

Radmila Mladenova 

Preface

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This contributed volume, fifth in number in the peer-reviewed, open-access book series *Interdisciplinary Studies in Antigypsyism* edited by the Research Center on Antigypsyism, documents the case studies presented at the international workshop “Artistic Alternatives to the Antigypsy Gaze,” which was organized in a digital format from Heidelberg in November 2021. The workshop was part of the Explorer Project of the same name, conceived and carried out by Radmila Mladenova at the Research Center on Antigypsyism (RCA) at the History Department at the University of Heidelberg, between September 1, 2020 and August 31, 2022.

One goal of the explorer project and its workshop has been to shift the focus from antigypsyism critique and open up alongside it a new set of discussions, thereby shedding light on the artistic alternatives to the antigypsyist gaze in film. We put out an open call for papers, inviting submissions in three underresearched thematic areas: 1) case studies that compare filmic antigypsyism to filmic antisemitism and/or to other racist/racializing discourses; 2) case studies that compare antigypsyist films to films in which the Nazi genocide against Sinti and Roma is addressed, thereby examining the transformative impact the topic of the Holocaust has on the narrative strategies and visual aesthetics of film productions; 3) case studies on the deployment of artistic strategies aimed at resisting, subverting, and/or transcending antigypsyist tropes in film. The scholars and junior researchers who responded to the challenge of the topic and to our call for papers—notably, amidst COVID-19 lockdowns—include MATTHIAS BAUER, HANS RICHARD BRITTNACHER, SARAH BURNAUTZKI, ISMAEL CORTÉS, JULIA FRIEDRICH, SABINE GIRG, NADJA GREKU, DANIELA GRESS, KIRSTEN VON HAGEN, MICHAEL HAUS, SARAH HEINZ, HILDE HOFFMANN, DINA IORDANOVA, MARINA ORTRUD M. HERTRAMPF, JOHANNES VALENTIN KORFF, ANDRÉ RAATZSCH,

FRANK REUTER, MARIANA SABINO SALAZAR, TIRZA SEENE, DÁVID SZŐKE, ALEXANDRA VINZENZ, and LEA WOHL VON HASELBERG. As is often the case, not all workshop participants were able to produce a paper for the volume; at the same time, the edited collection has been enriched by some additional papers written especially for it.

The majority of the case studies deal with fictional and documentary films, (co-)productions with their countries of origin including Austria, Belgium, England, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Mexico, and Spain; some of the filmic stories reflect the cultural dynamics between the West and the East of Europe, the North and the South, between Latin America and (Eastern) Europe, or between Europe and the Far East. In addition to the film case studies, there are contributions that broaden the palette of art forms and media by considering photography, fine art, anime, theater education, and critical media literacy. In its entirety, the volume steers towards a pan-European—better, global—perspective and thus aims to highlight the exigency of developing an intertextual, transnational, and transmedial approach to dealing with the phenomenon of antigypsyism. As a counterpoint to the universal normativity of the occidental worldview, this way of looking is essential for understanding the elusive nature of antigypsyism and the ways to defy it, for, as Lou Charnon-Deutsch rightfully observes in her book *The Spanish Gypsy: The History of a European Obsession*, the ‘gypsy’ construct has resulted from a dialogue both intercultural and interdisciplinary; all the while, antigypsyism has remained a blind spot in scholarship for quite some time, and this is also due to a certain tendency in the humanities to primarily focus on a single culture or to stay within the confines of a single discipline.

Drawing on research that comes from such a diversity of scholars, locations, and disciplines, it is inevitable that the papers in the present collection should vary greatly in their form and level of abstraction, in their goals and theoretical approach, and in their benchmarks as to what constitutes antigypsyism and what constitutes opposing this age-old form of racism. And since the debate on the topic is still in its infancy, there are a number of case studies that focus specifically on filmic antigypsyism and not on the counterstrategies, thus contributing with new insights to the question of what it is that needs to be countered. A number of papers continue discussions started at the international conference “Antigypsyism and Film,” which was organized in February 2018 in Berlin by the Society for the Research of Antigypsyism (GfA) and the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma. The

nineteen papers in the collection are thus arranged in two contrastive sections. The case studies in SECTION ONE present artistic alternatives to antigypsyism, highlighting the centrality and productivity of the contrapuntal strategy which juxtaposes individual Romani perspectives with the antigypsyist gaze of the dominant collective, while the case studies in SECTION TWO offer new critical insights into filmic antigypsyism, pointing out dubious aesthetic counterstrategies such as romanticizing ethnicization, ethnographic isolation, or idolization of outsiders.¹ All contributions are preceded by short abstracts in English and German. To avoid repetition, instead of providing summaries of the papers as is customary for introductions to edited collections, we have opted for a far more engaging presentation strategy: an opening paper that sums up and expands on the heated discussions that took place during the workshop; an orientation map of a kind that should help the reader get their bearings in this novel field of research. The alternative introduction maps out and foregrounds a number of problem areas to which the case studies contribute with insightful reflections and approaches, importantly, of relevance both for researchers and practitioners.


In a closing note, on behalf of the Research Center on Antigypsyism, we would like to say how thankful we are to the workshop participants, to the authors who have contributed to this volume, and to all who have supported the realization of the event. We are grateful to the Ministry of Science, Research and the Arts of Baden-Württemberg and Field of Focus 3: Cultural Dynamics in Globalized Worlds at the University of Heidelberg for funding the Explorer Project “Artistic Alternatives to the Antigypsy Gaze,” of which the workshop was an integral part. We would like to thank Nele Schneidereit from Field of Focus 3 for all the support, timely advice and expert guidance. We would like to give our warmest thanks to Diana Bastian, chair of the Association of German Sinti and Roma in the Federal State of Saarland, for sharing the photo of her grandmother, the actress Selma Heilig née Frank, who graces the cover of this volume and who can also be seen on the workshop poster. We thank Mihai Surdu from Freiburg University (and a Romani Rose Fellow at RCA), Karen Nolte from Heidelberg University, Verena Meier, and Joey Rauschenberger from RCA for chairing the four workshop panels and moderating the at times rather heated discussions; we thank Sarah Kleinmann from RCA and Eszter Varsa from Central European

1 For this pithy and precise formulation I am indebted to Prof. Herbert Uerlings.

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University (and a Romani Rose Fellow) for taking care of the workshop minutes; we thank Sophie Schollenberger, Franziska Kuhn, and Merle Niemeyer from RCA for the assistance and technical support. Working together has been a pleasure, and hopefully, the outcome of our joint efforts will become a source of inspiration for the reader.

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