the New Fair takes place in Britain (Holloway 2005, 356).

Such awareness of representation and its relationships with social life mixed well with the so-called "Dutch School" (Willems 1997; Lucassen et al. 1998) and other pioneers of historical research (Mayall 2004) to produce more critical historiographical accounts of Romani groups (see among others: Marsh 2008; Bogdal 2012; Baumgartner and Kovács 2012). Some of these works also began to show how the assemblage of institutions and binary discourses that justified managerial interventions and strategies had deep involvement on the question of why Romani voices were excluded.

Ian Hancock's desire to put forward Romani self-organization processes and their relationship with academia also had continuation. Williams, for example, correlating travel journals with publications of budding Romani organizations in the early twentieth century in Romania, realized that scholars were appalled at the thought of Romani thinkers negotiating their position in modernity. Dealing with labels such as Romani, Tigani, Romanian, Orthodox Christian, nomad, etc., Romani thinkers became active at precisely the moment at which the Romanian nation-state was being redefined. Representatives of the GLS, on the other hand, "could not bear to think that all Roma were unconcerned with the same culture and traditions that the Gypsy Lore Society had worked so hard to 'preserve' for 60 years" (Williams 2007, 26). Although there was active communication between scholars and Romani thinkers in Romania, how could there be a constructive dialogue if the starting premises were so far apart? How could one counter the use of these racialized categorizations before they become lethal, without awareness of their role during colonialism, imperialism, and genocide?

Generational change in academia has brought the critique of power relations intrinsic to knowledge production into mainstream thought, at least in the humanities and the social sciences. In the final two sections, I show how the "Gypsy"/"non-Gypsy" divide has been addressed on two specific fronts recently. First, I will detail how accounts of Romani realities from places which go beyond the limits of the imagined "Europe" and even the "North Atlantic" have been explored. Second, I conclude by addressing how the legacy of the genealogy described above relates to the present when Romani voices have entered academia and shaken Romani Studies from its slumber.

3. Evidence of the Great Divide: Romani Presence in the Americas

At this point, I deem it necessary to give an example of what can occur when Eurocentric discourses are used indiscriminately to describe Romani-lived experiences. This section contrasts different theories that have attempted to explain when and how Romani groups reached the Americas. What is required is the development of a critical eye to these theories in order to analytically decouple ideas about "Gypsies" from the actual histories of migration and mobility that resulted in Romani families making their home in the Americas.[6]

At first, scholars' main assumption was of "nomadism" as opposed to "sedentarism," an almost inseparable characteristic of the "Gypsy." Early accounts of Romani groups in South America, such as those of Irving Brown (1938), assumed that the terms "nomad" and "Gypsy" were interchangeable. As such, the presence of Romani groups in the Americas was naturalized: they arrived because of their predisposition to move, and their mobile practices could be explained by the same totalizing logic. Even pioneers of the sociology of migration, such as Robert Park, considered this as a "geographical fact" that spoke of "ancient tribal organization and customs" (Park 1928, 887). This changed over time, however, especially when the category became the center of ethnographic analysis. Unfortunately, a "Gypsy"/"non-Gypsy" binary persisted in many of these more sophisticated analyses.[7]

In the 1990s, as the fall of the Iron Curtain was followed by East-West migration in Europe, Migration Studies became the dominant way to explain Romani population movements (Guy et al. 2004, 12). Migrant groups were considered to have a "sedentary" present but a "nomadic" past. That way their present mobilities could be explained by more refined lenses such as economic reasons or violent displacement, without upsetting the trope. A good example of how this teleological thought is still present are Marushiakova and Popov´s recent models of the different "waves" of Romani population in Europe. Centuries worth of movement are summarized in three stages: (1) a "nomadic community" successfully "acquiring niches" in fifteenth century Europe; (2) a "nomadic invasion" from Eastern Europe during the nineteenth century, escaping "from the freedom, and the […] new citizen obligations and responsibilities" that resulted from the abolition of slavery in Wallachia and Moldavia; and (3) a "third migration wave" from the 1960s onward, which could be better explained by labor migration (Marushiakova and Popov 2010, 126–128).

6 It is important to point out that this specific section does not intend to reinforce ideas around Romani people being eternal "nomads," "migrants," or "vagrants," as has been commonplace since the nineteenth century. The assumption that Romani groups have no attachment to place is contrary to what I argue here and in my doctoral thesis: that is, the need to revalue Eurocentric metaphors with little or no real grounding on histories, practices, and experiences of actual embodied mobilities and im/mobilities of Romani individuals and groups.

7 Since the 1970s academics have tried to pin down the relationship between the "nomad" label and the particular daily practices of diverse Romani groups. For a more detailed analysis on this subject, see Acuña 2018.

In the last few decades, this particular model has been reproduced by academics who have wished to understand Romani presence in the Americas. Most works[8] that have tried to contextualize ethnographic fieldwork in Latin American countries, for example, have used a similar version of the "wave" model summarized by Anne-Isabelle Lignier as: (a) a first "wave" during the colonial period (fifteenth to eighteenth century) (Lignier 2012, 11); (b) a second "wave" during the nineteenth century that corresponded not only to the end of slavery but to the intensification of persecution in Western Europe and the Great Migration (2012, 14). This "wave" ends with the First World War and the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, another motivation for migration (2012, 15–16). (c) The third "wave" coincides with the Second World War, and the displacement caused by genocide that included Romani groups from all states under Nazi occupation (2012, 16). Finally, (d) a fourth "wave" commences with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the war in ex-Yugoslavia and continues until today (2012, 16). Although the authors have tried to adapt the model to their own work in the field and the number of "waves" has increased over time – this example has four and more recently six "waves" (Baroco and Lagunas 2014) – the imposition of a European model seems apparent for two reasons:

1. The "wave" corresponds to what Schapendonk has called "frictionless metaphors of migration" (2012, 27–28), which create neat unidirectional models with cartographic appeal. However, they do not reveal much information about how journeys and lives actually took and take place. They act much like the "nomad" metaphor to explain mobile practices, reproducing the "Gypsy"/"non-Gypsy" divide by building a framework where actual experiences are out of the picture, including details of migratory and mobile practices and histories.
2. More pertinent to this article, this model, which allegedly fits an entire continent, is transposed from European historical categorizations without much reflection on how the actual histories of Romani families that embarked and continue embarking on journeys across the Atlantic relate to it. The actual lived experiences and contexts in the Americas continue to resist the transposition of Eurocentric understandings of transnational movements.

Ronald Lee also struggled with these trends in the representation of Romani migration. Early in his career, Lee argued, "The North American Gypsy is not nomadic for the most part but he is mobile" (1967, 40), referring to mobile strategies in daily life among the groups he knew as well as in his own life. As the new arrivals of asylum seekers shifted his own interests, Lee also refined his classifications of "Romani immigration to Canada" focusing this time on particular groups themselves and the period of their arrival. He mentions (a) "*Vlach* Roma from Eastern Europe and the Balkans" who arrived during the nineteenth century (Lee 2000, 2); (b) "another group which trekked up to Canada from Argentina via Mexico and the United States" around the same time (2000, 2); (c) "British-Romani Travellers" who arrived in the second decade of the twentieth century; (d) "some Romani families of Sinti and *Romungere* […] from Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire" who arrived before the First World War; (e) "sedentary Hungarian *Romungere*, mainly of the *Bashaldé* or musician groups who arrived as refugees, lost among the mass of non-Romani Hungarian refugees fleeing the Russian invasion of 1956"

8 See Acuña (forthcoming) for a more thorough account of the use of the "wave" and other models by authors who work with Romani groups in Central and South America.

(2000, 3); and (f) the recent "Roma who were now forced to flee these former communist countries because of systematic discrimination and the rise of neo-Nazi groups, fear of skinhead violence, ethnic cleansing and overt persecution at the hands of governments and police" (2000, 4). Families that could formerly pass as "fleeing communism" now had to engage in a new regime of visibility, by making their claim "based on their Romani ethnicity" (*ibid.*).

The "wave" model clashed with Lee's experiences, as reality is an amalgam of continuous and diverse movements, connections, arrivals, and moorings, including practices of home and place-making. From the nineteenth century alone, six different trends of transnational movements of Roma are enumerated, which respond not only to European politics and trends but also to movements of families in the Americas. In his work, Romani experiences and thoughts meet academic presuppositions in conflicting but productive ways, feeding off the continuity of Romani mobilities and presence in the Americas. As Argentinian Romani activist Jorge Bernal summarized: "Contacts are also maintained with many European countries, including Germany, Spain, Sweden and France. Aside from others where the Latin-American Rom have relatives and travel often, this allows the Romani people to keep the language and culture alive through permanent contacts with relatives abroad" (Bernal 2003, 6). Lee and Bernal were already following Brazilian anthropologists Fotta and Ferrari's advice one decade before: "the history and culture of Gypsies cannot be understood without taking the transatlantic space into account" (2014, 114).

4. Waking up Romani Studies or the "*Gadje* Awakening": The Importance of Romani Thought and Transatlantic Critical Awareness

> "The Gypsy Beast must be detoothed, declawed, and neutered before it can enter the hallowed halls of academia."
>
> Ronald Lee, Facebook commentary, April 22, 2018.

The journal *Critical Romani Studies,* which began publishing in 2018, has gathered exponents who have actively shown the productive cross-fertilization to which I refer. It is important then to give a nod to some of the trends that have resulted from such exchanges and keep adding insights on how to deal with Eurocentric logics in our daily work as researchers:

(1) A promising trend that appeared a decade ago takes the critical insights both on knowledge as power and on knowledge creation as a site of hegemony and domination and brings them to contemporary developments around "Roma rights" in Europe (Trehan 2009; Trehan and Koczé 2009). Relying on postcolonial and subaltern studies, these works have focused on the rise of "NGOization," US-based private foundation funding, and "American-style discourses on civil liberties and human rights" (Trehan 2009, 16) – all structures and institutions that have brought their own hierarchies and sites of violence. The reader can appreciate the irony of this convoluted side of transatlantic exchanges, which in this case reproduces the

assumption that there is a gap between "Roma" and European societies by imposing models that create new elites, which Trehan calls "human right entrepreneurs."

(2) Second, Koczé (2011) and Oprea (2004) have proposed an intersectionality framework that incorporates a refined awareness of issues of race, class, and gender. This has been developed in order to understand and challenge the marginalization of Romani women from the construction of knowledge in Romani Studies, including the naturalization of patriarchal structures and privilege as part of "Gypsyness." These seminal works paved the way for Romani feminism, noting the historical downplay of "the strong multinational, multigenerational networks that Romani women have formed over the past decade to fight the multiple modes of discrimination that permeate every area of life" (Brooks 2012, 6) and the exclusion that ensues.

(3) Finally, Petra Gelbart[9] and Heather Tidrick (2010) also talked provocatively of "gadjology" or "gadzology," an inversion that marks the importance of "from a Romani-informed point of view, systems, structures, and discourses controlled by non-Roma and how they shape the lives and possibilities of Romani persons" (Tidrick 2010, 127). The inversion of the binary has been the next step towards acknowledging power relations, after critical approaches to "whiteness" move towards taking a stance on "ethnography-as-activism" and away from imposed models that have little to do with Romani experiences and thoughts and towards alternative, perhaps anti-hegemonic, narratives.

I consider that this article adds to the epistemological debates in Romani Studies by, first, weaving a timeline of critical approaches to the discipline before the appearance of the *CRS* journal. Coinciding with the fortieth anniversary of Edward Said´s *Orientalism*, it revisited his influence on Romani Studies, especially in the identification of the role of the oppositional divide between "Gypsies" and "non-Gypsies" in the construction of knowledge on, about, and from Romani groups. In order for this to be accomplished, I built a genealogy since the first appearances of critical studies of representation in this line of academic work until the beginning of the twenty-first century.

The first aspect of the divide that was explored was that of the "Gypsy" as premodern and opposed to civilization. This notion is later expanded to consider how the "Gypsy" is conceived as outside of "the West," outside of its time, history and literature, and used to justify regulation, control, and unequal power relations. Even further down this path, some works noted how academic institutions were part of the powerful apparatus of internal colonialism in Europe. The beginning of the twenty-first century would be the moment in which ethnographers, on the shoulders of these developments, used the concepts of performance and performativity to describe quotidian engagement with these tropes in different daily life contexts. The marginal academic path of representation critique later became the basis for an ever-growing and progressively more influential set of works on the subject, and a foundation for the ongoing discussions highlighted in this journal.

9 See: P. Gelbart. 2011. "Gadjology: a Brief Introduction." Presented at the Inaugural Romani Studies Conference at University of California Berkeley, Nov 10. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cup3fwqsoLE

In the Facebook comment taken as this section's epigraph, Ronald Lee expresses his well-justified distance and suspicion of the entrance of Romani thought and experience into scholarship. The "Gypsy Beast" supposedly must be quelled when it dares to enter the white towers of academia. This image is particularly powerful when we see how the present situation of Romani Studies has been understood: as a "Roma Spring" or "Roma Awakening."[10] Indeed, it was a moment which not-so-innocently coincided with the end of the European Union's Decade of Roma Inclusion (DRI) in 2015. Initially perceived as the necessary solution for "eliminating discrimination and closing the unacceptable gaps between Roma and the rest of society," the Decade had the task to achieve two objectives: "Accelerate progress toward improving the welfare of Roma by including Roma in the decision-making process" and "[…] review such progress in a transparent and quantifiable way." Applying Lee´s suspicion, it is quite noticeable how this talk of "inclusion" has a familiar undertone of a "Gypsy"/"non-Gypsy" divide. Coinciding with its end, the "Roma Awakening," as Andrew Ryder argues, has been characterized by aggressive debates and positioning concerning the "relations between civil society, academia and Roma communities."[11] These discussions have included critical positions on the way the Decade contributed to skewed representation(s) of Romani people. It would take too long, though, to note here the strong reactions that such an "awakening" has provoked; paraphrasing Lee, the "Gypsy Beast" has awoken, and now academia shakes in distress.

This article could also be understood as another contribution to acknowledging that "the Gypsy Beast," as opposed to the "immaculate halls of academia," does not exist beyond its use as part of western geographies of imagination. Perhaps it is Romani Studies that has awoken from its century-long slumber. The field is now driven by Romani thought and experiences that have slowly but firmly raised awareness of the powerful lenses that guide knowledge creation in the field.

A second contribution that stems from this realization is that transatlantic mobilities, connections, and circulations have been a constant but marginal reminder of underlying Eurocentrism and have the potential to critically inform our current stances. The contributions of who I call, perhaps over-simplistically, transatlantic scholars, both Romani and non-Romani, have cemented new and exciting possibilities of inquiry beyond the imagined limits of Europe and European thought (and even beyond the North Atlantic). Not coincidentally, most of the authors whose work has been included here have had opportunities to travel between epistemic contexts, many times mentioning them in their own work. Ronald Lee is a good example of this productive tension, since his reflections have not only added theoretical insights to the field but also refined empirical stances, as my detour through theories of Romani presence in the Americas attests.

I do not claim to have made an exhaustive review since that qualifies as homework yet to be done. I do, however, aim at raising awareness of Eurocentric ideas in our midst. As a corollary, scholars are urged to take advantage of our own trans-local positionalities, and those of the respondents that kindly give us

10 A. Ryder. 2015. "The Roma Awakening." European Roma Rights Center Blog. http://www.errc.org/blog/the-roma-awakening/60

11 DRI (2010 [2005]). Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015. Terms of Reference. Sofia.

their time and thoughts – and, at least in the case of my respondents, a generosity always accompanied by a healthy dose of distance and suspicion – to continue advancing the multiplicity of critical stances that have characterized this new "*gadje* awakening."

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Nomads, "Gypsies," and Criminals in England and India from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Century

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Abstract

Both across Europe and India many mobile groups frequently are labeled as "Gypsy" and often are referred to as "criminals." Employing a critical approach, this article unveils how the intersection of nomadism, the "Gypsy" label, and criminality was not a "natural" occurrence, but one that came about through legal and literary discourses that have been used systematically since the seventeenth century. The connection between nomadism and criminality has been investigated both in Europe (Mayall 1988; Lucassen 1997; Lucassen and Willems 2003; Bardi 2006; Nord 2008) and in India (Radhakrishna 2001, 2009; Piliavsky 2015). These bodies of work are valuable as they examine how criminalization of groups took place. This article builds on this existing scholarship, and focuses its comparative investigation on several of the dominant discourses in England and India from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century. However, it is different from previous work on three accounts. First, it engages critically with the "Gypsy" label and details how this categorization became connected both with nomadism and criminality. Second, it claims that the criminalization of those who move in India preceded British colonial rule. Thus, it highlights how similar forms of community criminalization took place both in England and India. Third, this article argues that both legal and literary discourses are techniques through which power operates, and therefore analyzes the development of nomadism, criminality, and the "Gypsy" label within these interconnected mediums.

Keywords

- Roma
- "Gypsy"
- Nomadism
- Criminality
- England
- India

Introduction: The Intersectionality of Mobility, Criminality, and Ethnicity

Our identity is socially constructed. Who we are and how we define ourselves takes place through a complex interactionist process (Conrad and Schneider 1992) in which others categorize us, and we also categorize ourselves. Both our individual and community identities are born out through such dialogical acts, which are based on particular uses of language, discourses, and modes of expression (Taylor 1994, 34). Thus, if identities are constructed in relation to others, we need to understand how others see, describe, and potentially objectify people's identity. Moreover, as identities are constructed within power systems, we need to carefully examine how those in power classify and (il)legalize those whose access to power is more limited than theirs.

The present article does not aim to look at the complexity of identity formation, but aims to reveal how the intersection of categorizing communities as "nomad," "criminal," and "Gypsy"[1] lead to the criminalization of those labeled as "Gypsy." Specifically, I will bring into view how these labels became institutionalized. As these categorizations are not "created instantaneously" (Berger and Luckmann 1967, 72), following Conrad and Schneider (1992), I will outline the historical dimension of this process. I start from the assumption that if deviance and criminality are "social definitions," then we need to analyze how they come into being and how they become attached to and associated with particular groups of people (Conrad and Schneider 1992, 2)

The time period researched for this article spans the seventeenth to the nineteenth century. While the above-mentioned labels were in use before the seventeenth century and until today, focusing on this period allows us to see the emergence of both legal and literary discourses that focused and crystallized the criminalization of those who move, while identifying them as "Gypsies." Also, due to the colonial links between the United Kingdom and India during this period, we can trace how these categorizations traveled and were adapted to existent local societal structures. Thus, while this intersection of the three labels took place in many European countries around the same period of time,[2] this article focuses only on England and India, where we see draconian forms of criminalization of those who move and who were simultaneously identified as "Gypsy."

1 Individuals and communities labeled as "Gypsy" have been thought to originate in India. This article does not intend to demonstrate the Indian origin of those named "Gypsy" or to add anything to that particular conversation. For more information, see: Shashi 1990; Crowe 1994/1996; Fonseca 1995/2006; Barany 2002; Matras 2014/2015; Surdu 2017.

2 This is not to say that all nomads were regarded as criminals or "Gypsies," or that all those categorized as criminals were nomads. Rather, I argue that these labels were quite flexible and interpenetrated, creating a systematic criminalization of those who move from territory to territory, a legacy still experienced today. Moreover, not all European traveling communities were treated equally. While most of the European nomadic groups were targeted by legislation attempting to curve their mobility, at times law enforcement agencies were more lenient with the Irish travellers, the Yenish, or the carnival people who somehow were accommodated at the margins of society. Similarly, in India, spiritual seekers (sadhus) and pastoral communities were not criminalized but accepted – and even held in high social esteem in some instances.

The connection between nomadism and criminality has been investigated both in Europe (Mayall 1988; Lucassen 1997; Lucassen and Willems 2003; Bardi 2006; Nord 2008) and in India (Radhakrishna 2001, 2009; Piliavsky 2015), but the two bodies of scholarship were not placed in comparison so as to highlight the common modes of criminalization in each context. This article aims to fill this gap and to start a process of comparative analysis of the criminalization of particular communities in both South Asia and European countries.[3]

This article starts by outlining the methodology and the historical context of nomadism and the state, and then proceeds by outlining the legal system in regards to nomadism and the "Gypsy" label in England and then in India. The final part will follow the same structure, and starts by outlining common tropes within the English literature and then moves on to show several comparable literary discourses in India. This structure was chosen to facilitate the reading of the sources and to highlight in each case the main points that have contributed to the process of criminalization of those who move and are labeled as "Gypsy."

This article is not intended as an exhaustive work. Quite the contrary, I focus on highlighting the identity construction process by looking at several legal and literary discourses in England and India from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century. In doing so I outline how typically unrecognized power operates within society (Taylor 2015, 3). The primary aim of this article is to enable rigorous and in-depth conversations and research into the criminalization of groups labeled as "Gypsy"[4] in order to disrupt what others take for granted or see as "normal" (*ibid.*) regarding the criminalization of Roma and Adivasi communities.

1. Methodology

Because the goal is to compare discourses developed on two continents that are united by a shared history of colonial power, this work uses legal documents and original sources. However, it also relies on secondary sources, especially works that outline trends within the discourses of the time. I use these bodies of literature as a springboard to further parallel discourses that reveal the construction of nomadism and criminality in relation to the "Gypsy" label.

Considering the presence of nomadic communities both in England and India (and beyond),[5] as well as their historical colonial connection, this comparative discourse analysis exposes the underpinnings

3 While focusing on India and England for this article, over fifty primary and secondary sources were surveyed. I also additionally consulted literature on the Netherlands, France, Romania, and Russia. This article looks at the historical development of different discourses in England although a similar situation can be observed in other European countries as well. See, for example, Jan Lucassen and Leo Lucassen 1997.

4 The term "Gypsy" is a historically constructed term (Surdu 1984). Since the sixteenth century, the term has been used to define multiple communities and subcommunities, all of which speak different languages and/or diverse Romani dialects; they have different religions, lands, histories, and cultures. Due to its complicated history, the "Gypsy" label is a politically loaded term and its negative connotations overwhelmingly outweigh its positive categorization (Matache 2017). To acknowledge these difficulties and their implications, I will place the term in quotes.

5 For more on nomads and the state in the Near East, see Szuchman 1984.

of the ways in which certain mobile communities, especially those labeled as "Gypsies," were regarded between the seventeenth and the nineteenth century. This article starts from a basic assumption: laws and regulations are not enacted in vacuums; they are deeply rooted in their historical contexts, and as a result it is necessary to investigate both the legal and literary discourses that referred to criminality, nomadic lifestyle, and the "Gypsies." This view is based on Michel Foucault's text (1977/1997), which argues that in order to understand how power operates we need to investigate its *dispositif*:

> Thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions – in short, the said as much as the unsaid. (…) Between these elements, whether discursive or non-discursive, there is a sort of interplay of shifts of position and modifications of function which can also vary very widely (Foucault 1977/1997, 194).

The present article uses a genealogical exploration of the *dispositif* at work in both England and India during the time when England exercised great influence into its Indian colonies. By "genealogical exploration," I mean that I am employing an analytical method that targets discourses rather than individuals. This approach exposes acclaimed ideas and embedded practices and aims to reveal how both knowledge is constituted and how categorizations are created.

Foucault described genealogy as "gray meticulous, and patiently documentary. It operates on a field of entangled and confused parchments, on documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times" (2001, 139). From this often separate account of the past, genealogy seeks in "the most uncompromising places, in what we tend to feel is without history" (Foucault 2001, 140). It understands that that "historical beginnings are lowly," (*ibid.* 143) not uncovering a divine birth, or "a timeless and essential secret, but the secret that they [i.e., events/ concepts] have no essence or that their essence was fabricated in a piecemeal from alien forms" (*ibid.* 142). This genealogical approach aims to denaturalize what otherwise appears as natural and immutable, to open up new understandings of mobile communities by unveiling the discursive mechanisms that lead to a systematic criminalizing of those who move, particularly those labeled as "Gypsy."[6]

2. The State and Nomadism

As Michel Foucault (1983) argues, during the seventeenth century the European penal system took action whenever central administration or monarchical power wanted to get rid of someone. Prisons had two roles: to exert the power of the state and to organize society in a functional manner. Prior to the eighteenth century, prisons were the symbol of a state's arbitrariness and useful for punishing elements

6 I do not mean to imply that those who were labeled as "Gypsy" were passive and absorbed these discourses and their discriminatory consequences without engaging in different forms of resistance. It is my understanding that communities labeled as "Gypsy" always have employed a variety of practices of direct and indirect resistance.

disobeying its power. Starting with the eighteenth century, when a new penal code was constructed, prisons became the main form of punishment as well as a form of rehabilitation. Among those who were under systematic scrutiny, starting with the seventeenth century, were those who moved from place to place, thereby eluding the power of the state. Because monarchical and other central administrative powers wanted to exert control over the people living within their territory, those who transgressed were seen both as a threat to power and as a functional problem.[7]

According to Lucassen and Lucassen (1997), the rise of the modern state was characterized by direct rule over its people through the organized police, who, as a result, targeted traveling groups and those labeled as "Gypsies." This led to the "stigmatization of the Gypsies (…) because of their visible travelling way of life [that] underlined their status as 'masterless' men, which made them a threat to a well ordered society" (Lucassen and Willems 2003, 10). Mobility especially was controlled and punished in England; furthermore, through British colonial rule many of the techniques of assigning criminality to nomads were exported to and implemented in India, applying these structures onto preexisting methods of criminalization.

3. Legal System: England from 1600s to 1800s

From the seventeenth century onwards, the English state manifested increased interest in controlling "vagabondage," "homelessness," and "vagrancy."[8] People performing these acts were seen as "undesirables" defying the power of the state and were punished as a result. Those labeled as "Gypsy" were among those most frequently disciplined for their habits. Across Europe they were included in decrees that "increasingly regarded [them] as the most dangerous subgroup and [thus they] became the symbol for the unwanted itinerant" (Lucassen and Willems 2003, 10). This was the case as early as 1555, with the Philip and Mary Act, titled An Act against Certain Persons Calling Themselves Egyptians,[9] and which aimed to control the life of those identified as "Egyptians" or "Gypsies":

> All and every person and persons (…) in any company or fellowship of vagabonds, commonly calling themselves Egyptians, or counterfeiting, transforming, or disguising themselves by their apparel, speech, or other behaviour, like unto such vagabonds, commonly called or calling themselves Egyptians, and so shall do or continue and remain in the same, either at one time or several times, by the space of one month: that then the said person or persons,

7 For more information about the criminalization of nomadism and poverty in the 1600s, see Fishman (2007), and https://eh.net/encyclopedia/english-poor-laws.

8 Following Geremek (1974), Lucassen (1997) tells us that "the first use of the term 'vagabond' took place in France around 1350 and had a negative connotation signifying 'undesirable wandering behavior,'" and vagrancy soon came to be considered a crime in itself (Lucassen 1997, 227).

9 According to Crow (1994/1996), Fonseca (1995/2006), and Matras (2014), "Gypsy" comes from the word "Egyptian," and it is based on the myth that mistakenly assumed that Roma groups came from Egypt. For more on Roma's presumed foreign origin, see the second part of this article and also Morgan (2016).

> shall by virtue of this act be deemed and judged a felon and felons; and shall therefore suffer pains of death, loss of lands and goods, as in cases of felony by the order of the common laws of this realm (cited in Pickering 1763, 211).

Also, the Act for the Punishment of Vagabonds, and for Relief of the Poor and Impotent (Vagabond Act) of 1572 criminalized groups of "masterless men," such as "all fencers, bearwards, common players of interludes, and minstrels (not belonging to any baron of this realm, or to any other honourable person of greater degree), wandering abroad without the license of two justices at the least" who, as a result of their transgressions, were "grievously whipped and burned through the gristle of the right ear with a hot iron of the compass of an inch about."

The English state of the seventeenth century created the Settlement Act of 1662, which detailed that those who move from place to place had to have with them a Settlement Certificate that would mention their belonging to a parish, which would be responsible for them in case they needed removal (An Act for Better Relief of the Poor of this Kingdom, also known as the Settlement and Removal Act of 1662). In this way the state empowered parishes to further control the population on its territory. To encourage settlements and to prevent those who move to turn into "incorrigible Rogues," the state allowed those settling into one place for more than forty days to apply for "poor relief." The Act further stated that authorities were entitled to move newcomers to their previous settlement if they deemed it necessary. While the Act details the particulars of settlement and removal, it also lays the foundation of an all-encompassing paradigm that assumed being settled as the rule. This assumption transformed mobile persons into exceptions to be systematically controlled and punished.[10]

Authorities were aware of the distinction between vagrants, vagabonds, and "Gypsies," but placed them under the same law, thus blurring legal differences. The state aimed to limit the mobility of undesirable groups and assert its authority onto their lives, bodies, and goods by using these acts to legally intersect the category of "Egyptian" or "Gypsy" with vagabond. This legal intersection made those who were mobile and those identified as such (who might not have in fact been mobile) into an offense to the state and to its laws. Thus, the state could now legally control the movement of those labeled as "Gypsies."

While the seventeenth century was marked by the state's aim to control movement, in the eighteenth century the state changed its techniques to control and reform "vagrants" under the guise of transforming them into productive citizens. Once apprehended, those deemed as "vagabonds" were punished with public whippings and incarcerated in houses of correction (Lambert 1868). Moreover, they were forced to perform six months of hard labor for the state. By this point, the state developed a preoccupation with rehabilitation, as the law did not seek only to limit mobility and regulate behavior but to remake its subjects, enabling their participation in the doings of (and according to the will of) the state.

10 As concern regarding nomadism was generated within sedentary society, new theories of sedentarism started to take shape, aiming to normalize and produce sedentary models of existence and pathologies and regress nomadic modes of existence (McVeigh 1997, 9)

These eighteenth-century legislative decisions criminalized behavior by creating a taxonomy, that is, by naming groups that became categories of criminals according to the law. While this taxonomy referred to "vagrants" and "vagabonds," it also included "Egyptians," according to the *General Index to the Journals of House of Lords 20–60 Geo III, Vols. XXXVI-LII*.[11] For example, with the Vagrancy Act of 1744, people become "vagrants" because of their mobility, their moral characteristics, or their occupational categories. Moreover, they also became criminals simply because of their identification as "Gypsy," as the act declared "vagrants" as "all Persons pretending to be Gypsies, or wandering in the habit or form of the Egyptians." Thus, the 1744 Act established the group criminalization of all who were "pretending" to be "Gypsy," as well as of those who behaved in a manner that was perceived to be alike those labeled "Gypsy." This legal categorization blurred the line between those who identified themselves as "Gypsy" and those who displayed similar behavior, making both groups into criminals. This lack of legal distinction between the two placed those identified as "Gypsy" or "Egyptians" under the same law as "vagabonds" and "vagrants," implicitly linking the former to nomadism and criminality.

Moreover, with the Vagrancy Act of 1744, the English state aimed to reform both those identified as "Gypsies" and "vagabonds." For example, the city or state assigned those labeled "Gypsies" special places to live. In an attempt to restrict their movement and modify their behavior, the state instituted punishments: imprisonment, fines, and corporal punishments like whippings, to name a few. In turn, these measures placed mobile communities next to local authorities in charge of policy implementation, where their behavior could be changed so they could become "useful" for the state.

These judicial discourses helped cement the criminalization of those who were not settled and those labeled as "Gypsies." By the nineteenth century these categories came under further scrutiny. Thus, the Vagrancy Act of 1824 named "vagabonds" as those who were resisting their apprehension as "incorrigible rogues":

> Every person apprehended as a rogue and vagabond, and violently resisting any constable or other peace officer so apprehending him or her, and being subsequently convicted of the offence for which he or she shall have been so apprehended; shall, be deemed an incorrigible rogue within the true intent and meaning of this Act (Vagrancy Act of 1824, V: 700).

Just like in its previous formats, in addition to criminalizing those who move, the *Act of 1824* paid particular attention to groups whose characteristics overlapped with the people they identified as having "Gypsy" characteristics, such as those people working as fortune tellers or living in mobile homes:

> Every Person pretending or professing to tell Fortunes, or using any subtle Craft, Means, or Device, by Palmistry or otherwise, to deceive and impose on any of His Majesty's Subjects; every Person wandering abroad and lodging in any Barn or Outhouse, or in any deserted or unoccupied Building, or in the open Air, or under a Tent, or in any Cart or Waggon, not

11 "Egyptians" were mentioned directly in: "Bill 23 Geo. 3. to repeal 5 Eliz. for further Punishment of Vagabonds so calling themselves; from H.C.; and read l a, xxxvi. 686 a. 2 l, and committed, 692 a. House in Committee, and Bill reported, 693."

> having any visible Means of Subsistence, and not giving a good Account of himself or herself … [were] become forfeited to the King's Majesty (Vagrancy Act of 1824 IV: 699–700).

While the Act of 1824 does not refer directly to the "Gypsy" by name, it listed characteristics associated with being a "Gypsy" prevalent in the literature of the time (as we will see next), such as having supernatural powers, fortunetelling, living in the wilderness, and traveling in carts or wagons.

Legal reference and criminalization of those thought to be a "Gypsy" reverberated further into local legislation. For example, in Norfolk, magistrates passed a resolution that referred specifically and solely to "Gypsy" mobile groups: "All persons pretending to be Gypsies or wandering in the habit or form of Egyptians, are by law deemed to be rogues and vagabonds, and are punishable by imprisonment and whipping" (Mayall 1988, 151–2). It determined that "the Gypsies" could be sent to prison "without being charged with transgression" (*ibid.*).

The striking aspect of these regulations is that they overlook individual responsibility and deem as criminal any person belonging to the "Gypsy"/nomad groups. Laws are understood to be universal and individually applied. However, belonging to a group/community and specifically being identified as a "Gypsy" took away individual application of the law and made entire groups fall under the criterion of criminality.

Thus, from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, the legal system gradually increased language that referenced nomads and "Gypsies" in the laws, thereby linking them to criminality, and moved from restraining them to engaging in their potential rehabilitation. While this process had been developing in England (as well as other European countries), thousands of miles away, in India, a similar process of the criminalization of nomadic and semi-nomadic groups in India was in full swing by the seventeenth century.

4. India: Precolonial and Colonial Law

A look into India's legal system under colonial rule reveals similarities with the English systematic criminalization of groups. Postcolonial scholarship often argues that this process of criminalization was not indigenous to the Indian subcontinent but was imported and instituted by British colonists (Radhakrishna 2000, 2001, 2009). This view presents the effect of colonial legislation on India, and it implies that the criminalization of Indian communities was the consequence of British colonialist ruling in connection to Indian elites (Radhakrishna 2009).[12]

However, this perspective does not tell the full story of the criminalization of groups throughout Indian history. As Piliavsky (2015b) argues, "to be effective, stereotypes must have cultural purchase: they must

12 It is important to mention that the categorization of communities in India is intertwined deeply with the castist tradition that placed people by birth into different official (and economic) groups. This article does not delve into to this vast area of study, but acknowledges that a study of nomadism in relation to caste would further this project and give details about communities' categorization in India.

be widely and readily recognized" (334). The British categorization (and criminalization) of certain groups did not occur on a blank Indian canvas; they were implemented within the context of a society with its own long-lasting and complex system of classifying "undesirables."

Following Gordon (1985), Freiteg (1991), Dundas (1995), Wagner (2007), and Piliavsky (2015a, b), I argue that identifying and categorizing entire nomadic groups as criminals has been a part of the Indian tradition dating back much farther than the advent of colonial influence: the judicial criminalization of communities, for example, dates hundreds of years before modern colonial India. Once colonialism ruled the subcontinent, it simply worked with the preexisting categories and power techniques to implement its own regime and systematize the criminalization of mobile communities.

Because the precolonial Indian economy depended on migratory labor, unsettled and semi-nomadic people were not seen as a possible threat at the time (Lucassen and Willems 2003). However, precolonial India identified entire groups as thieves, thugs, and criminals. Piliavsky (2015b) explains that even in "vedic accounts, like the kathās," entire tribes are described as "riteless, void of sense, inhuman," "frightful and terrible," "flesh-eating," "wine-drinking," "bird-hunting," "parrot-roasting," and "human-sacrificing predatory brutes" (Piliavsky 2015b, 330). While some of these tribes were nomadic, in precolonial India being itinerant was insufficient to criminalize a group or community. It is important to mention that, just like in England, in precolonial India the label of "nomadism" at times intersected with that of "criminal."

The belief that some people are born thieves or belong to a criminal group simply by their tradition appears in seminal Indian texts, such as *The Laws of Manu,* the law-giving treaty of approximately 1250 BCE. This text refers to those who are not confined to settled life, particularly to "robber tribes living outside the village" on "burial grounds," "on mountains and in groves," and that they wore "the garments of the dead," ate "their food from broken dishes," and "always wander[ed] from place to place" (Bühler 1886, 50–52, cited by Piliavsky 2015, 330). Law-giver Manu described "that forest tribes (dasyus) and the brutal, heretical, and low-living servants (sudras) were naturally drawn to forbidden occupations, like theft" (Bühler 1886, 4.61, 5.131, 9.225, 8.66, cited by Piliavsky 2015, 331). Criminals "who secretly prowl on this earth, cannot be restrained except by punishment" (IX 261–263: Buhler 1967, cited by Piliavsky 2015, 388–389). Majumdar (1961) states that these views made "crime as an inherited trait" (375). As a result, a large number of men and women who were both mobile *and* engaged in "forbidden" acts "were registered and stigmatized as criminals from birth" (*ibid.*). Moreover, as Radhakrishna (2001) argues: "it was a popular perception that these mobile people were vagrants, drifters, lazy, not given to any kind of 'disciplined' life, and therefore needed to be disciplined" (Radhakrishna 2001, cited by Rana 2011, 15). Categories and processes were thus created, intersecting the category of nomadism with that of criminality, and they organized and governed the Indian subcontinent before the British colonialist ruling.

It is nevertheless important to mention that even if criminalization of entire groups was practiced before British colonialism, India has been traditionally more tolerant to those who did not settle, allowing groups to live within its jungles and hills without seeing them as a threat to official power unless they committed additional acts of vagrancy. In other words, the precolonial preoccupation was mainly with those who displayed "habitual stealing of vast qualities of wealth, lack of concern for military strength

used against them, contempt for divine and temporal power, and skill in burglary" (Piliavsky 2015, 334, citing a twelfth-century Jain text in Dundas 1995, 82).

The colonial powers became aware of these classifications, "absorbed many indigenous concepts, practices and institutions" (Piliavsky 2015, 324), and by essentializing them created a certain uniformity in the treatment of groups labeled as "criminal tribes," which now included itinerant ones. Thus, due to the underpinnings of colonial power, the criminalization of communities changed by the eighteenth century, and nomadic groups – who were not necessarily sharing any other characteristics – also became "criminals."

The pivotal legal act that criminalized many groups was the Criminal Tribes Act (CTA) of 1871. In addition to those deemed as being from "criminal communities," the Act included nomadism under "non-bailable offenses," and as a result officially linked criminality to nomadism within the Indian British Colonies:

> If such tribe, gang or class has no fixed place of residence, the report shall state whether such tribe, gang or class follows any lawful occupation, and whether such occupation is in the opinion of the Local Government, the real occupation of such tribe, gang or class or a pretense of facilitating the commission of crimes (CTA 1871, Part II, 4: 122).

This legislation was justified on the basis of the colonial view of the Indian caste system:

> The special feature of India is the caste system. As it is traders go by caste: a family of carpenters will be carpenters, a century or five centuries hence, if they last so long. Keeping this in mind the meaning of professional criminal is clear. It means a tribe whose ancestors were criminals from times immemorial, who are themselves destined by the usages of caste to commit crime and whose descendants will be offenders against the law, until the whole tribe is exterminated or accounted for in the manner of the Thugs. When a man tells you that he is an offender against the law, he has been so from the beginning, and will be so to the end, reform is impossible, for it is his trade, his caste, I may almost say his religion to commit crime (Hon'ble M. T.V. Stephens, member for Law and Order, cited by Kapadia 1952, 9).

A prior colonial ruling, the taxonomy of tribes, including nomadic ones, was not centralized or rigorously enforced. As a result, nomadic communities were able to move throughout vast territories and came under the state's scrutiny once they engaged in other punishable acts, such as thievery. The British, accustomed to exercising central authority, and aiming to settle those who moved, exported their model to the colonies. As a result, a community came under the radar of local authorities by simply being nomadic. The CTA recommended the creation of a report that shall "specify the place of residence in which such wandering tribe, gang or class is to be settled" (CTA 1871, Part II, 4). After this procedure was completed "the tribe, gang or class to which it relates ought to be declared criminal" (*ibid.,* Article 5, 122), and authorities had to publicly declare that "such tribe, gang or class is a criminal tribe" (*ibid.*). Once this categorization became official, the members of these communities had to register with the Local Government, who in turn had the power to move or settle those who have "no fixed place of residence" (*ibid.*, Article 13, 124) in reformatory settlements (*ibid.*, Article 17, 124).

The process of settling nomads was accompanied by a set of rules about conducting regular role-calls to prove their presence within "reformatory settlements." Moreover, just like in the case of nomads and those labeled "Gypsies" in Europe under the Vagrancy Act of 1744 (see above), under the CTA, those who broke these rules were severely punished with "rigorous imprisonment for a term which may extend to six months or with fine, or with whipping, or with all or with any two of those punishments" (*ibid.*, Article 19, 126). Thus, colonialists created legislation that ensured dominance over entire groups, forced nomads to settle, and kept them visible under the eyes of the state, aiming to transform nomads into productive citizens for the state, and not for their own good:

> The Criminal Tribes Act was used by the police administration for confining a number of CT members to various enterprises. (…) Giving employment to criminal tribes for their reformation (…) was obviously not the aim. The workers were needed only for two months, and no individual workers was to be employed for more than a month (Radhakrishna 2001/2008, 106).

The preoccupation with rehabilitation of those deemed as "criminals" was delegated to non-statist institutions, such as the Salvation Army, which were then entrusted with reforming nomads.

While the CTA went into effect in 1871, it is important to understand that given the great diversity across the subcontinent, the Act was not uniformly applied, and it underwent a long process until it was able to capture most of the communities living there. For example, in 1871 approximately 160 tribes were criminalized, mostly in Northern India. That number gradually increased, reaching three million people across India by 1947. The way in which a community was defined as a "criminal tribe" varied, based on what those in power deemed as undesirable. Among them, groups who were mobile and therefore difficult to control often fell under this legal regime.[13]

Lloyd (2014) posits that the British government assigned specific tribes' criminality through state administrators, not by transgression of the law. In doing so, the legal system implemented within British India was one based on "extraordinary" crime (Arnold 1986; Freitag 1991), which gave power to colonial authorities to control the population by arresting without warrant (CTA, Article 20, 126). As a result, like in England, individuals deemed as members of a criminal community lost their individuality. Importantly, this categorization was based on the simple "suspicion" of belonging to a group or community, not on factual proof. In effect, the CTA resembled British legislation in England, which stated that, "under Regulation XXII, section X, 1793, a person could be arrested on *the suspicion* that they were a 'notorious robber', a 'vagrant', or a 'disorderly and ill-disposed person'" based on belonging to a community. Thus, through mere "suspicion," persons lost their individuality and fell under criminalized categories such as Dacoits, Cozauks, Thugs, and Buddeck. Like in the English example above, the existence of collective crimes is puzzling in the context of a colonial legal system that claimed the recognition of the individual as the main subject of the law.

13 Radhakrishna (2001) comments that this new assertion of power over the colonies was motivated by the erosion of the British state, which by the nineteenth century was struggling with "unemployment, strikes, economic depression, and a growing political radicalism" (3).

The criminalization of groups and communities was not officially linked to being a "Gypsy," but Indian communities who were both criminalized and nomadic informally received the "Gypsy" label, a name adopted and reinforced even today in the twenty-first century. Thus, in India the "Gypsy" categorization informally arrived through British colonial underpinnings, labeling nomadic criminalized Indian communities as "Gypsy." If before the British colonial power gripped the Indian subcontinent, a community had to display their violence and propensity to theft in addition to their nomadism to be criminalized, now lack of permanent settlement alone was enough to be judicially deemed criminal, and therefore informally called "Gypsy."

Thus, the British rulers implemented similar power techniques in the Indian subcontinent to those already created back home and informally brought the "Gypsy" label to categorize undesirables. While groups might have migrated from India to Europe without a name attached to their community and ended up being labeled as "Gypsy," hundreds of years later the term "Gypsy" migrated back, this time without people. In the same manner Majumdar (1961) explains how different nomadic tribes of Northern India, such as Banthus, Sanshis, Karwals, Haburas, Tagu, Pakhiwara, Meena, and Harni, were thought to have a distinct *modi operandi* and "live[d] by anti-social activities, thievery, pilfering, dacoity and violence and became categorized as the 'Gypsy of India.'"[14]

As a result, while the "Gypsy" label did not exist in precolonial India, it informally came into existence because the colonial categorization perceived groups on the subcontinent to be similar to those communities labeled "Gypsy" back home. The term "Gypsy" clearly was imported to India and superimposed on diverse populations who *might* not be otherwise related.

5. The "Gypsy" in English Discourse: A Beauty and a Beast

As mentioned above, laws are never created in a vacuum; they represent and operate in a larger system which inspires them and by which they are influenced. People or groups who are not settled have captured the imagination of (and often invoked fear among) settled communities for centuries. These tropes are visible in the literature of the time. Even though literary discourses do not have legal power, they have the power to create images and knowledge, which, in turn, is further reflected in the legal system.

In Europe, those labeled as "Gypsy" often had a double image. One can distinguish two complementary portrayals of nomads which still persist today: one romantic, praising their authentic lifestyle, and the other offensive, describing them as beasts. In the same vein as the laws, within England the main view since the seventeenth century was that "Gypsies" often were different, born as "others" (Mayall 1988). While they sometimes shared traits with other mobile individuals or groups (such as "travelers"),

14 In addition to criminal categorization, the British rulers used similar techniques of curtailing movements and punishment for those who disobeyed their organization.

the true "pureblood Gypsy" – also called "Romany" – were said to live an idle life and camp in forests. They were thought to be racially different, and they were supposed to be easily distinguishable from other nomads because they were physically and temperamentally different, presumably because they came from Egypt. Mayall (1988) further tells us that "Gypsies" were usually described as "dark, supple, agile and handsome, possessing a temperament that was wild, fierce and defiant." Also, their "complexion was said to be swarthy, hair curly and black, eyes dark with a pearly lecture. The mode of dress was frequently portrayed as showy and colorful with headscarves, trinkets and droopy earrings in abundance" (Mayall 1988, 75–76).

According to Reynolds (2002), as early as the 1620s, the term "Gypsy":

> Usually denoted people who travelled nomadically in groups, had dark skin, read fortunes, were performers, and acquired a reputation for immorality. The connotation or signified to the signifier Gypsy was paganism, sorcery, nomadism, profane sexuality, theatricality, deception, thievery, [linked to] the multifarious criminality, the 'gypsism' with which Gypsy is typically associated in literary texts, statues, legal records, and personal letters of the period (Mayall 1988, 23).

As early as 1596, Shakespeare also made references to "Gypsies" in *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* and in 1600, in *As You Like It*. The direct reference to the "Gypsy" as the "Egyptian charmer" who gave Othello's mother the well-known handkerchief appears in 1603's *Othello*, where a "Gypsy" woman was known for being able to almost read people's thoughts. One of the classical romances – a popular genre at that time – that gives an in-depth account of the life of the "Gypsy" is the eighteenth century memoir *The Life and Adventures of Bampfylde Moore Carew*. It describes the life of a settled Englishman who joined a "Gypsy" caravan and became nomadic as a result. Carew (1749) describes the "Gypsies" and "natural" nomads. Neither of them accepted the authority of the state, nor did they have "any envyings to torment them: they have no settled habitations, but move from place to place, as often as their convenience or pleasure requires it, which renders their life a perpetual scene of variety" (Carew 1749, 12). In the stereotypes of the time, those labeled as "Gypsies" were portrayed as powerful free spirits living outside society, defying its territorial boundaries, and enjoying their freedom.

But the fixed and idealistic image of freedom and defiance of the settled communities was often accompanied by a negative and hostile representation. According to Mayall (1988), the "Gypsies" were also described in literature as:

> Closer to the animals than any other race known in Europe… the lowest possible level of existence. They were said to eat more like the beasts than men, subsisting on animals that had died of disease and the discarded refuse of settled society. … [They] possessed animal traits of cunning, deceit and aggression (80).

Similarly, Mayhew (cited by Radhakrishna 2009) describes the "Gypsies" as "not yet formed to civilized habits." Furthermore, he claims that they "indulge their appetites when they could, restoring to plunder rather than submit to the discipline of steady work" (Radhakrishna 2009, 5). While not all those identified as "Gypsies" were nomadic, those who appeared mobile were seen as "fiercely proud and independent"

and often ignored society's taboos. Mayall (1988) states in his analysis of the literature that the typecast of the "Gypsy" was presented as "free-living and free-loving, with a sexual appetite matched only by their wanderlust" and more than anything impossible to settle because "of the possession of black blood, or *kalo ratt*" (76). Again, the notion of inherited differences played an important role in the literary cliché: their wandering character was impossible to change, as it was "transmitted at birth" (*ibid.*). As a result of "Gypsies" being seen as different by birth, they were "Orientalized," treated differently, and perceived as somehow more "exotic" and thus separate from the accepted mainstream.

The tropes of the nomadic "Gypsy" in England between the seventeenth and eighteenth century extend beyond literature and into medical discourse. For example, in the 1800s, when local councils received complaints from residents about the new "Gypsy" encampments in their area, "some local medical practitioners testified that the camp smelt offensively," and their verdict was that "there was an accumulation of matter, no means of draining, and no water for flushing purposes … the land was generally unhealthy and as a direct result there have been several cases of illness in the district" (Mayall 1988, 164). Medical discourses often relied on health concerns to create reasons that would justify the exclusion of nomads. Faced with the threat of possible diseases and death, states could implement rules and policies that affected mobile groups.

The malicious allegations of inborn nomadism in literature was further "extended and amplified by accusations of treachery, idleness, parasitism, heathenism and vice" (Mayall 1988, 80). Simultaneously being described as a beauty and a beast with untraceable or "Oriental" origins, living at the margin of the society, engaged in a mysterious nomadic lifestyle, the image of the wandering "Gypsy" was often linked to criminality and those who fell under this label were used as scapegoats. Thus, the stereotype of those categorized as "Gypsy" within the literature complemented and added to their criminalized legal profile.

If in the sixteenth century "the Gypsies" were considered to be in the same group as beggars and therefore were categorized as a social problem that the state needed to address via imprisonment, by the seventeenth century those labeled as "Gypsies" were presumed to lack Christian faith (Mayall 1988, 184). This both inspired and motivated various individuals and organizations "to remedy the state of affairs existing in camps of these *savages* living on the fringes of the settled society and be taught the word of God" (*ibid.*). Thus, at least a century before the state produced legislation that aimed to transform nomads and those identified as "Gypsies" into "docile bodies" (Foucault 1997/1995), the church was already concerned with their makeover and hoped to change them into members of the "flock." As Lucassen and Lucassen (1997) tell us, religious discourse saw the nomadic "Gypsies" as "people lacking a fixed abode and labeled as beggars or vagabonds were increasingly stigmatized as lazy and prone to criminal behavior" (Lucassen and Lucassen 1997, 227).

Not to be mistaken, in the medical, religious, and literary discourses from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, two distinct categories are visible: "The Gypsy" and the nomad. But even though the two categories were separated, they also often overlapped. This blurred the distinction between nomads, criminals, and those labeled as "Gypsy," enabling the state to respond by increasing the institutionalization, incarceration, and possible rehabilitation of those deemed be a nuisance to its power.[15]

15 For more on the similar cases across Europe, see: Ocobock 2008.

The two opposing clichés of the nomadic "Gypsy" as a romantic freedom-lover, away from the medium of settled life, and "the Gypsy" as a beast of prey, as dirty and criminal, assumed one common stereotype: "Gypsies" have a foreign origin. In all these texts, they were described as non-European, as having an Oriental origin, possibly coming from Egypt, or more likely from India. While not yet bearing the name "Gypsy" in Indian literature, the image of communities that were nomadic and lived at the margins of society were both praised for their courage and abhorred for their disruptive behavior.

6. Thugs/Thieves, Nomads, and "Gypsies" in Indian Literature

While in India the official criminalization of nomads through colonial power techniques is visible through the adoption of legal terms, their image in the literature is more abstruse. Different from Europe where a duplicitous image was formed around the "Gypsy" label, the Indian literature[16] did not produce similar romantic literary tropes, but presented nomadism as one of the characteristics of the overall society. While not as numerous as the stories of "Gypsies" and mobile groups in Europe, stories dating back to the Indian Middle Ages portray wandering groups as thieves by trade, by nature, or by tradition. In "Rauhineya's Adventures," published in "Studies in the Honor in Maurice Bloomfield" by Bloomfield (1920), we learn that tribes like Rupiakhura or Silverhoof were described for centuries as "bold and rich thiefs," wandering "at night in various houses, and [taking] whatever pleased [their] fancy." These thieves were described as living at the margins of the cities and not tied to any settled communities (Piliavsky 2015a, 167). Similarly, Piliavsky (2015a, citing Johnson 1920) asserts that: "thieves were described as living in the mountains and inhabiting caves (165–66). Like "the Gypsies"' description in European literature, traditional roaming was depicted in the Indian literature of the seventeenth century as "wonderfully like animals" (Sangar 1967, 47 citing Tzuk Tr. I: 99, Text I: 48–49). It is therefore important to underline that those deemed as thieves neither belonged to one specific community nor were they always nomadic. These categories were separated, though at times they overlapped.

As seen above, nomadism was connected to criminality in India, with habitual robbers being seen as people who have no stable home, who do not live within larger sedentary communities, but "pour down in countless hordes from hill and plain for loot in bullock" (Piliavsky 2015b, 335 citing Beveridge 1921, 454). In a manner strikingly similar to the beastly image of the "Gypsies" in European literature, we are told by Fick (1920/1972) that in India some "races" were thought for hundreds of years to lead a

> wandering life, feed mostly on animals (…) eating habits which ensured their long lasting impurity in the eyes of the mostly vegetarian settled population. Their lifestyle was unacceptable and inassimilable into the mainstream, and as a result even when they tried to set up their residences among the cultivated population, they [were] compelled to live in isolation outside of cities and maintain their livelihood by the meanest kinds of work (Fick 1920/1972, 315–316).

16 As Indian literature is vast and in multiple languages, the statement refers to the surveyed Indian literature.

For example, Fick argues that the Candalas were depicted as wandering from place to place, dressed in the garments of the dead, speaking a different language, and refusing to intimately connect with the rest of Indian society.

Traditionally, nomadic groups found in India were not labeled according to one name. But once British colonialism took root, the "Gypsy" label was informally superimposed on the existent categorization of diverse itinerant communities in a similar manner as they were described in England. The existent literary similarities further allowed colonists to assume transcontinental connections among itinerant communities and to criminalize nomads as they did back home.

Conclusion

Between the seventeenth and nineteenth century, nomadism and criminality became interlinked and associated with the term "Gypsy." This connection has been perpetuated over time, leaving behind a strong social, legal, and political legacy that labels those considered "Gypsy" as criminals and nomads in need of rehabilitation. This intersection was facilitated by a legal system intimately connected with other literary discourses. In England, from the seventeenth century onward we see a change from the past, with nomads coming under the strict scrutiny of the state, their movement and behavior often being criminalized. In precolonial India, nomads were better accommodated overall. Only when they exhibited additional traits (such as thievery) were nomads criminalized. However, once colonial rule gripped the Indian subcontinent, nomadic communities came under strict surveillance and became severely criminalized.

A similar image of those who move as criminals has been evident in other discourses, too. In England, literary discourses crystallized around the image of those labeled as "Gypsy," presenting them as both "beauty" and "beast." In India, this duplicitous image is not so clearly defined; instead, Indian literature that I surveyed for this article appears rich in tropes persistently describing nomads close to the European "beastly" image.

Thus, in India and England the label of "Gypsy" became associated with those who were thought to be both "nomads" and "criminals." This association persisted for centuries. For example, as recently as in 2010, communities such as the Yerukula were called by academics at Andhra University "a gypsy tribe, bearing an evil reputation as professional criminals" (Prakash and Sudhakar 2010, 21). In the west, the image of those labeled as "Gypsy" is still at times associated with criminality and nomadism. For example, on February 15, 2017, a news channel broadcasted: "authorities are looking for three crooks, considered part of a traveling Gypsy crime group, … [who] are historically known for committing these types of distraction crimes, as well as violent crimes."[17]

17 Peter D'Oench. 2017. "'Traveling Gypsy Crime Group' Targeting Elderly in Hialeah." *CBS Miami,* February 15. http://miami.cbslocal.com/2017/02/15/elderly-targeted-in-scams-by-traveling-gypsy-crime-group.

The similarities between the criminal descriptions of mobile communities are remarkable in establishing the connection among targeted groups. These transcontinental resemblances stand as political evidence of how groups who did not want to be brought to the heel of the central government have been treated. This further highlights a specific form of political "othering," an all-too-common tendency to "Orientalize" those who are different, a collective inclination to define who is "other."

Further research is required, particularly in regard to investigating the intersection of notions such as "wanderer," "nomad," "thug," "Gypsy," and "criminal" – both in larger European and Asian texts. This could be supplemented by detailed theoretical discussions of the "Gypsy" categorization in South Asia in relation with colonial influence. While this article looks at how legal and literary discourses lead to the criminalization of those who move, it is important to further investigate how these discourses operated (or not) in practice. Further research on these practices would sharpen our understanding of how mechanisms of criminalization operate on the ground. Moreover, an in-depth investigation of the diverse and ever-changing categorization of those who move within the Indian subcontinent would reveal and expose the importance of caste and the ways in which various administrative power systems operated and instrumentalized this hierarchy. Unfortunately, these areas are beyond the scope of this article, which hopefully will stand as an incentive to further investigation on both English (and European) and Indian legal and literary discourses into how the label of "nomadism" has been historically linked to "criminality," and often associated to those labeled as "Gypsy." This intersection is a powerful social construction with a long, deep, and painful legacy, which continues to legitimize discrimination.

Today, across England and India, most of those who are labeled as "Gypsy" live at the margins of their societies, often with limited access to education, employment, and healthcare opportunities. While some have distinguished themselves socially and economically, many live in abject poverty, struggling to survive conditions such as the lack of running water and electricity. These conditions also are fueled by systematic persecutions, visible in numerous police acts. While identity is dialogical (i.e., created both by communities and outsiders), and communities on the ground have agency in defining the way they are seen by others, labeling communities as "criminal" leads to their marginalization. Without a commitment to expose and change legal and literary discourses, the legacy of in-born criminality is bound to lurk in the shadows for years to come.

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Book review by

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As an Eastern European migrant in London, I picked up Reni Eddo-Lodge's book to learn more about black history in Britain. I was excited to read a personal account of experiences and issues facing young black women in contemporary British society. As a white female immigrant from a less prosperous part of Europe, I have been at the receiving end of negative stereotypes: "Do you work as a cleaning lady?" is a question I have heard countless times, along with patronizing attitudes ("You're hardworking people who add to our economy so you can stay after Brexit."), and sometimes nothing less than unvarnished racism. Thus, to read another woman's account of belonging to a visible historically marginalized group was an important lesson and frankly a great read. The provocative title immediately gets a reaction and, as later on explained by Eddo-Lodge, does not mean she is unwilling to talk about race issues: she just wants to do it on her own terms.

In this award-winning book[1] Eddo-Lodge provides a comprehensive overview of black history in Britain, intermingling historical facts with her own experiences and thoughts and details from the lives of black migrants. It is an emotionally charged insight into the life of the Black Minority Ethnic (BME) community in Britain, especially in the multicultural giant that is London. The book's first two chapters, **Histories** and **The System**, outline the history of African and Caribbean migration to the UK and the interconnected systems of power and race that still guide contemporary society. In her account, Eddo-Lodge does not shy away from pointing out rampant racism and xenophobia present since the onset of significant black migration to the country. Despite receiving many newcomers from former colonies and Commonwealth countries from the 1950s to the 1970s, Britain is depicted as an unwelcoming land that merely tolerated its black labour force. Societal change, such as the rise of migration, has brought about increased racial awareness and a shift toward more positive attitudes. Nevertheless, the author argues that, in spite of some superficial changes, systemic racism is embedded deeply in British society. She devotes an entire chapter to **What is White Privilege?,** delving into a complex notion that recently has underlined many debates about racism. The next chapter, **The Fear of a Black Planet**, starts with the now infamous speech by Enoch Powell in which he declared that "In this country in fifteen or twenty years' time, the black man will have the whip hand over the white man" (117). Eddo-Lodge skillfully points out contemporary examples of the eponymous fear of a black planet, citing her conversation with the politician Nick Griffin and the xenophobia prevalent in post-Brexit referendum UK. Chapters 5, **The Feminism Question**, deals with intersections of racism with other identity categories such as gender and economic background. The writer evaluates her own experiences as a member of feminist movements that did not take into account race and its implications for women of colour. She tackles the questions of subjectivity of black female bodies in media and culture, or lack of it thereof, the visibility of black feminists and their additions to the field of Feminist Studies. In **Race and Class,** issues of poverty and neglect in predominantly coloured areas come to the forefront, as well as the prevalent stereotype of working class as being mostly white. Gentrification, internal class divisions, and the struggles to reposition oneself on the social ladder dominate this part of the book. The closing chapter, **There's No Justice, There's Just Us**, provides not

1 Winner of Foyles Non-Fiction Book of the Year, Blackwell's Non-Fiction Book of the Year, winner of the Jhalak Prize, and longlisted for the Baillie Gifford Prize for Non-Fiction among others.

only a neat summary of the destructive power of systemic racism but also puts forward ideas and propositions of how we can fight it. Eddo-Lodge encourages her readers to take action, to stop the blatant passivity in the face of racism, even if it is something as small "(…) as chipping away at the warped power relation in your workplace" (224).

Having said that, a lack of rigour in language use poses questions about what the author means by "immigrants" and "migration," sometimes limiting these words to include only minorities of colour, at other times mentioning other ethnicities and nationalities in passing. While minor, in the wider context of a highly mixed multi-identity Britain, it might seem imprecise or even exclusionary. Consequently, her reasoning of why she no longer talks about race to white people becomes repetitive, just scratching the surface and failing to gain a deeper understanding of the patterns of behaviour that govern it. She often relies on generalizations that tend to divide the society into two groups – people of colour and white people – reducing a complex situation into simplified binary elements. Navigating the narrative in which we essentialize and label certain groups is tricky and laden with boobytraps. It could be argued that *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People about Race* inadvertently falls into such a trap, losing sight of the bigger picture, with its optics mostly aimed at the black community in London. The writer makes an effort to include other ethnic minorities and more recent European and Eastern European migration, but the issue remains unexplored and the idea of xeno-racism does not appear at all. The latter term is a relatively new concept, as explained by Liz Fekete (2001), who quotes A. Sivanandan: xeno-racism is

> (…) a racism that is not just directed at those with darker skins, from the former colonial territories, but at the newer categories of the displaced, the dispossessed and the uprooted, who are beating at Western Europe's doors, the Europe that helped to displace them in the first place. It is a racism, that is, that cannot be colour-coded, directed as it is at poor whites as well, and is therefore passed off as xenophobia, a 'natural' fear of strangers.

In this broader understanding of racism with all its socio-political implications, it is hard not to think of members of the Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller (GRT) community, who even today are treated as third-class citizens. It was, therefore, disappointing not to find any mention of GRT communities, especially with the emergence of popular visual representations like *Big Fat Gypsy Wedding* which were stigmatizing and sensationalist. It would be worthwhile for Eddo-Lodge to take more time to explore the parallels between the experiences of various ethnic groups living in Britain and focus more on the shared traits rather than divisions among these various communities.

Overall, the book presents a convincing portrait of race issues in Britain, and it reads easily due to the author's writing and ability to weave together various narratives. It is a personal account of being Black, rooted in Eddo-Lodge's own experiences and stemming from her need to add to the existing debate, and as such, it naturally privileges the author's stance and point of view. It is neither meant to be a historical epigraph nor aims to be a study of racism in the UK (nor a Brexit analysis), and when read with an open mind it provides an invaluable account of xenophobia, migration history, and race politics in contemporary Britain. An extra chapter dedicated to xeno-racism, especially in the context

of GRT people, would be a welcome addition in the future and would provide a more nuanced view of the race question. Scholars working within and across fields such as contemporary literature, race, and European studies will most certainly find this an inspiring read, and if wanting more, Eddo-Lodge has now launched a series of podcasts about race and racism in the UK.

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Beck and Ivasiuc's *Roma Activism: Reimagining Power and Knowledge* is a timely addition to the discipline of Romani Studies as the wider Romani movement undergoes a paradigm shift. The book starts powerfully with a violent story about an attack on Roma in the Romanian county of Harghita on March 31, 2017; subsequently, it documents the silence of the academy in the aftermath as well as the information collected by other actors. The book's message is clear from the outset – academia should not detach itself from activism – and the book itself is written in a space between research and activism, thus creating a place for reflexivity in both. Reflexivity is argued here to be a vital means through which "learned and unlearned lessons" in research and activism can be examined both to reveal new forms of being political and to upset assumptions about past, present, and future knowledge production.

Dedicated to Nicolae Gheorghe (1946–2013), the anthology aims to unsettle its readership by challenging norms in data production and assumptions about the positions of Roma within the discipline of Romani Studies and the wider Romani political movement. It argues for future research to focus on reflective ethnographic and participatory methods, positioning the local at its heart and moving beyond dichotomies defining the current debates which construct scholarship and activism as opposing poles, i.e., as other binary understandings of good versus bad activism or NGOs (nongovernmental organizations) versus the state.

1. Renewing Methods, Renewing Sites

Section 1 argues that ethnography and anthropo-sociological research are a means of escaping the frequently reductionist and binary image of activism. It is argued that ethnographic research allows for an inquiry into activism and activists' work in relation to and beyond its ambivalences and contradictions which can only be understood in the context of broader histories of political and local activism. According to this argument, the local is the key site through which research must be rooted – alongside national or transnational contexts – while avoiding the local being romanticized as a unique or "authentic place" of mobilization.

Chapter 1 is a telling starting point when Van Baar examines the nexus between research and activism by mapping the development of the Romani social movement in and beyond Europe. In doing so, he draws out three phases of development which also show the emergence of "nongovernmental" as a distinct category of rule and research: (1) the emergence of CSOs (civil society organizations) funded by Western donors and IGOs (international governing organizations); (2) these organizations becoming "professionalized" and adapting to "well-defined funding streams," while forfeiting their independence in adapting to this new power relationship (known as the emergence of the "Gypsy industry" (e.g., see Rostas 2009); and (3) the emergence of an "ethnic turn" whereby Roma integration strategies became the focus of policymaking. Van Baar opts, as he has done previously (2011), to move beyond the binary "success" or "failure" model of understanding Romani activism while critically sketching out its development.

Van Baar advocates for an ethnographic research on activism and anthropo-sociology (a sociological approach to studying race by anthropological methods) of Roma-related activism which focuses on the life histories of activists and unveils their movement between positions and sites. This is a means to escape the binary lens through which activism often is presented as either a "bottom-up" grass-roots movement

or a "top-down" movement focused on universalizing activism and imposing practices, frames, and vocabularies which are foreign to Roma "culture."

Chapter 2 displays the type of ethnographic approach called for by Van Baar. Chirițoiu's chapter makes an in-depth analysis of activists' reaction to the 1993 Hădăreni conflict, in particular the activism of Nicolae Gheorghe that shaped the agenda surrounding the case. She contextualizes this case as being symptomatic of the post-socialist Romani movement which was characterized by an estrangement from the local due to a push to focus on "universalising human rights vocabularies." This focus, she argues, is based on international government organizations' pursuit of political recognition and engagement or political relevance by constructing antagonistic meanings for events. Chirițoiu's ethnographically informed analysis returns the nuanced "local" site to the forefront and challenges the problematic "victimhood" narrative produced by activists in contrast to "local knowledge." The events at Hădăreni are presented as a "cautionary tale of [e]arly Romani activism" rather than as an evaluation of policy intervention. It also shows the clear tensions and contradictions between parallel accounts on different levels of the case: local, national, and international (Chirițoiu 2018, 51).

In Chapter 3 Fosztó takes up the local again, this time focusing on two Hungarian cases. First, he discusses two conflicts between local groups in Harghita County in the summer of 2009. Both conflicts involved fighting among local Roma and Hungarians. Based on his own experiences working for an NGO at the time, he argues that the reaction of pro-Roma activists and researchers (to adopt a watchdog-like approach) were not constructed with the nuanced local experience in mind, were misguided, and were not welcomed by locals. The second case that he examines, again from personal experience, focuses on debates over the use of the term *Rom/țigan*. In this section he recounts a contentious debate between activists and researchers from 2009 to 2011 in both intimate and public forums.

The two different cases are linked together by Fosztó's underlying argument for activism to maintain dialogue with local forms of knowledge. This might have resulted in a less misguided physical reaction of researchers and activists in the first instance, while it would allow for individual self-identification of Roma in the second. Moreover, he examines the complicated nature of activism due to the range of actors, agendas, and power relations at play. This chapter considers the state and NGOs beyond a common binary assumption that sees them in opposition. They are analyzed as actors in continuous interaction and often forced (or not) to work together. Fosztó sees no researcher, activist, or cause as neutral or static, and this chapter argues for more space both for the self-identification of Roma and also for researchers to position themselves on a spectrum between activist and critical observer "from the margins" wherever they see fit. This notion unsettles the idea of a binary understanding of positionality for researchers as observers or activists. Moreover, it ties to Van Baar's earlier demand for anthropo-sociological analysis to account for the relational role of activists defined by interactions, often bound to situations and "taking positions."

2. Renewing Epistemologies

Three chapters authored by Ryder, Kóczé, and Ivasiuc, respectively, look beyond the literature of Romani Studies as they address wider issues of power relations within knowledge-production institutions, with

the purpose of shifting perspectives and enabling renewal in scholarship "better attuned to activist engagement." A link between the authors can be drawn through their attempts to capture the importance of understanding the nexus of knowledge and the environment in which it is created.

Andrew Ryder begins this section with an analysis of the ways in which an increasing number of Romani scholars in the academy have challenged established power hierarchies and notions of objective or neutral knowledge production and therefore unsettled hierarchies within Romani studies. He encourages the use of ethnographic methods and anthropology as a discipline which can be used to meet emancipatory goals.

Ryder uses a fictionalized dialogue between two researchers traveling on a flight to demonstrate the division he sees in Romani studies between scientism, traditionally connected to normative assumptions and researchers as "objective" observers, and critical research, representing more reflective approaches which consider data production as occurring within existing power structures. Such a presentation is uncommon in academic writing, but here it works to demonstrate the points being raised by these two camps and exemplifies the inventive approaches he argues must be encouraged in the academy. He believes that academics should appreciate the value of disagreement as an engine of knowledge production and that "paradigm change" comes at the sharpest point of conflict between an old and new conceptual world view; thus Romani Studies may be witnessing a revolution in which more participatory and collaborative relationships with the researched and the rise of Roma intellectuals at the fore of the discipline are to be expected. Thus, he stresses the importance of the relationship and dialogue between the "scientific" or the status quo and more critical research.

Chapter 5 by Angéla Kóczé is also a reaction to institutional debates and aims to challenge ideas that academic research is "objective" and devoid of power relations. Knowledge cannot be detached from the context of its production and is therefore generated in a locus "composed of social fabric rife with power struggles." Kóczé uses autoethnographic methods to examine her own experience of creating a place for herself in the academy, a place where she should "not exist" (Ivasiuc 2018a, 13) – both as a woman and as Roma. She succeeds in unsettling a readership accustomed to seeing Roma as an object of research by reflecting on her position within knowledge production. Drawing on feminist and critical race theory, with an eloquence typical of her work, Kóczé argues for the need for race rather than ethnicity as a lens through which to analyze how processes of inferiorization are imposed on Roma. Her chapter marks a powerful challenge to mainstream Romani studies, the wider academy's entrenched power imbalances, and the racist and sexist epistemologies which have been challenged elsewhere by Romani and black feminist scholars such as Patricia Hill Collins, bell hooks, Audre Lorde, Angela Y. Davis, and Kimberlé W. Crenshaw (Kóczé 2018, 114).

Co-editor Ana Ivasiuc closes the second section with a personal ethnography drawn from her experiences as a research coordinator for a Romani NGO. Her analysis unpicks the way in which a narrative of victimhood and entrapment is produced through "militant advocacy discourses" and "gray literature." In this narrative Roma are constructed as passive victims to better fit the expectations and existing narratives within the machinery of international development and therefore to increase the chances of receiving funding. Focusing on why this happens, and by whom it is done, Ivasiuc shows the ways in which the focus on the deficits of Roma is a form of "orientalism sustaining paternalistic policy interventions and feeding the wider discursive needs of the development apparatus" (Ivasiuc 2018a, 15).

3. Renewing Activisms

The final section takes the volume's earlier arguments and explores how activism may be renewed in a more practical sense. It thus connects to the question posed by Ivasiuc in Chapter 6: "(how) is it possible, precisely from within the 'anti-politics machine' of development (Ferguson 1994) to maintain political relevance and open up new spaces for a less ambivalent activism?" (Ivasiuc 2018b, 139).

Margaret Greenfields opens this section by arguing that high-quality research and activism for the empowerment of Roma is best placed to produce real change if it engages more specifically with policy recommendations. She argues that scholars with direct expertise in policymaking are hard to come by, despite the high number of academics who act as policy consultants. This argument is built upon her analysis of publication trends and an increase in the number of members of the European Academic Network of Romani Studies. According to this analysis, researchers in disciplines such as sociology and anthropology far outnumber those with expertise in practical policymaking domains. Greenfields argues that scholars and activists who can better "package" their knowledge for policymakers will be more capable of influencing material change in the lives of Roma and avoiding the perpetuation of trends around unnuanced narratives (e.g., victimhood) that portray Roma as a disempowered group. Thus, she argues that policy advice using "models that are familiar to the policy community" (Greenfields 2018, 156) is crucial for opening up the terrain of practical research activism and calls for a collaborative research design that collaborates both with the community and policymakers.

Danielle V. Schoon explores the reliance on universal narratives in Roma activism through her examination of Turkish *Romanlar* who exemplify a stark alternative to European forms of identity politics activism. She places this within the historical Turkish context where Romanlar claimed equality based on a shared belief in Islam rather than ethnic, linguistic, or cultural differences – which are viewed as illegitimate and a threat to nation building in Turkey. Thus, poverty and class are central to the policy claims of *Roman*[1] associations rather than cultural differences. This case study shows that there is an alternative to the focus on minority rights and may compel scholars and activists to rethink the categories upon which European Romani activism has been built, including "civil society" which works to reconfigure rather than dissolve existing power relations.

Anna Mirga-Kruszelnicka closes the volume with the suggestion that the epitome of renewed activism in the Romani movement can be seen as the Romani Youth movement. Her argument echoes Van Baar in her discussion of the shift from grass-roots level activism (which has lost much of its funding) to the professionalization of organizations that create a dynamic in which existing hierarchies and power relations are either replaced or reinforced rather than diminished. The Romani Youth movement represents a new strand of Romani activism that has unsettled dominant trends in activism around victimhood and subalternity by focusing on empowerment, self-esteem, and ethnic pride. Thus, the

1 Schoon uses the "Turkish *Roman* (singular or adjective) to refer to urban and politically active Roma in Turkey, as that is the term they use to refer to themselves." *Roma* or *Romani* is used by Schoon to refer to a global Romani movement or Roma living in Europe (Schoon 2018, 190, fn 1).

book ends with a hopeful message about the possibility for a rejuvenation of Roma activism through the emergence of a Roma Youth movement.

Overall, *Romani Activism* does what the best academic work should do: it engages the reader from start to finish while challenging the binaries too often accepted as the status quo. The cohesion among the authors of this volume builds a strong case for the future of Romani Studies and Romani activism. Each chapter embodies the reflective approaches and spirit being proposed by the volume as a whole, leaving little ambiguity for the reader. More conservative positions within this debate over the future of the discipline and movement are alluded to and at times referenced directly, and readers seeking direct exposure to establishment voices will be required to look elsewhere.

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Accessorizing (with) "Gypsyness" in the Twenty-first Century: Cultural Appropriations in the Fashion Industry

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Abstract

Prefaced with a brief discussion of representation and cultural appropriation, this article examines how the fashion industry recycles and revamps hackneyed tropes that cast Roma into narratives of wanderlust, mystique, and transgression. Such tropes perpetuate epistemic injustice, compromise understandings of Roma and their culture(s) within non-member groups, and curtail Roma designers' rhetorical agency. I flesh out the discussion with the case of Mexican American designer Rio Uribe and his line Gypsy Sport and argue that, despite Uribe's investment in social justice and much touted effort toward inclusiveness, he fails to acknowledge the unethical and harmful dimensions of his work. I turn to the fashion studio Romani Design (founded by Hungarian Roma designers Erika and Helena Varga) as an example of Roma initiatives that counter appropriative practices through reclaiming the heritage for self-representation and empowerment, then envision ways of intervening in the fashion industry's co-option and misuse of Roma's cultural heritage.

Keywords

- Representation
- Cultural appropriation
- Fashion industry
- Rhetorical agency

Introduction

This article examines how, under the guise of sartorial[1] narratives of resistance or multicultural celebrations, the fashion industry commodifies and markets "Gypsyness" in ways that produce and perpetuate epistemic injustice. Although this article focuses on the current historical moment and, within it, on the work of only a few designers (with a focus on Rio Uribe's work), the hope is that these discussions will generate interest in more comprehensive analyses of the fashion industry's history of (mis-) representation and appropriation of Roma and Romani culture, and in comparative studies that engage with scholarship that pursues similar work but within the context of Native American, African American, Aboriginal, and other minority cultures.[2]

After clarifying the usage of key terms and considering the ubiquity of "Gypsy" stereotypes in various artistic media (section one), the article provides an overview of critical stances on cultural appropriation and establishes the author's position (section two) before illustrating how and to what end the fashion industry uses appropriative practices in "Gypsy"-inspired collections (section three). In section four, I narrow my focus to one designer, Rio Uribe, whose Gypsy Sport line has occupied the spotlight on runways at New York Fashion Week and internationally, to popular and critical acclaim. I selected Uribe not only because of his high visibility (which means an increased circulation of the ideas that his work promotes) but also because his stance is particularly disheartening. Unlike other non-Roma designers, he appears invested in social justice and produces collections that have potential to contest the hegemonic powers of representation from within and to intervene in the industry's harmful co-option of "Gypsy" tropes. However, the potential is unrealized. Uribe's failure to even acknowledge the unethical dimension of his "Gypsy" branding speaks also to the embeddedness of essentialist thinking, the power of stereotypes, and the complexity of the work ahead as we envision change. In the penultimate section, I discuss the fashion studio Romani Design (Hungary) as an example of Roma initiatives that counter appropriative practices through reclaiming the heritage for self-representation and empowerment. The brief conclusion (section six) outlines some possibilities for intervening in the fashion industry's co-option and misuse of Roma's cultural heritage.

Notes on the title and nomenclature: The article's title draws on Anjali Vats' "Racechange Is the New Black: Racial Accessorizing and Racial Tourism in High Fashion as Constraints on Rhetorical Agency" (Vats 2014) and on Rio Uribe's comment, "Fashion is just an accessory to what is really happening" (as quoted in Katz 2017). Without quotation marks, the word Gypsy honors various groups' and individuals' choice of this form of self-identification and self-ascription. The use of quotation marks in "Gypsy" signals *gadje* (i.e., non-Roma) appropriation and (mis-)use, and draws attention to the perpetuation of the misnomer. "Gypsyness" refers to *gadje*-authored representations of Gypsies and Roma that have been formed

1 Derived from the Latin noun *sartor,* which translates as "tailor," "sartorial" means "of or relating to a tailor or tailored clothes; broadly: of or relating to clothes" (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed., 2012).

2 Richard A. Rogers (2006, 486) acknowledges the preponderance of "studies on appropriations of Native American cultures (e.g., Black 2002; Churchill 1994; Kadish 2004; Ono & Buescher 2001; Torgovnick 1996; Whitt 1995)."

through practices that homogenize, essentialize, stereotype, and often also fetishize and naturalize real or perceived difference. Exonymic representations of "Gypsies" have circulated for centuries across cultures and continents and have been reinscribed and disseminated through art, entertainment, literature, music, and now social media.[3] Whether exoticizing or vilifying,[4] such representations have operated together toward sustaining individual and national fantasies while also enabling *gadje* to project their fears and justify discriminatory practices. Although serving different purposes during various historical periods and in various geopolitical contexts, linguistic and visual romanticizations have generally tended to capitalize on motifs associated with clothing (sumptuous, vibrant), occupation (music, dance, "black arts"), and position (nomadic, at the periphery, outside "norms," in sync with nature). Formulaic representations encode modes of being that are employed to contrast with those of the *gadje* in enviable, threatening, or ambivalent ways. An illuminating discussion of how pictorial representations have responded to changing contexts is provided by Sarah Carmona's (2018) analysis of Romani iconography in 13 works from the Louvre and Prado collections. She notes that,

> While until the sixteenth century Romani dress and regalia were used inter alia to portray biblical figures known for their hermeneutic and prophetic gifts, from the second half of the sixteenth century, and especially with the repeated use of the fortuneteller by Caravaggio and his followers, the images of Bohemians, Gypsies, or Tsigane gradually turned into incarnations of vice, theft, and alienating exteriority. Later, when Romanticism and then Orientalism emerged as systems of thought and representation, revealing how the West perceived the Other, the Romani figure became sexualized and the female body objectified. What was previously fantasy or even the reviled norm became the reference through "deethnicization" (Carmona 2018, 146–147).

This "deethnicization" and orientalizing of the Romani figure that gained momentum during the Romantic period created optimum conditions for cultural appropriation, a process that continues, to increased detrimental effects, into the twenty-first century.

1. On Cultural Appropriation

Cultural appropriation may be defined broadly as the taking of artifacts, cultural expressions, genres, history, intellectual property, rituals, symbols, or technologies that belong to a culture that is not one's own (Ziff and Rao 1997, 1–3; Rogers 2006, 474). *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (11th edition, 2012) offers two definitions of the verb "to appropriate" (which derives from the Latin "appropriare," meaning "to make one's own") on which most conceptualizations (both popular and theoretical) rely, and both underscore the unethical and exploitative dimensions of the practice: "to take exclusive possession

3 For analyses of such representations see Beaudoin (2015), Nord (2006), and the essays in the volume edited by Glajar and Radulescu (2008).

4 See Stuart Hall's (1997) discussion of the "binary structure of the stereotype" that forces the stereotyped into shuttling between extreme opposites, and at times having to also inhabit both extremes at once (263).

of" and "to take or make use of without authority or right." Along these lines, Helene Shugart (1997) suggests that, "technically, appropriation refers to any instance in which means commonly associated with and/or perceived as belonging to another *are used to further one's own ends*. Any instance in which a group borrows or imitates the strategies of another – *even when the tactic is not intended to deconstruct or distort the other's meanings and experiences* – thus would constitute appropriation" (Shugart 1997, 210–211, italics mine). According to James O. Young (2010), it may include the representation of practices by outsiders, non-members' use of artistic elements specific to a cultural group, and the possession and use of cultural artifacts by non-members or culturally non-affiliated institutions (Young 2010, 135–46).

An appropriative act has implications that depend on numerous factors, including degree and scope, the power relations within which the process takes place, and the kind of epistemic knowledge it produces. Richard A. Rogers (2006) proposes that cultural appropriation is involved "in the assimilation and exploitation of marginalized and colonized cultures" as well as "in the survival of subordinated cultures and their resistance to dominant cultures" (474), and identifies four categories, according to the conditions (cultural, economic, historical, political, social) under which acts of appropriation occur:

1. Cultural exchange: the reciprocal exchange of artifacts, genres, rituals, symbols, and/or technologies between cultures with roughly equal levels of power.
2. Cultural dominance: the use of elements of a dominant culture by members of a subordinated culture in a context in which the dominant culture has been imposed onto the subordinated culture, including appropriations that enact resistance.
3. Cultural exploitation: the appropriation of elements of a subordinated culture by a dominant culture without substantive reciprocity, permission, and/or compensation.
4. Transculturation: cultural elements created from and/or by multiple cultures, such that identification of a single originating culture is problematic, for example, multiple cultural appropriations structured in the dynamics of globalization and transnational capitalism creating hybrid forms (Rogers 2006, 477).

According to Rogers, certain circumstances make appropriation benign or mutually beneficial (see the first category) while others might make it both harmful and unavoidable (see the second category), such as when minorities are coerced or incentivized into adopting the majority's culture as they negotiate their degree of assimilation into mainstream society; they might do it for survival (Clifford 1988), psychological compensation (Radway 1984), and/or opposition (Shugart 1997; Harold 2004).[5] Rogers' fourth category, transculturation, "involves cultural elements created through appropriations from and by multiple cultures such that identification of a single originating culture is problematic" (490). He sees this paradigm as having emerged from a set of fairly new conditions (such as globalization, neo-imperialism, postcolonialism, postmodernism). While retaining and making visible the implications of unequal power of cultural dominance and exploitation, Rogers contends that this fourth category foregrounds the inevitable hybridity of new cultural forms (491–493). Though relevant to other contexts, the transcultural paradigm is not particularly useful to this analysis, as it downplays the damaging effects

5 References acknowledged in Rogers 2006, 483.

of appropriation; however, some of its underlying ideas will prove useful to my discussion of Romani Design. Rogers' third category, "cultural exploitation," captures most aptly the conditions within which my arguments operate, so I will return to it in the upcoming sections.

In their introduction to the edited collection *Borrowed Power: Essays on Cultural Appropriation*, Bruce Ziff and Pratima V. Rao (1997) identify four concerns with cultural appropriation. Their first is with the "cultural degradation" and other "palpable damage" that results from erroneous or flawed renditions of the appropriated culture (9). They underscore the corrosive effects on the exploited culture, especially when the latter's preservation or self-mobilization relies heavily "on the construction of a strong cultural identity" (11). Ziff and Rao's second concern targets "the preservation of cultural goods as valuable objects" (12). They posit that cultural representations need to be understood in their original settings, as their meaning is intimately related to these contexts (12–13) and that "appropriative practices could undermine attempts at preservation" (14).

The third concern is with "the deprivation of material advantage" minority cultures experience when appropriators reap the financial benefits (14–15). A fourth concern is with the failure of appropriators to "recognize sovereign claims" (15) that would, in an ideal justice system, enable minority cultures to prevent what they perceive as cultural theft.[6]

My position aligns with that of cultural critics who see cultural appropriation as primarily harmful (Shugart 1997; Ziff and Rao 1997; Ono and Buescher 2001; Fricker 2007; Maitra 2009; Dotson 2011). As my following discussions suggest, the effects are particularly pernicious when the appropriators, taking advantage of a minority group's socio-economic vulnerabilities and limited political agency, proceed without "substantive reciprocity," without being granted permission, and without providing compensation (Rogers 2006, 477).

2. Representation and Cultural Appropriation in the Fashion Industry

The topic of appropriation of Romani culture has been addressed by other scholars, especially in the context of music (Malvinni 2004; Helbig 2009; Silverman 2012, 2015), but to my knowledge no study has been produced on appropriative practices in the fashion industry. One might understandably question this article's attention to sartorial matters, especially in light of other, more pressing concerns with systemic structural injustice. I would suggest, in response, that top-down reforms, without simultaneous efforts to challenge and change popular perceptions of Roma, are not only unlikely to yield the most desirable long-term results but that they could fuel populist opposition. At the same time, altering mainstream perceptions of underrepresented groups (especially when social interactions with these groups are limited) requires concerted efforts that branch into the areas of education, social reform, and grass-roots advocacy. The

6 Ziff and Rao exemplify this point with Aboriginal laws and rule-systems that delineate the terms of their ownership of symbols, rituals, stories, and other cultural elements, though such sovereign claims are generally discounted in courts of law that represent dominant interests and do not share the same views on intellectual property.

challenge is compounded by the considerable functions the entertainment media, music, and various other forms of popular culture play in shaping, sustaining, and exploiting reductive views of difference (see Lee et el. 2009; Arendt and Northup 2015). This, in turn, is complicated by the fact that what these industries produce is in large part a response to assessed or estimated "market demands." They recognize otherness as a compelling object of representation but are not particularly invested in understanding the mechanisms that power this fascination or its ethical implications. It is not in the entertainment industry's interest to wonder, with Stuart Hall (1997), about "the repertoires or regimes of representation" on which the industry draws when representing "difference," or to ask "Why does 'difference' matter?" or "[H]ow is the representation of 'difference' linked with questions of power?" (259). To seek answers to these questions means to be willing to assume responsibility over the meanings produced through representation.

In his discussion of stereotyping as a signifying practice that "reduces, essentializes, naturalizes, and fixes 'difference,'" Stuart Hall (1997) underscores the symbolic power of representation and its ability to "mark, assign, and classify" as well as to "ritualize expulsion" (259). Such power is particularly insidious as it works at two levels that might seem mutually exclusive but that in fact work in tandem – one at the conscious level and the other at the unconscious or suppressed level. As Hall (1997) insists,

> stereotypes refer as much to what is imagined in fantasy as to what is perceived as 'real.' (…) [W]hat is visually produced, by the practice of representation, is only half of the story. The other half – the deeper meaning – lies in *what is not being said, but is being fantasized, what is being implied but cannot be shown* (263).

This "binary structure of the stereotype" (*ibid*. 262) is closely connected to the ambivalence that governs approaches to "difference." As Hall encapsulates it, while necessary "for the production of meaning, the formation of language and culture, for social identities and a subjective sense of the self as a sexed subject," "difference" is at the same time perceived as "threatening, a site of danger, of negative feelings, of splitting, hostility and aggression toward the 'Other'" (*ibid*. 238).

Therefore, *how* difference is used by media and the entertainment industry is a fundamentally ethical concern. This bears particular relevance to the case of Roma, about whose history, heterogeneity, and real (i.e., non-discursive) presence in the world non-Roma have limited knowledge, especially in the United States. In an interview with Paul Gilroy and Lizbeth Goodman, Stuart Hall reflects on this by suggesting that "[i]n a sense, what the society knows about race [and ethnicity] and what it feels about race [and ethnicity] do not exist outside of the way in which those subjects are represented in the media"[7] (as quoted in Goodman 1992, 108). Julianna Beaudoin (2015) too has observed that,

> [w]hen there is a vacuum of accurate information on Romani realities, compounded by historic and mythical "Gypsy" stereotypes, entertainment media fills a factual void; in this

7 That Hall has both race and ethnicity in mind here is revealed in his next sentence, where he suggests that analyses of media can provide "profound insight into the shifting relations that are going on around race and ethnicity at that moment" (as quoted in Goodman 1992, 108).

> way, minor characters, or even fleeting references in fictional shows end up serving as the basis for understanding and categorizing an entire ethnicity (315).

Unfortunately, as consumers of culture, we often cannibalize the narratives we are served without questioning why and how they are produced, what purpose they serve, and how we might find ourselves replicating them in real-life situations. In fact, the more innocuous or depoliticized an art or entertainment form appears, the more insidious, in many cases, is its power to shape public consciousness.[8] Clothing has functioned as one of the most commodified identity signifiers in constructions of "Gypsyness" in arts and literature, and the fashion industry, attuned to the "visceral impact" visual stereotypes can exert on judgment (Fricker 2007, 37), has been quick to exploit their associations as it creates and exports its own sartorial tropes for commercial purposes.

Through appropriative acts that invoke or recycle ossified narratives of mystique, primitivism, transgression, or wanderlust found in artistic, cinematic, journalistic, and literary representations, as well as in pop culture and various media outlets, and that have, over the centuries, fueled personal or collective fantasies, the fashion industry has perpetuated essentialized or distorted views that compromise acceptable understandings of Roma and their culture(s) within non-member groups. In his discussion of appropriation as cultural exploitation, Rogers (2006) reminds us that the process of commodification, "by abstracting the value of a cultural element, necessarily removes that element from its native context, changing its meaning and function and raising concerns about cultural degradation," and further draws attention to how, "[i]n fetishizing and reifying 'artificial' meanings onto the elements of living cultures, the social relations and history involved in that act of commodification are obscured and neocolonial relations justified" (488). Wittingly or out of ignorance, designers producing "Gypsy-inspired" collections discount the cultural contexts from which they "lift" them and in which the appropriated material plays substantially different functions. They do so exploitatively, by profiting from the imbalance of power within which these generally non-mutual transactions operate. Perhaps equally important, by propagating stereotypes and fetishized notions of "Gypsyness," the fashion industry contributes to normalizing them, thus disincentivizing audiences from seeking – or even recognizing the legitimacy of – alternative narratives and discourses, such as those authored by Roma about their histories and lived experiences.

3. The Rhetors[9] of the Fashion Industry and the (Re-)production of "Gypsy" Tropes

The following discussion examines how designers, as main rhetors, articulate their inspiration, and how their work is read, decoded, and disseminated by related rhetors, such as fashion journalists who

8 For a discussion on how images both communicate and produce social knowledge, and on the ideological power of iconic and popular imagery, see Hariman and Lucaites (2007).

9 My use of the word "rhetors" means to position fashion designers and reviewers as "conscious and deliberating agents" who shape discourses and make choices with the express or indirect purpose of influencing audiences (https://www.thoughtco.com/rhetor-definition-1692059).

collaborate in meaning-making as they mediate between the artists' work and audiences while also often serving the interests of the industry. The fashion media's power to shape both discourses and public attitudes through particular agendas (especially since, as already suggested, social realities are increasingly constructed and mediated through interactions with media platforms) is often underestimated, as is fashion critics' "symbiotic relationship" with, and dependence on, fashion business.[10] The analysis will reference a number of designers and fashion houses, and will conclude (in section four) with a discussion of one particular designer, Rio Uribe, and his brand, Gyspy Sport.[11]

The fashion world has made tropes associated with "Gypsies" and "Bohemians"[12] integral to its visions for almost a century, generally by capitalizing on evocative associations with a "free" lifestyle, non-conformism, liberation, and counter-normativity. As an example, in the United States, where by the mid- to late-1960s hippies had displaced beatniks "as the prevalent bohemian culture" (Gore 1999, 77), the bohemian look (floral fabrics, flowing skirts, headscarves, fringes), whose power had been mythologized in unprecedented ways, became central to discourses on rebelliousness and resistance, both in streetwear and high fashion.[13] Over the last two decades, perhaps as a response to global socio-political and cultural changes, we have witnessed a resurgence in the popular imagination of the appropriation of traits associated with "Gypsies" and "Bohemianism." Designers and fashion houses such as Rina Dhaka, Salvadore Ferragamo, Barbara Fialho, Miki Fukai, John Galliano, Gucci, Ralph Lauren, Miuccia Prada, Rio Uribe, and Yohji Yamamoto have incorporated motifs identified as "Gypsy"/"gypsy" by the collection's title, fashion journalists, or other media coverage. Some designers openly have confessed the intent to use "Gypsyness" as marketable currency. At the 2015 London Fashion Week, Indian designer Yana Ngob reportedly declared that, "there's a huge following of boho [short for "bohemian"] and gypsy trends in the UK and I plan on capitalising on the same" (as quoted on redriff.com).

In her review of Greek designer Mary Katrantzou's 2016 London Fashion Week collection, journalist Suzy Menkes remarks that, after hearing that Katrantzou's collection had been inspired by Emir Kusturica's 1988 *Time of the Gypsies*, she "sat down expecting a wild spectacle of colour and pattern" (Menkes 2015a). She admits to being pleasantly surprised: "The fashion miracle of the collection was that the clothes all seemed so streamlined and wearable, however *Mary's magpie, gypsy mind* may have travelled" (*ibid.* 2015a [italics mine]). In her review of Manish Arora's 2016 collection "Romany Rave," which she qualifies as "half Indian, half gypsy," after remarking that "[g]ypsies are believed to have started their pilgrimage

10 For an illuminating discussion of the complicated nature of impartiality, transparency, and ethics in fashion journalism and fashion media, see Johannes Reponen's (2017) "Fashion Journalism Negotiates Ethics" in *Vestoj*. He notes that "while on the one hand fashion journalists are trying to demonstrate their loyalties to their readers through reporting and commenting on fashion, they are at the same time addressing their industry peers who mediate access and control finances" (Reponen 2017: 160).

11 Though traditionally referring to custom-fit/hand-executed, unaffordable clothing, high fashion has come to refer also to fashion houses or designers who create unique and often trend-setting fashions, and Uribe's brand falls into this latter category.

12 Early associations of bohemian(ism) with "Gypsies" have endured in part due to the fashion world's co-option and interchangeable use of the terms; see "bohemian" in Brown (1985) and *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (2018).

13 Designers like Yves Saint Laurent and Roy Halston, for instance, partially resignified the look though class reassignment, with "Gypsyness" figuring not so much as a symbol for mainstream resistance but for a culturally eclectic upper-class elegance.

across the world in India, the designer's home territory," Menkes (2015b) criticizes Arora for making "Romany culture […] look like a kitschy theme, with hippie-de-luxe gilded chiffon dresses sweeping the floor of an underground dive by the river Seine." The critic's push against kitschy representation is laudable. However, how Menkes, a world-renowned and influential fashion journalist and editor for the *International Herald Tribune* and *International Vogue*, reduces Roma to an adjectival modifier connected to the avian realm ("magpie, gypsy mind") is deeply unsettling. Some of the assumptions that appear to shape her assessments are problematic as well as they reveal the entrenchments of essentialized thinking. Thus Katrantsou is praised for harnessing her "magpie, gypsy mind" and streamlining, while Arora, whom Menkes affiliates with Roma by virtue of their shared home territory (which Roma left centuries ago), appears to be reproved on grounds of "inauthenticity."

The deployment of "Gypsyness" as a trope of resistance is barely concealed in *Marie Claire* contributor Kira Gimpel's 2017 article, "For Fashion Snobs: A History of the Bohemian Trend (And Why We Think It's Back Now)," a topical review of the Paris Fashion Week Spring/Summer 2018. After attempting a lay definition of "Bohemian"[14] to reinforce her point, she accompanies it with a reproduction of "Gypsy Bohemian women in Turkey circa 1910." Advocating for "*authentically and ethically produced clothing*" (my italics), she suggests that this comeback is here to "re-inspire us to break away from the conventional and to also do so with our clothing" (Gimpel 2017). The five categories to which she assigns various collections could not be more entrenched in hackneyed tropes: fringes that suggest movement; the "most popular" paisley and floral solid prints; functionality for traveling; a "mix-and-match" attitude that shows nonchalance and "the individuality of the wearer" and, for the fifth, "also widely popular" (sic) "white lace" that shows "fine needlework." This last one might come as a surprise, but it should not. The interplay between non-conformism and propriety (framed by the last category's evocation of domesticity and purity) recalls literary narratives (such as Miguel de Cervantes's novella "La Gitanilla" and D.H. Lawrence's *The Virgin and the Gypsy*) in which Gypsy characters are used as foils who tease their *gadjo* counterparts' desire for transgression. In such narratives "order" (or some version of status quo) is always restored, presumably to alleviate contemporaneous readers' anxieties. Disregarding what Celine, Chloe, Valentino, Valli, and other designers referenced here might have intended with their fringes and paisleys, Gimpel markets "Gypsyness" as a strategy for possessing otherness *while* participating in all kind of oppositional discourses and aligning oneself with trendy narratives on sustainability and authenticity. Her conclusion is telling in this regard: "We know to expect this trend in the stores very soon (…). However, the real question is whether you'll choose to incorporate hand-woven lace and unconventional styling into your look as well as the ideology of these free-spirited pioneers of the trend" (Gimpel 2017).

Designer Katharine Polk's Houghton Bride Spring/Summer 2016 collection exploits the "Gypsy" trope's power to inspire dreaming, spontaneity, romance, and a return to the unspoiled. One reviewer who comments on "[t]he light and airy spirit of a gypsy… a collector of mementos of world travels… shells and beads, stones and crystals… natural beauty remembered in the floral motifs in lace, leather, and chiffon…

14 "The term hints at an unconventional way of life, suggestive of people with shared interests in art, music and even spirituality. Similar to that of a gypsy, it is mysterious and without the intent of extreme fashion" (Gimpel 2017).

delicate crochets and embroideries, ancient handcrafts," urges readers to "indulge in the collection" and "get your daydream on" (Woolf 2016). The online *Fashion Gone Rogue* notes how, "[i]nspired by [the] travels of a gypsy, Polk showed a lineup of bohemian inspired looks including leather, lace and even bold metallic styles," and then adds that, "These looks are perfect for a destination wedding like the beach or even in your own backyard. Loose and flowing silhouettes can be worn by just about any body type" ("Bridal Spring 2016" 2015).

As Anjali Vats (2014) argues, in allowing outsiders to "take difference as they please to enrich their own cultural knowledge and worldly experiences," voyeurism becomes an enterprise with "neocolonial and racial undertones" (125). Besides inviting a voyeuristic consumption of difference, these fashion narratives (as authored by designers and/or reviewers) pitch "Gypsyness" as an available identity that, like ready-made clothes, can be worn or discarded, customized for "just about any body type" and personality, transferrable and multifunctional (e.g., good for both destination weddings or the backyard).

As revealed in these excerpted reviews, through a process of de-historicizing and resignifying, fashion rhetors craft perilous narratives about the relation between identity and performance. In some cases, the notion of performance has been used literally to amplify the semblance of authenticity. From John Galliano's Christian Dior Fall 2003 "exuberant" (Mower 2003) collection that "opened with a group of fiery flamenco gypsies, stamping the runway in flounced skirts, corsetry, and wickedly mannish, form-swathing jackets, their eyes flashing and matches clamped between their teeth" (Mower 2003) to Andres Aquino's 2012 Fashion Week collection that was introduced with Julia Kulakova's Russian Gypsy dances, "Gypsyness" is deployed not just as a discreet signifier but as a strategically packaged "cultural experience." On the surface, this is nothing more than a benign form of entertainment that reminds how the "reality" of the simulacrum has come to usurp the reality of the original in much contemporary culture (see Baudrillard 1983). Yet how are Roma-authored perspectives to compete with "haute-couture" exoticizations such as the one instantiated in Mower's (2003) description – "wickedly mannish," "eyes flashing and matches clamped between their teeth"? These *gadje*-authored performances' implicit promise of an "authentic" experience undermines the rhetorical agency[15] of Roma desiring to represent – and speak – for themselves (even when self-representation takes the form of not speaking).

4. Rio Uribe: Radical Inclusiveness, Exclusive Inclusiveness

As mentioned in my introduction, I chose Rio Uribe as a case study because of his high visibility and subsequent power to shape public attitudes, coupled with his professed investment in social justice. Thus, I found his failure to address or even acknowledge the unethical dimensions of his appropriative acts, starting with the brand's employment of the fraught word "Gypsy," both disheartening and worth scrutinizing.

15 I use "rhetorical agency" to refer to a multiplicity of concepts, including, as Karlyn Kohrs Campbell proposes, "invention, strategies, authorship, institutional power, identity, subjectivity, practices, and subject positions, among others" (quoted in Vats 2016: 116).

While earlier associations with non-conformism remain the dominant mode/strategy, in recent years "Gypsy" tropes have been increasingly deployed along visual rhetorical narratives that challenge dominant and normative thinking on aesthetics, class, ethnicity, gender, race, and more. Among the most acclaimed emerging American designers is the thirty-two-year-old Californian-born Rio Uribe, the 2015 recipient of the prestigious Vogue Fund Award. The founder (in 2012) and creative director of Gypsy Sport, a line known for its "gender-bending sportswear, global nomad, and cool street" looks (Nnadi 2016), Uribe spent his childhood between L.A.'s Koreatown and Mexico and has worked with the luxury fashion house Balenciaga and brands such as DKNY, Opening Ceremony Japan, and *The Hunger Games* film series.

Image 1. Gypsy Sport
1.1(top left), 1.2 (top right), 1.3 (bottom left): Fall 2019 Ready-to-Wear Collection,
photos by Filippo Fior; 1.4. Fall Winter 2018 Ready-to-Wear Collection, photo by Regis Colin Berthelier

Critics have hailed Uribe's "renegade sensibility" and "commitment to smashing fashion convention" (Singer 2016) and called him a "natural-born disruptor" (Nnadi 2017). Uribe has described his line as a "streetwear brand inspired by pop culture and world culture,"[16] a line that is "alternative and global" (as quoted in Katz 2017). He has repeatedly underscored the democratic scope of his vision and the ethics of inclusiveness and responsibility that ground it.[17] In Evan Ross Katz's (2017) view, "[w]hen it comes to organic inclusivity in fashion, Gypsy Sport is both the blueprint and the aspiration." To his merit, Uribe has collaborated with (and donated proceeds to) various organizations that work to curtail homelessness, has done castings for his shows at protests and marches (such as the Women's March and the Muslim Ban March in New York City in 2017) and on the streets, and has built collections that address disenfranchisement, ghettoization, and homelessness. In her review of the guerilla-style show Uribe staged in the spring of 2017 "smack-bang in the middle of the Place de la République" in Paris, fashion critic Chioma Nnadi (2017) praises his daring vision: "Connecting with forward-thinking, disenfranchised millennials at street level has always been part of his raison d'être, and today he showed just how bold and beautiful that global movement can look like."

Reviewing his Fall 2018 Menswear collection, the same critic notes that Uribe's brand creates "a safe zone for personal expression and body positivity" (Nnadi 2018). Along the same lines, in the September 9, 2018 issue of *The New York Times Style Magazine*, Alexander Fury (2018) approaches Uribe's work in relation to queer aesthetics and recent explorations of "the hinterland that lies beyond the boundaries of both hetero- and homonormative conventions" and aligns his vision with that of another handful of designers whose clothes "don't simply suggest androgyny but […] announce a radically inclusive ideology." Other fashion critics such as Maya Singer (2016) have positioned his work within current discourses "about race," as she does in her review of the 2016 New York Fashion Week, where she admires how Uribe has created "a patchwork printout of close-up photos of his skin and the skin of various friends and Gypsy Sport team members." "The point he was making," she continues, "was an uncontroversial one – skin color is an abstraction – but he did a nice job of translating it into the language of fashion" (*ibid.*).

Singer's comment connects to what Anjali Vats has noted as a trend toward "representations of racial performance" that imagine a postracial America in which race "is no longer a meaningful category of analysis" (Vat 2014, 114). While I see Uribe's bold interventions in current conversations about race and ethnicity as necessary, I concur with Vats that racial performance (or what Susan Gubar calls "racechange,"[18] e.g., whites performing blackness, blacks performing whiteness) may in fact "limit the rhetorical agency of those who wish to speak against the myth of postraciality" (*ibid.*). This is particularly pertinent in the case of Roma, whose histories and lived experiences, deeply marked by discrimination, prejudice, and various forms of racism (especially in Europe but by no means absent in the United States), underscore the utopian dimensions of postraciality.

16 See https://gypsysportny.com.

17 In its casting call, Gypsy Sport declares, "Gypsy Sport has always been committed to showcasing diversity. No Racism • No Sexism • No Ableism • No Ageism • No Homophobia • No Xenophobia" (https://gypsysportny.com/blogs/tv/casting).

18 See Gubar (2000).

I chose to discuss Uribe over other designers precisely because he has set the bar so high. As he delivers what Susan Gubar (2003) would call "nuanced […] stories about various modes and gradations of Othering" (44), he also draws attention to all kinds of sites of injustice and inequality, including those based on race and ethnicity. Moreover, he instantiates possibilities of enacting resistance. He challenges dichotomized views of race, gender, class, beauty, and body shape, as well as urban-rural, private-public, high-low polarities, and foregrounds productive discourses on intersectionality. His disruptions of high fashion conventions and attempts to de-essentialize identities and redirect dominant discourses toward inclusivity and fluidity have social and cultural implications that could serve minorities and marginalized groups. At the same time, these nuanced views on *some* issues do not exculpate him and do not mitigate the unethical dimensions of his exploitative appropriations. What place do Roma occupy in the supposedly radically inclusive world of Gypsy Sport?

Some may argue that the "Gypsy" of Uribe's brand is just a marketing tool or catchphrase not worth critical scrutiny. However, naming gives meaning to things as it brings them into language, and so the act of naming carries significance that impacts real-life situations. In a culture whose commerce relies so heavily on branding, "Gypsy" is a potent signifier, especially to audiences who draw their "understanding" of Roma/Gypsies primarily from pop culture, with the reality show *My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding* often identified as a top source of "knowledge." Asked about the "Gypsy" of his line's name, Uribe explains, "The reason is (…) gypsies have historically been persecuted by all nations, so I wanted something that has the feel of 'I'm not accepted everywhere, but I'm happy where I am.'" (as quoted in Katz 2017).[19] I am unsure how to interpret the latter part of his statement: is he suggesting that his line creates a space that not only fosters acceptability but normalizes difference? It is worth noting though that Uribe is aware of Roma's historical presence and the systematic prejudice and exclusion to which they have been subjected, so his choice to ignore this is troubling. In the same interview, commenting on the "bohemian implication" of the word, Uribe adds, "Gypsy is about subcultures and how to target those I related to or belonged to without neglecting others. Gypsies, as people, go beyond race, gender, religion or nationality (as quoted in Katz 2017)."[20] Here he deploys the word "Gypsy" as a synecdoche, using one disenfranchised group as a signifier for all others. He displaces Roma from the particulars of their lived experiences and history and emplaces them into a universalizing trope primed for tourist consumption. In "transacting" them to speak for the silenced, as a conduit for all kinds of narratives of inclusiveness and/or postraciality, he excludes them from the very discourse on self-representation and self-empowerment his aesthetic, as a fashion designer, means to embody. The more malleable and universalist his constructed "Gypsyness" becomes, perhaps the more invisible and silent it renders the people and culture that served as "inspiration." Uribe's collections defy normativity, inviting identification and disidentification[21]

19 On Gypsy Sport's official Facebook page, "Gypsy" is defined as " a nomadic or free-spirited person who lives beyond borders and outside of the social norms. (Also a misnomer for the traveling Romany people, once believed to come from Egypt, but are actually descendants from India and South Asia.)" (https://www.facebook.com/gypsy.sport)

20 Asked if he has received criticism "over the political correctness of that word," Uribe acknowledges he has and mentions he responds to criticism with this very explanation.

21 I borrow the usage of this term from José Esteban Muñoz (1999), who defines it as a process that "scrambles and reconstructs the encoded message of a cultural text in a fashion that both exposes the encoded message's universalizing and exclusionary machinations and recircuits its workings to account for, include, and empower minority identities and identifications" (31).

in the same breath. They challenge stereotypes by hyperbolizing or by combining elements borrowed from various cultural repertoires and transforming them through cross-pollination, fusion, and mutation. At the same time, rather than using such innovative means to draw productive attention to Roma's history of marginalization, Gypsy Sport (see images 1.1–1.4 as samples, with entire collections available at gypsysportny.com) might be generating new misperceptions and feeding apprehension.

As suggested above, while Rio Uribe's "Gypsy" brand pitches an ideal vision of an integrated world in which difference is celebrated and perhaps normalized, with age, appearance, class, culture, gender, and skin color eradicated as sources of bias and injustice, it also generates its own version of epistemic injustice. In this latter respect, Uribe might not be doing something much different from what other fashion rhetors engaged in flagrant and often tasteless appropriations do. He too runs the risk of turning the people in/under whose name his line markets its ideals "from an identity category into a costuming element" available for consumption, or for what Vats (2014) calls "tourist enterprise" (114). This kind of "enterprise," Vats argues, "permits interactions with difference without social, political, or economic obligation while, consistent with postracial ideologies, recognizing difference for its exocitcness [*sic*] and novelty instead of its continuing material significance" (*ibid*.).

Critiquing Uribe's work may be seen as a futile exercise or something akin to preaching to the choir. I would like to suggest instead that we consider what this case study teaches us about how we might be able to intervene in the fashion industry's knowledge production and, equally if not more importantly, how we might convince designers like Uribe of the importance of joining that effort. Unlike other designers, Uribe shows genuine interest in capitalizing on fashion's potential to act not only as a form of art but as a social and political force, and to advance sartorial discourses that (re)shape public perceptions and attitudes. As Chioma Nnadi notes in her review of Uribe's 2019 New York Fashion Week ready-to-wear collection, "Uribe understands […] more than most" that "[c]lothes can't heal the world, but they can be a powerful tool for empowerment and self-expression," and that he "has taken pains to build his brand on a solid foundation of consideration and respect for all" (Nnadi 2018). Uribe needs to understand how he has failed in doing precisely that (building a brand that honors and respects), and how he has failed his own vision.

Such critical awareness (Uribe's, his fans') is integral to what I see as a larger endeavor of making the fashion industry rhetors, along with literary and television writers, musicians, and other artists, accountable for the visual and narrative discourses they produce. This, is turn, might make some of them inclined to use their success (and profits) to benefit Roma as well. The fashion industry could also play a "corrective" function in educating audiences,[22] but its rhetors themselves need first to be educated on Roma, their culture, histories, and lived experiences.

Another consequence of appropriation worth examining here relates to what Miranda Fricker (2007) calls "credibility excess" and "deficit." Following her line of argument and her emphasis on the power

22 An example of this is the 2017 CFDA (Council of Fashion Designers of America) partnership with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). Wishing to actively and concretely support the work of organizations that fight to protect rights and freedoms, over 50 designers teamed up on an initiative called "Fashion for ACLU" (Shepherd 2017).

of visual stereotypes to exert a "visceral impact on judgment" (37), Roma-authored narratives,[23] even as they increase in number, will have to compete in the popular imagination with those established by the dominant culture. Roma activists, scholars, and writers "authoring" narratives that do not reinforce those populating the *gadje* imaginary might be faced, as Fricker suggests, with a "credibility deficit owing to identity prejudice in the hearer" (*ibid*. 28) and, relatedly, owing to the epistemically unwarranted "credibility excess" (*ibid*. 17) that members of the dominant culture are granted by virtue of their status. Who is speaking and from what position matters.[24] If, as Karlyn Kohrs Campbell suggests, rhetorical agency "refers to the capacity to act, that is to have the competence to speak or write in a way that is recognized or heeded by others in one's community" (as quoted in Vats 2014, 116), then when *gadje* fashion rhetors monopolize or usurp the narrative authority of those from whom they appropriate and/or for whom they appear to speak, they also disable the rhetorical agency of the latter. Raising awareness about this kind of epistemic violence is particularly important to the current historical moment, when Romani designers are producing their own lines and trying to assert their own voices, as I discuss below.

5. Romani Fashion Designers and Romaniness

It is beyond the scope of this article to offer an encompassing examination of Roma designers, their collections, and the complexity of their roles as both artists and agents of change, though such discussions are much needed. Hoping to position the following illustration as an invitation to further research, I will focus briefly on Romani Design, Hungary's first Roma Fashion Studio and now an internationally acclaimed brand name. Founded in 2010 by Roma designers Erika and Helena Varga, Romani Design has been creating collections that reclaim, (re)envision, and perform Romaniness, raise awareness about the "cultural heritage of Roma traditional clothing," bridge cultures, and fight stereotypes.[25]

Breathtaking and highly innovative, the collections engage with Roma's history, identity, and with issues of representation, cultural memory, and social justice, underscoring the significant interplay of aesthetics and ethics. Romani Design clothes foreground heritage motifs, symbols, aesthetic elements, and other components of traditional clothing, as reflected in the use of rich colors, patterns inspired by the natural world, flowerbands, ribbons, pleats, natural fabrics, or the unconventional adaptations of *kretinca*, the traditional apron. Simultaneously, they reflect multiple forms of belonging, underscoring the interconnectedness between ethnic and national, as well as local and global, communities. Romani Design builds on the "aesthetic roots of Roma communities" while reflecting these communities' "embeddedness and deep connections with Hungarian culture" and to the world at large, as expressed explicitly in the collection "Wanderers of the Worlds."

23 I use "narrative" with its most encompassing connotations, to refer to any meaning-making structure, including written and oral texts, and visual and aural artifacts.

24 I cannot help but ask myself how I would have read Uribe's brand in the context of a different statement of intentionality (see his stated intention of using "Gypsy" as an umbrella term for all "subcultures"). Would I have read it differently if he were Roma, and/or worked with Roma models, or if he had invested some of his profits to benefit Roma?

25 See https://www.romani.hu/en/history.

The inevitable convergence of aesthetics with ethics, history, and politics is reflected in some of the collections' titles and descriptions. Thus, the 2010 collection titled "Acceptance through Fashion" envisions social change through "the encounter of traditions with modernity"; the 2011 collection "Chameleon" highlights "the flexibility of traditional Roma communities to react to new challenges," and the 2016 collection "Romani '56" commemorates the Roma heroes of the Hungarian Revolution. The 2016 collection "Icon," inspired by five iconic actresses spanning "five different worlds," styles, and eras [26] (Marlene Dietrich, Audrey Hepburn, Frida Kahlo, Sophia Loren, and Marilyn Monroe) and showcased by five Hungarian actresses, fuses easily identifiable heritage elements with the five actresses' signature styles.

Together, these collections that (re-)envision Romaniness echo James Clifford's (1988) argument that in contemporary contexts (especially those involving de-colonializing processes), "cultural or artistic 'authenticity' has as much to do with an inventive present as with a past, its objectification, preservation, or revival" (222). Rogers' concept of transculturation (as outlined in section one of this article), though flawed in its implicit de-emphasis of the exploitative nature of appropriative acts, might be nonetheless useful in situating Romani Design outside bifurcating views of authenticity and in honoring their aesthetic and mission. As Rogers points out, transculturation highlights those processes of absorption, transformation, and hybridization that complicate productively notions of purity and authenticity that might otherwise promote essentialist and static views of culture (Rogers 2006, 494–495). Along these lines, a Romani Design piece inspired by Marlene Dietrich (or Audrey Hepburn/Frida Kahlo/Sophia Loren/Marilyn Monroe) and modeled by a well-known Hungarian actress delivers an expression of Romaniness that celebrates heritage culture while also acknowledging culture as encoded by (and encoding) symbols and commodities, and as inevitably "impure."

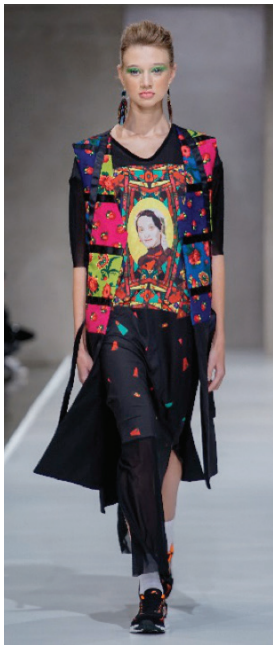
In the process of reclaiming and (re)envisioning Romaninness, Romani Design reveals the multidimensional and complex nature of such an endeavor. Celebrating one's heritage through fashion should be easy. However, the industry's history of cultural exploitation of Romani aesthetic elements, symbols, and popular fabrications of "Gypsyness," combined with a long history of systemic discrimination and lack of access to resources, have compounded the difficulty and added an inevitable political dimension. Thus, in order to produce work that celebrates Romani heritage, Romani Design has to simultaneously engage *gadje* (mis-) representations and stereotypes, and confront dominant regimes of representation. It also has to risk "re-creating existing stereotypical patterns" (Szilágyi-Kispista 2018, 156), a point Ágota Szilágyi-Kispista raises in the context of her analysis of a different category of Roma design but which is equally relevant here. Though too complex to be addressed in this article, the issue points to yet another layer of difficulty confronting Roma artists who reclaim a heritage whose modes of signification have been altered and cheapened through decontextualization, overuse, and economic trafficking. Therefore, as they recuperate appropriated cultural elements so they can be returned and (re)envisioned within cultural contexts to which they belong, the creators of Romani Design also perform work of resistance and contestation.[27] Thus, among other things,

26 See https://Romani.hu/en/history.

27 Other designers too, such as Juana Martin (Spain) and George Radulescu (Romania) have drawn attention to the activist role they have had to occupy, by necessity, when creating fashion that reflected cultural tradition and also empowered their communities. See Marin 2014, and the interview (in Romanian) with Radulescu (https://vimeo.com/11191130) in which he discusses his creation of a fashion line with the intent of combating stereotypes and anti-Roma sentiments.

they disrupt and question *gadje*'s monopoly over issues of representation and, symbolically at least, discredit what Friker (2007) calls the appropriators' "credibility excess" (17).

Image 2. Romani Design:
2.1. Collection "Wanderers of the World" (top left); 2.2. Collection "Rebel Spirit" (top right);
2.3. Collection "Romani '56" (bottom left); 2.4. Collection "Icon" (bottom right)



Appropriators and others involved in the perpetuation of "Gypsy" tropes either control or have privileged access to the fashion industry, including its commercial domains. This has severely limited Roma designers' access to economic resources and to opportunities for foregrounding their vision. However, Romani Design has used its success and limited resources to invest in the community. It provides educational programs and workshops that foster creativity and cultural pride among Roma youth and serves economic needs by training, employing, and empowering Roma women. Thus, it models for the industry what it means to produce responsible, sustainable, civically minded fashion, and how to use it as a medium for social intervention and empowerment. The case of Romani Design evidences the need for non-Roma designers and consumers of "Gypsyness" in general to curb the impulse to appropriate, and to help build political, social, and economic environments that encourage established and emerging Roma designers to speak for themselves.[28]

Conclusion

Imagining change-effecting responses to cultural appropriation is complicated, and not only because what constitutes appropriation remains controversial, but also because, even if a consensus were reached, solutions would depend on a range of variables, including the fields and modes of appropriation, power relations, the values that are threatened, the purpose of appropriation, and the assessable or projected effects on all involved, including the exploited and the beneficiaries. In my discussion of cultural appropriation of "Gypsyness" in the context of the fashion industry, I tried to be sensitive to these variables, hopefully with a modicum of success and without slipping too often or unreflectively into the traps of essentialism. In envisioning reforms I have to remain tentative for similar reasons. As a literary scholar (primarily) and someone who is conscious of the confines of my knowledge of, and access to, Roma peoples' heterogeneous histories and lived experiences, I do not claim a comprehensive or cohesive vision. Change necessitates concerted national and transnational as well as localized (site- and community-specific) efforts. It also necessitates multidisciplinary interventions into knowledge production. As far as the fashion industry is concerned, such interventions need to incorporate the following: foster public and professional environments that support Romani designers and provide them with resources and opportunities to exert agency as they (re)claim and showcase their cultural heritage; address the industry's ongoing dissemination of "Gypsy" tropes through constructive critiques and by mentoring new generations of fashion rhetors; educate audiences about the corrosive effects of cultural appropriation and on how to become critical consumers of culture; and join other scholars (as those investigating the use of appropriation and commodification of the cultures of indigenous peoples or other silenced minorities) in comparative work.

28 This point is aptly argued in Szilágyi-Kispista's (2018) analysis of work produced by Meșteshukar ButiQ (Bucharest, Romania), which looks at the role of design in the representation and self-representation of Romani identity. The scholar notes that "Roma are now themselves the initiators of a progressive interpretation of their own heritage" (152) and ready to create artistic spaces for self-representation.

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