



THE 'WHITE' MASK AND THE 'GYPSY' MASK IN FILM

Radmila Mladenova

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To Herbert

Table of Contents

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Preface	xi
Acknowledgements	xv
Abstract	xix
1 Two Masks, One Cultural Consciousness	1
Theoretical Background	
1.1 The Alternative Ending in Emir Kusturica's Film <i>Time of the Gypsies</i> (1988) as an Introduction	1
1.2 The Mask as a Working Concept	7
1.3 The Semiosphere: Yuri Lotman's Dialogic Model of Culture	11
1.3.1 Cultural Centre and Periphery	13
1.3.2 Cultural Boundary	14
1.3.3 Norm Face and Anti-face	16
1.4 The 'White' Mask or the Aspirational Ideal of 'Whiteness'	20
1.4.1 The Visual Rhetoric of Whiteness	26
1.4.2 Whiteness as an Aesthetic Technology	29
1.5 The Dynamic Principle of the 'White' Mask and the Dynamic Principle of the 'Gypsy' Mask	30
2 On the Film Corpus	41
2.1 The Corpus Structure and Selection Criteria	41
2.2 Quantitative Description	44
2.3 Sources of Information	47
2.4 The Corpus Building in Retrospect	48

Table of Contents

3	The Literary Motif of Child-stealing ‘Gypsies’ and Silent Film	51
3.1	The Symbolism of Light and Colour in <i>The Adventures of Dollie</i> and <i>Zigeuneren Raphael</i>	53
3.1.1	<i>The Adventures of Dollie</i> (1908), USA	55
3.1.2	Lucrative Literary Motif	59
3.1.3	<i>Zigeuneren Raphael</i> (1914), Denmark	62
3.2	The Motif of ‘Gypsy’ Child-theft in Silent Film	71
3.3	The Motif’s Literary Roots: “La gitanilla” (1613), Spain	73
3.4	Stock Characters in an Improbable Story	81
3.4.1	The Disciplinary Message of <i>The Bohemian Girl</i> (1936), USA	84
3.5	Masquerade at a Stand-still: Four Cinematic Versions of <i>The Hunchback of Notre-Dame</i>	88
3.6	Conclusion	95
4	The Phenomenon of ‘Gypsy’-themed Films and Their Technology of Truth Production	97
4.1	The Racialising Aesthetics of Authentication Described as a List of Films	98
4.2	Questioning ‘Gypsy’-themed Films or the Racialising Aesthetics of Authentication Described as a Technology of Truth Production	106
4.2.1	Production Set-up	107
4.2.2	Content Analysis of the ‘Gypsy’ Mask: Character Portrayal and Plot	108
4.2.3	Formal Analysis of the ‘Gypsy’ Mask	110
4.2.4	Claim to Truth and Authentication Strategies	110
4.2.5	Functional Analysis of the ‘Gypsy’ Mask	112
4.2.6	How to Produce a ‘Gypsy’-themed Film in Five Steps	113
5	Production Set-up ‘Gypsy’-themed Films Paralleled to Blackface Minstrelsy Shows	117
5.1	Film Directors of ‘Gypsy’-themed Films	122
5.2	Fiction Authors with a Contribution to ‘Gypsy’-themed Films	125
5.3	Celebrity Actors in Gypsyface	129
5.4	Roma Cast in ‘Gypsy’-themed Films	133
5.4.1	The Devastating Effect of Filmmaking Interventions	135
5.4.2	Typcasting Based on Skin Tone and Conformity to Stereotype	138
5.5	The Power Added by Digital Technology	142
5.6	Conclusion	144

6	Content Analysis of the ‘Gypsy’ Mask or the ‘Gypsy’ Mask as a Cluster of Attributes	147
6.1	The Content Matrix of the ‘Gypsy’ Mask in <i>The Bohemian Girl</i> (1936): Sequence-by-Sequence Description	151
6.2	The Content Matrix of the ‘Gypsy’ Mask in <i>King of the Gypsies</i> (1978): Sequence-by-Sequence Description	171
6.2.1	Plot Structure and Genre	189
6.2.2	Elements of Film <i>Noir</i> and the Message of the Plot	192
6.3	The ‘Gypsy’ Mask in Motion or the Vertical Storyline in ‘Gypsy’-themed Films	198
7	Formal Analysis of the ‘Gypsy’ Mask or the ‘Gypsy’ Mask as a Set of Cinematographic Conventions and Devices	217
7.1	Colour Schemes in <i>Gucha – Distant Trumpet</i> (2006), Serbia	219
7.2	Europe’s Golden-haired Nations vs ‘Gypsies’	226
7.3	Elements of Visual Style and Facial Visibility	230
7.3.1	Facial Visibility, Character Centrality and White Make-up in <i>Gipsy Anne</i> (1920), Norway	232
7.3.2	Lighting, Framing and Facial Visibility in <i>Papusza</i> (2013), Poland	237
7.3.3	The Strategy of Diminished Light	242
7.3.4	The Film’s Take on the Ideal of ‘Whiteness’	243
7.3.5	Face Lighting and Skin Colour	248
7.3.6	A ‘Gypsy’-themed Film rather than a Historical Biography	251
7.4	Lighting Set-up and Skin Hue in Colour Film	253
7.5	Conclusion	255
8	Claims to Truth and Authentication Strategies	259
8.1	Paratexts	260
8.2	The Audio-Visual Effect of Authenticity	288
8.2.1	Art Direction: Costumes	289
8.2.2	Art Direction: Sets	298
8.2.3	Sound Design: Romani Folklore/Gypsy Music	308
8.2.4	Sound Design: Voice and Romani Language	314
8.3	Conclusion	317
9	The Functions of the ‘Gypsy’ Masquerade Staged in Film	319
9.1	Aesthetic Function	321
9.2	Disciplining Function	329
9.3	Carnival (Expressive) Function	336
9.4	Subversive Function	339

Table of Contents

9.5	Socially Integrative Function	343
9.6	The Phenomenon of ‘Gypsy’-themed Films Viewed from Five Different Perspectives: An Overall Conclusion	352
10	Annexes	357
10.1	Annex I – Online Film Catalogues, Archives and Heritage Platforms	357
10.2	Annex II – Silent Films with the Motif of ‘Gypsy’ Child-theft	358
10.3	Annex III – Film Directors of ‘Gypsy’-themed Films	366
10.4	Annex IV – Literary Sources of ‘Gypsy’-themed Films	367
10.5	Annex V – (Inter-)National Celebrity Actors in Gypsyface	369
11	List of Illustrations	371
12	Filmography	379
13	Bibliography	395
14	Index of Persons and Works	415

Preface

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Like most children in Bulgaria, I grew up with scare stories about ‘gypsies’. These were stories I would hear from the grown-ups around me and their hushed, confiding tone made my ears perk up, or these were stories I would read in my favourite illustrated books for children. I loved listening to stories and I loved plunging into the fantasy storyworld of books. So, like most Bulgarian children, I grew up fearing ‘gypsies’ with a deep, atavistic fear. There were two Roma quarters in the vicinity of my family’s home in Sofia, and these places filled me with horror; in my child’s mental map of the familiar world, the Roma quarters were to be avoided at all costs.

In the late 1980s, I remember watching, together with a gang of friends, Emil Loteanu’s film *Queen of the Gypsies* (1975). Just watching his film felt like an act of rebellion to us. I remember the fascination that the throbbing music and the passionate, colourfully dressed characters produced in us; it was a rare, revelatory experience that added glue to our camaraderie. Some years later, when Kusturica’s films *Time of the Gypsies* (1988) and *Black Cat, White Cat* (1998) came out, they became an immediate hit. Everyone went to see them. All the while, I had not had a single acquaintance of mine who was of Roma origin. There was hardly a chance to meet somebody from the Roma community at the schools I was lucky to go to – the Russian language school, the English language school, and Sofia University with its much-coveted Department of English and American Studies. Everything I knew about the Roma came from hearsay, from books and films, from the evening news.

It was several years after leaving university that I got to know Roma individuals close up. In 2004, I worked for an EU-funded project called “Roma Population Integration” in which over a hundred young Roma were trained for the position of teachers’ assistants and in which I was responsible, among other things, for the production of two films, a short fiction one and a documentary. Working on this project not only brought me close to Roma people but also gave me an opportunity to observe first-hand the kind of dialogue that takes place, if at all, between the mainstream society and the minority. And, in 2009 and 2010, I took part as a Bauorden volunteer¹ at two building camps in Hungary, organised in the aftermath of the series of murders in 2008 and 2009 in which six Roma were killed and fifty-five injured by right-wing extremists (cf. Mareš). In the village of Tatárszentgyörgy, we helped renovate the house of a family whose twenty-seven-year-old son Róbert Csorba and five-year-old grandson had been shot dead as they ran out of their burning home, which was set on fire with a Molotov cocktail. While renovating the grandparents’ house, we could see the charred remains of the son’s home, standing there grimly only a few meters away.

Shortly after this experience, an enthusiastic friend sent me Aleksandar Petrović’s film *I Even Met Happy Gypsies* (1967), and after seeing this highly acclaimed cinematic masterpiece, I realised I no longer shared the fascination. On the contrary, I was appalled by the film and my sense of indignation was bolstered by the painful awareness that I had no language, no tools to lay out my objections in a convincing manner. This is how I came up with the idea to do research at university level on the forms and functions of the imagined ‘gypsy’ figure in film. For I asked: what is communicated to the general audience in Bulgaria by a *Deutsche Welle* reportage about a Roma schoolgirl from a small Bulgarian town in which the girl is praised for attending school and yet is made to read aloud that one passage from Antoine de Saint-Exupéry’s tale *The Little Prince* where the fox explains that it is untameable? What is communicated to the general audience in Germany by a *Tatort* episode² in which Bulgarians (and by implication Roma) are depicted as people who are used to living among bags of decaying rubbish? What is communicated to the general audience in Germany by a TV reportage

1 Bauorden organises international youth exchanges and aid projects in Europe and overseas. By setting up building camps, it supports non-profit organisations with construction and renovation work; see the website of Bauorden Germany: bauorden.eu.

2 See the episode *Mein Revier* (2012, Dir. Thomas Jauch).

about the inauguration of the monument to Sinti and Roma in Berlin in which reportage scenes from the opening ceremony are edited together with footage of a family with many children living in a desperate housing situation? Why did the news about a blonde girl-child found in a Roma quarter in Greece spread in no time across all of Europe, even reaching the headlines of *The New York Times*? And why did this piece of news prompt policemen in Ireland to detain fair-haired children of Roma parents and subject them to DNA tests? These were the kind of questions that set my research in motion and that eventually led to the present Heidelberg dissertation *The 'White' Mask and the 'Gypsy' Mask in Film*. I move from practice to theory and then back to practice, so my hope is that the following chapters will precipitate a turn in film scholarship as well as in the art of filmmaking.

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I would like to extend my gratitude to the Friedrich Ebert Foundation for seeing value in my research project proposal and furnishing me with a doctoral stipend for four fruitful years; my special thanks

3 The master thesis has been published as two separate articles: “The Imagined Gypsy: The Palindrome of the ‘Human Being’” and “The Figure of the Imaginary Gypsy in Film: *I Even Met Happy Gypsies* (1967)”.

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I am exceedingly grateful to Herbert Heuss and Jonathan Mack from the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma for backing both the international conference on “Antigypsyism and Film” – designed and organised by Tobias von Borcke, Pavel Brunssen, Markus End, Anja Reuss and myself in Berlin in February 2018 – and its outcome, the bilingual anthology *Antigypsyism and Film/Antiziganismus und Film* (heiUP, 2020). I would like to extend a special word of thanks to Elaine Burrows, Valentina Christova, Sergey Glinkov, Daniela Gress, Martin Holler, Dr. William Hope, Diana Ivanova, Dr. David Jara, Radu

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Abstract

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The present study adopts a tailor-made five-tiered analytical approach to films on the ‘gypsy’ theme to shed light on the interplay between their production set-up, content matrix, visual design, paratextual framing and functions. Drawing on a sizeable corpus of works from the European and US American cultural realm, it demonstrates that regardless of the place or time of origin, ‘gypsy’-themed productions share the skeletal frame of ‘ethno-racial’ masquerades. As such, they are akin to blackface minstrel shows and often enjoy similar levels of obsessive popularity. If the film industry mobilises its powerful apparatus to assert the authenticity of the films and advertise them as untampered-with ‘slices of reality’, the X-ray vision advanced here makes it plain to see that these cinematographic works are nothing other than ventriloquised cultural forms. With hardly any exceptions, ‘gypsy’-themed films are scripted, directed and playacted by professionals from the dominant national culture, and in the cases when Roma lay actors are involved, this takes place after scrupulous casting based on dark skin colour and conformity to stereotype. Another recurrent feature of the films is the deployment of Roma extras who are used – together with their homes, music, language and artefacts – as authenticity props.

Inevitably, one is bound to ask why: why do filmmakers from all four corners of Europe reproduce with such automatic readiness the racialising aesthetics of authentication that has come to define the ‘gypsy’ theme? Why do audiences flock to cinema halls so eager to absorb the reality of screen ‘gypsies’? The answer to this question is complex and multifaceted and has a lot to do with the shared sense

Abstract

of reality sustained by national cultures. Simply put, staging the tableau of 'gypsy' life constitutes a pivotal scene in the spectacle of the national: aesthetically, it is functionalised as a contrastive foil against which the 'white' ethno-national Self can gain relief and psychological salience; content-wise, it provides a brief carnivalesque escape from the shackles of normality, a vicarious adventure into the 'non-white' world of the forbidden which ends, though, with the didactic finale of a cautionary tale. As part of the ideological imaginary of nationalism, the para-ethnographic 'gypsy' show is not confined to film only but is re-enacted in all other art forms from which film copiously borrows: from literature through the visual and performing arts to music and popular culture. Bearing in mind the transmedial and intertextual nature of the 'gypsy' spectacle, the current study seeks to define and describe the racialising patterns of the antigypsy gaze specific to the medium of film and thus stresses the role of lighting and colour schemes. And if the author takes the risk of charting the phenomenon of 'gypsy'-themed films on a dauntingly large map, the exposition balances the broader findings with micro-analyses at the level of individual films and film sequences with an attentive eye to cultural and authorial idiosyncrasies.

1

Two Masks, One Cultural Consciousness Theoretical Background

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1.1 The Alternative Ending in Emir Kusturica's Film *Time of the Gypsies* (1988) as an Introduction

Time of the Gypsies (1988) is the film that catapulted Emir Kusturica to international prominence. This signature work of his is nowadays one of the most widely known 'gypsy'-themed films and in its controversial and contradictory ways forms the crown of the 'gypsy' genre. Interestingly, the film ends one scene earlier than originally scripted and filmed; for some reason, the last couple of minutes of the story were discarded from the final version. The outtake is distributed, instead, as part of the DVD bonus features and is presented as the film's alternative ending. I want to open the discussion by zooming in on the cut-out finale of *Time of the Gypsies* and the inverted image of the human being that it artfully constructs, in order to bring the reader right into the middle of my research topic with all its unyielding complexity.

In its officially released version, the film ends with the 'gypsy' character Merdžan (Husnija Hasimović) as he is running through the rain and mud up towards a small, solitary chapel in an open field. His appearance and slapstick manner are reminiscent of Charlie Chaplin's – he smirks under a black toothbrush moustache, sporting the overfamiliar bowler hat and suit. As we watch him skip away from the camera, the credits begin to roll. In the originally filmed ending, however, Merdžan continues to run up the muddy slope and stops in front of the chapel



Fig. 1. Assembled screenshots from *Time of the Gypsies* (1988, Dir. Emir Kusturica): the ‘gypsy’ character Merdžan (Husnija Hasimović) in conversation with God; a visual metaphor that conveys the symbolic position of the ‘gypsy’ in relation to the Christian deity.

entrance. The camera frames his face with the chapel’s blurred cross. The scene that follows is structured like a dialogic exchange that has the cross standing in between two interlocutors. On the one side of the cross is Merdžan, while on the other side is a wooden painted crucifix that has tipped over, with Christ’s head and outstretched arms pointing downwards (**Fig. 1**). Merdžan turns to God, talking to him, notably, in Romani, wondering what has happened to him. He enters the small, visibly neglected chapel, its altar draped with tattered pieces of nylon. In a close-up, we can see the ‘gypsy’ character tilting his head sideways, literally trying to come face to face with the inverted image of Christ. He offers to help God, but on the condition that God helps him in return. He warns God, waving a finger in his face, that otherwise he is unwilling to be of service. Apparently assuming that he has reached an agreement, Merdžan ardently kisses the crucifix and carefully sets it upright, turning Christ’s figure head up. With tears in his eyes, he implores God to take care of small Perhan, Merdžan’s nephew, who has been left without parents, and to spare the boy’s sad heart. When it comes to his second wish, Merdžan pulls out a pair of dice and demands from God that as long as he lives, they should fall according to his will. With a serious tone, he explains to God that he wants to rule with the help of the dice. At the end of this statement,

the crucifix starts wobbling and swiftly, as if in answer to Merdžan's pleas, tips back over and down.

The scene that shows Merdžan bargaining with Christ is a visual metaphor so saturated in religious and mythic symbolism that one can easily fill pages with its many possible interpretations. At this stage, I want to present the dialogic exchange between Merdžan and God to the reader without attempting to define and thus delimit the rich symbolic meanings that the moving pictures convey only in a matter of a few minutes. There is no doubt, though, that the sequence is a testament to Kusturica's cinematic genius: it provides an elaborate visual analysis of the manner in which the imagined 'gypsy' is constructed through its relationship to the Christian deity, whose significance here lies in providing human beings with an aspirational ideal. The dialogue between Merdžan and the upside-down Christ on the cross abstracts the principle of obverse mirroring after which the 'gypsy' figure is commonly imagined into being.

In a short film interview about his 'gypsy'-themed films, Emir Kusturica affirms point-blank that "[i]n Gypsies you always have this advantage, in which impossible things could happen in their life" ("Rencontre"). This assertion of his, just like the above-described scene, encapsulates an essential quality of the imaginary 'gypsy' figure and links directly to the driving questions of my research: Why is almost anything believable about a 'gypsy' character? Why can filmmakers ascribe almost any aberrant quality to their 'gypsy' figures and utilise them for almost any dramatic purpose without straining their audience's belief? What makes this construct so pliable, so open to re-interpretations and ascriptions and yet so readily recognisable in almost any culture, so plausible, so real, so tenaciously durable over time? Why are 'gypsy' figures and their stories so excessively and, at times, so obsessively popular in films produced and shown all across Europe and the USA? And why are, at the same time, 'gypsy'-themed films so heavily under-researched, most of them still largely overlooked, looked down upon or even avoided by scholars?

In the above-mentioned interview, Kusturica talks at length about his intimate knowledge of the Roma, who were a part of his formative experience while he was growing up in Sarajevo. But in the course of the conversation, it quickly transpires that the filmmaker's primary concern – he calls it even an obsession – is to forge a new and expressive film language, or as he puts it: "giving cinema an injection that could extend its life" ("Rencontre"). Kusturica associates 'gypsy' characters

with the unexpected ingredient in his works, as well as with the necessary departure from established genres. His talk about his Roma neighbours insensibly flips into talk about stylistic devices and genre conventions.⁴ No word is said about human rights or discrimination, about racist stereotypes in the mass media or oppressive social hierarchies. Instead, the minority and the dire conditions they are forced to live in are perceived exclusively as marketable material that can be exported for profit to Western cinema audiences.

Kusturica's 'gypsy'-themed films have been heavily criticised by some scholars⁵ and yet, to this day, the ethics and aesthetics of his oeuvre – and more importantly of 'gypsy'-themed films as a pan-European phenomenon – have not been sufficiently challenged. And this is precisely the objective of my study. In the chapters that follow, my effort is directed at unravelling the principle of obverse mirroring that underpins the artistic rendition of the 'gypsy' phantasm on the big screen (**Fig. 2** and **Fig. 3**). By working out the singular creative pattern that generates the numerous, endlessly varied and yet invariably familiar celluloid forms of the 'gypsy' figure, the present work seeks to bring about a deeper understanding of its plastic content, its black-and-white aesthetics and its significant functions. In my view, the medium of film has played a vital role in shaping and ingraining a black-and-white lens of perception among national majorities in Europe; film has been instrumental in instilling a shared picture of reality that is antigypsy and that condemns the Roma minority to chronic social exclusion and poverty. The role of cinema in sustaining antigypsyism as a visual regime of normality is the main concern of the present study. In addition to that, I want to outline the extent to which the 'gypsy' construct has been instrumental in energising the language of cinema, and by doing so, to show that the resultant aesthetic innovations, commonly celebrated as singular acts of artistic rebellion, mostly serve to cement social hierarchies and to reify the 'ethno-racial' status quo. More than

4 In another interview, Kusturica easily glides from the topic of 'gypsies' to the topic of film aesthetics: "I was attracted by the beauty of alternate universes. The Gypsies of my film survive like insects, according to the principle of the natural selection, according to the beauty of the colours and the shapes of the wings. (...) My film *Black Cat, White Cat* can be regarded as an anti-genre film in the direction where it wants to warm the heart of men" (Radakovic).

5 For a discussion of the antigypsy content in Kusturica's films, see Brittnacher, *Leben* 12–15, "Gypsygrotesken"; Tumbas 113–117; Gotto 88–108; Roth 232–244; Holler 75–77.



Fig. 2. Screenshot from *Drei Birken auf der Heide* (1956, Dir. Ulrich Erfurth): at the film's start, the 'gypsy' characters Mirko (Hubert Hilten) and Susanna (Margit Saas) are introduced for the first time to the viewers as inverted reflections of human beings.

a century after the birth of cinema, it is high time to reflect on the role of the seventh art in propagating, aestheticising and normalising anti-gypsyism, an age-old form of racism⁶ that has unfailingly accompanied the rise of modern nationalism in Europe, being its inseparable and extremely unsightly underside.

Over the length of the exposition, I introduce, one by one, the components that go into my multi-perspective framework of analysis. Parallel to that, as a way of substantiating my claims and arguments, I offer a broad array of examples from the film corpus. It is also my intention to familiarise the reader with as many film titles as possible: works ranging, time-wise, from the dawn of cinema to the present day and, space-wise, from across all of Europe and the USA. Before diving into the vast film corpus, however, in the remaining pages of this chapter, we shall consider the central concepts and theoretical considerations that inform my approach to 'gypsy'-themed films. For the analysis of

6 For a working definition of the term antigypsyism, consult the Reference Paper drafted by the Alliance against Antigypsyism accessible at Antigypsim.eu. For an analytical overview of the debate that surrounds the term and the field of study, see End, "Antiziganismus" 54–72; Heuss 52–68.



Fig. 3. Screenshot from *I Even Met Happy Gypsies* (1967, Dir. Aleksandar Petrović): Beli Bora (Bekim Fehmiu) and Pavle (Milosav Aleksić) take care of drunken Mirta (Velimir Živojinović), who is loaded head down into Pavle's cart with the following exclamation: "Into the garbage cart, you Gypsy bastard!"

screen images, I introduce the notion of the mask after Hans Belting; the notions of the semiosphere, semiotic centre and boundary after Yuri Lotman; and the notion of 'whiteness' after Richard Dyer. In the context of the European semiosphere, the construct of 'whiteness' (in representational arts) is clearly an emanation of the cultural centre, while the construct of 'gypsy' (in representational arts) coincides with the cultural boundary. To create a coherent picture of the dynamic semiotic processes at work and to lend storyboard clarity to the analysis of abstract cultural constructs, I have coined two complementary concepts that give the title of my work, namely the 'white' mask and the 'gypsy' mask. My contention is that the 'white' mask and the 'gypsy' mask are in a reciprocal relationship, creating the force field of European culture where individuals are organised in colour-coded social groups (class, nation, ethnicity/'race') by being inculcated – from a very early age – to admire and emulate the 'white' mask while disdaining and distancing themselves from the 'gypsy' mask. These two constructs represent the two defining structures of consciousness – one charged positively, the other charged negatively – that regulate the European cultural realm.

1.2 The Mask as a Working Concept

While developing my approach to ‘gypsy’ figures in film over the years,⁷ I have assembled the somewhat clumsy term the ‘imaginary gypsy figure’ to emphasise, both lexically and orthographically, the fact that the object of my analysis is a fictional creation with origins in European literature and arts dating back to the fifteenth century.⁸ In addition to that, my goal has been to draw a clear-cut line of demarcation between this literary phantasm, which was conjured into existence at a time when the notion of ethnicity and ethnic minorities was non-existent, and the ethnonym Roma, which denotes actually existing groups of people with a minority status. ‘Roma’ is a relatively novel term; internationally, it has been in circulation since 1971,⁹ while as a self-designation it has a much longer history.

Led by the same intention, i.e. to foreground the artificiality of ‘gypsy’ figures in film and thus to set them apart from real individuals and collectives, a number of film scholars have coined other similar terms, such as “screen gypsies” (Imre), “celluloid gypsies” (Dobрева), “metaphoric Gypsies” (Iordanova, “Mimicry”), “als Rom_nja markierte Figuren” or “nation-ethno-kulturell markierter Figuren” (Kraft). The first two formulations are particularly felicitous, not only because they highlight the constructed nature of ‘gypsy’ faces and bodies on the silver screen, but also because they point simultaneously to the materiality of the medium, to the physical substance out of which these imaginary faces and bodies are produced. An example in the negative comes from the literary scholar Sean Homer who, by contrast, does not recognise the need for a terminological distinction between fictional characters in film

7 See Mladenova’s “Imagined Gypsy” and “Figure”.

8 The first written records of ‘gypsies’ in Europe are to be found in late-fifteenth-century chronicles. As the German literary scholar Klaus-Michael Bogdal wittily puts it in his comprehensive work *Europa erfindet die Zigeuner*, in the beginning were the chronicles. This is where the main problem lies: the chroniclers were not eye-witnesses producing themselves stories and illustrations for a public that was not interested in the actual existence of Roma but in their representations (cf. 23–25).

9 The self-designation ‘Roma’ was adopted in 1971 at the First World Romani Congress, which took place in Orpington (south-east of London) with delegates from fourteen countries (Kenrick 101–108). It needs to be stressed at this point that Roma are not a homogenous group; for the official definition of the ethnonym, see “Council of Europe Descriptive Glossary of terms relating to Roma issues” published online by the CoE.

and actual people existing in the socio-historical world. In his otherwise incisive analysis of *Gadjo dilo* (1997, Dir. Tony Gatlif), the scholar treats the terms 'Roma' and 'Gypsy' as interchangeable synonyms. He questions 'gypsy'-themed films and their claim to authenticity, ultimately encapsulating the findings of his critical examination in the very title of his article: "The Roma Do Not Exist". So, while providing an insightful analysis of screen images, Homer's approach inadvertently disavows the existence of real-life Roma.¹⁰

In the present work, I introduce the notion of the 'gypsy' mask as my main working concept; this newly coined term should complement and expand the notion of the imaginary 'gypsy' figure by putting the stress on its formal (visual) and dramaturgical aspects. In the sense used here, the term 'mask' refers to a legible, socially recognisable sign for a role, which role is enacted by the performer's real face and body. On the big screen, the embodied or enfacéd 'gypsy' mask appears as a two-dimensional image (a segment of the screen) having been previously modelled through various cinematic tools and conventions, such as framing or low-key lighting, for instance. It is important to underscore that the 'gypsy' mask equals a role – an archetypal life-script, a trajectory through mythic time-space, and this motion of the 'gypsy' mask is propelled by a specific set of human values and qualities. Thus, as an analytical term, the 'gypsy' mask calls attention to three important aspects of screen images: 1) the visual tools and devices as well as the technical conventions in cinema; 2) the role of the mythic 'gypsy' and his/her life-story plot; and 3) the constellation of values that set the 'gypsy' mask in motion. The notion of the mask can also serve as a meta-concept in film analysis; we can treat it as a terminological shortcut to signify the abstract content matrix of the mythic 'gypsy' universe.

The present use of the term 'mask' draws substantially on the insights and ideas advanced by the German art historian and media theorist Hans Belting in his book *Faces: eine Geschichte des Gesichts*. Belting operates with the concepts of face and mask, and redefines their meaning in the context of representational arts by shedding light on the

10 Although Charnon-Deutsch does not discuss films, it is worth making a note here of her set of analytical terms. She proposes three discursive categories: 'gypsies', which roughly corresponds to the Romantic construction; 'Gypsies', which is the commonly used racialised designation of actual ethnic groups; and 'Roma' (or Romá, Romany and Travellers), which is a category employed by modern social scientists in an endeavour to conduct research independently of stereotypes, fictions and racialised thinking (11–13).

significance of the mask in prehistoric cult rituals, but also in the epochs that lead up to modern theatre. With his work, Belting endeavours to restore the privileged place of the mask in the cultural genealogy of the face, and so he posits that the face should be understood by way of the mask that depicts or enacts a face (cf. 45). In the words of Belting, in early prehistoric cultures, the ideas that people had of the human face were expressed in the form of ritual masks and used to summon the spirits of the ancestors. These masks also carry statements about the living face, which is understood here as a carrier of social signs and controlled by society. Ritual masks could be artefacts that one placed on one's face or make-up that changed one's face (cf. 44). Belting stresses that the mask is simultaneously a surface and an image, and the same holds true for the face: as a carrier of expressions, in its absence, the face offers itself as an image, while also being a surface that can be painted upon (cf. 45–46). An inseparable element of the ritual mask is the practice of its performance, which Belting calls a 'dance', his blanket term for the stage appearance of the mask. He underlines that the significance of the mask in cult rituals lay less in the mask's physical shape and more in the manner and the place of its re-enactment; being a requisite for a role, the mask and its 'dance' cannot be understood or studied separately from each other (cf. 50). In the modern era, the mask is back on the theatre stage, Belting concludes, embodied by the face; it is a role that the individual has to enact with his/her real face and his/her entire body (cf. 63–64).¹¹

In the context of film analysis, the 'mask' is a particularly fruitful term for a number of reasons. Compact as it is, it is also an ideogram for a 'cultural construct' denoting a material object that both exemplifies and signifies artificiality. Another way of defining it is to say that the 'mask' is a visual synonym of 'representation' as the latter analytical term is used in the representational theory of art. By virtue of its proper meaning, the 'mask' evidences that representations are, above all, material objects, products of aesthetic fabrication, and that their

11 See also Wulf D. Hund's analytical approach to racism as a social and historical phenomenon; in a recently disseminated draft version of his introduction to *Marxist Theory of Racism*, the German scholar comments on the utility of the term "character mask", and points out that Marx used it as a metaphoric phrase to refer to the personification of social relations. Hund goes on to explain that "[s]ocial masks are not a means of disguise. Their usage is not a matter of free choice. Their dramaturgy is not subject to an individual configuration but is prescribed by social relations and grounded in economic conditions" (6).

manufacture is governed by a set of visual tools and conventions specific to the artistic medium. It is, therefore, necessary to view cinematic representations also as material objects (surfaces, two-dimensional screen images) that result from a concrete process of manufacture. Most importantly, the concept of the mask stresses the artificiality of realist and documentary images, drawing attention to the materiality of light and the role that film lighting techniques have in the production – in the very literal sense of the word – of skin colour and ‘ethno-racial’ difference on the big screen.

The notion of the mask makes it obvious that the deconstruction of the ‘gypsy’ mask is hinged on the deconstruction of ‘whiteness’, i.e. the representation of ‘white’ identity, which for the sake of parallelism I call the ‘white’ mask. In this line of thought, the notion of the mask facilitates the comparison between the set of visual tools and conventions employed for the construction of ‘the universal human being as being essentially European and white’, a field of research which falls within the domain of Critical Whiteness Studies, and the set of visual tools and conventions employed for the construction of ‘the imaginary gypsy figure as essentially non-European and non-white/coloured/black’, a field of research which lies in the domain of Antigypsyism Studies. My central thesis is, to phrase it once again, that in the context of nation building projects, the ‘white’ mask and the ‘gypsy’ mask represent the two sides of European cultural consciousness, reflecting its two regimes of seeing, or its two modes of exercising power, and that these two complementary regimes of seeing operate in ‘gypsy’-themed films.

Finally, the notion of the mask foregrounds the theatricality of film. It makes apparent, to the point of tautology, that the ‘gypsy’ mask is not identical with the human being associated with it, that it is independent from the living face (this fact makes it akin to the convention of blackface minstrelsy¹²), and, what is especially important, that it does not necessarily coincide with representations of Roma (i.e. by representations of Roma we should understand here constructs that represent in a mode of normality actual people from the socio-historic world, whereas the ‘gypsy’ mask is a construct that visualises the antigypsy phantasms circulated by art and pseudo-scientific works). The autonomy of the ‘gypsy’ mask provides some explanation for its remarkable plasticity and for its eager appropriation by various individuals and/or

12 For a discussion of blackface minstrel shows and their functions, see Rogin; Roediger; and Saxton.

groups of people.¹³ Finally, the notion of the mask focuses attention on the human face, the most important and carefully constructed *surface* on the screen.

1.3 The Semiosphere: Yuri Lotman's Dialogic Model of Culture

For its broader theoretical framework, my research draws on Yuri Lotman's dialogic model of culture for which the Russian semiotician has coined the special term 'semiosphere'. The meta-disciplinary concept of the semiosphere has proven very beneficial for my work because it opens up ample space for a scientific investigation that strives to abstract the underlying patterns of cultural processes without eclipsing their historical dynamism or their interdisciplinary complexity. In this section, I give a short definition of the semiosphere, in its simultaneous capacity of signifying "an object- and a meta-concept" (Torop 164), and then I outline the manner in which Lotman's understanding of culture informs my approach to 'gypsy'-themed films.

In his texts, Lotman refers variously to the space enclosed by the semiosphere, calling it "semiotic space" ("On the Semiosphere" 205), "specific semiotic continuum" (206), "semiotic universe" (208), "space of semiosis" (*Universe* 124), etc. The main property of this space has to do with providing the necessary conditions for the existence and functioning of languages, which is also to say that outside of the semiotic space there can be neither communication nor language; "[t]he semiosphere is that same semiotic space, outside of which semiosis itself cannot exist" ("On the Semiosphere" 206). While the semiotic space can be conceived mathematically as an abstract space, it also partakes in the properties of living organisms and represents "a unified mechanism (if not organism)" (208). Although Lotman does not state it explicitly, it becomes clear in his exposition that he takes the isolated fact of human consciousness, the universe of the mind (an abstract

13 In show business, for instance, where the 'gypsy' mask has a high selling value, it is eagerly appropriated both by members of the Roma community and by members of national majorities. An example of the first case is the Macedonian Romani singer Ema Redžepova, who takes pride in being called 'Queen of the Gypsies'; an example of the second case is the Manhattan-based band Gogol Bordello, formed by musicians from all over the world, promoting themselves as a Gypsy punk band. The musical genre 'Gypsy punk' was christened by Eugene Hütz, Gogol Bordello's founder, who is known to have Roma ancestry (Dimov 255).

space and an emanation of a sentient being) as the smallest semiotic unit and turns this unit into a general model of culture. As Lotman explains, the semiotic space is suitable for performing the function of a template because it can model all the qualities of the phenomenon onto which the conclusions are being extrapolated: the phenomenon of the conscious mind shares the structure and the properties characteristic of the larger phenomenon of culture.

The space enclosed by the semiosphere is, in other words, the medium of human thought and understanding, of dialogue, and as such this medium precedes language, being the impetus and the precondition for the emergence of languages. Communication, the two- or multi-directional flow of information, is the ontological characteristics of human consciousness; the very nature of this medium is dialogic. Lotman describes the semiosphere as “a generator of information” with a complex inner structure: it is formed by an ensemble of semiotic formations (or embedded semiospheres) occupying a range of hierarchical levels (*Universe* 127). Exhibiting semantic asymmetry, all these semiotic formations are permeated by currents of internal translation that move in a horizontal as well as in a vertical direction (cf. 127, 130). The semiotic space is a space in a state of dialogue where all its semiotic levels are engaged in an information exchange, albeit at different moments in time and at different speeds. Subsequently, each semiotic formation within the semiosphere operates both as a participant in a dialogic exchange and as the space of dialogue (“On the Semiosphere” 225).

The methodological principle of dialogism that undergirds Lotman’s approach to the study of culture, his understanding that communication is the motive power behind cultural processes, allows me to shed light on the dynamic complexity of ‘gypsy’-themed films from a multitude of viewpoints. On the one hand, these works of art can be regarded as the outcomes of a specific dialogic situation in which the national majorities and the minority are the two partners in dialogue. This perspective highlights the politics of film production and raises questions about the institutional mechanisms of the film and media industry. On the other hand, ‘gypsy’-themed films can be regarded as text-messages partaking in a range of dialogic exchanges: within, between or among national cultures in Europe as well as between the cultural core and the periphery/boundary that define structurally the European semiosphere.

By applying Lotman’s dialogic model of culture to ‘gypsy’-themed films, or in fact to any artworks that purvey antigypsy attitudes, there

is one important realisation to be gained. Power asymmetries, often cited as the primary reason for the racialised representations of the minority, do not necessarily preclude the possibility for a genuine dialogue. Consequently, power asymmetries cannot serve as a sufficient explanation for the prevailing antigypsyism in European arts. This realisation logically leads to one important question that I deal with at a later stage of my exposition: given the unequal power relations between national majorities and the Roma minority, what conditions need to be satisfied in order for a dialogue to take place?

1.3.1 Cultural Centre and Periphery

The division of the semiotic space into a centre and a periphery is one of the laws governing the internal organisation of the semiosphere. The centre of the semiosphere is occupied by a natural language that serves as an organising principle for the rest of the semiotic space. This structural nucleus plays a vital role for the semiosphere: without it, the culture runs the risk of being infused with too much diversity (invaded by too many foreign texts), losing its unity and disintegrating. An individualised semiosphere, one that exhibits the highest form of structural organisation, is a semiosphere in which the dominant nucleus formation has reached the stage of self-description. At this stage, the cultural centre elaborates meta-languages, producing texts, such as grammars, laws and various codices, that lay down the norms of language, of behaviour, of dress style, etc. Besides generating norms, the centre is also engaged in extending these norms over the entire semiosphere, horizontally and vertically across its levels. Consequently, the periphery becomes a repository for partial and semi-developed languages or languages that only serve certain cultural functions. The most important feature of the norms generated by the cultural centre is their neutral status, the fact that they are perceived as unmarked (in terms of colour, scent, shape and so on), 'common to all' or 'normal', while the semiotic formations in the periphery, in turn, are perceived as marked or deviant (cf. *Universe* 141). Lotman explains that the act of self-description contributes to the unification and individualisation of the semiotic space. This process also implies the first-person pronoun: the nuclear structure produces a stereoscopic picture of reality, dividing the world into 'my/our' vs. 'their' and claiming "the right to speak for the whole culture" (133). Another consequence of the legislative role of the nucleus is that it banishes all semiotic phenomena that do

not correspond to its norms and standards; these are disregarded or regarded as non-existent (cf. 128–129).

1.3.2 Cultural Boundary

The boundary sets the limit of the semiotic space and serves as a contact surface with extra- or non-semiotic space. Just as in abstract mathematics, the borderline area represents “a multiplicity of points, belonging simultaneously to both the internal and external space” whose function is to translate (re-structure) incoming impulses or texts into the language of the semiosphere (“On the Semiosphere” 208). By nature, the boundary is ambivalent: its situation is epitomised by the oxymoron ‘our pagans’¹⁴ (cf. *Universe* 137). Being a zone of cultural bilingualism (or plurilingualism), it ensures the semiotic contact between two worlds. It both connects and divides two spheres of semiosis, controlling, filtering and adapting the external into the internal (cf. 140). The boundary is therefore in a reciprocal relationship to the homogeneity and individuality of the semiosphere and can also be described as “the outer limit of the first-person form” (131).

Lotman points out that it is an existential need of conscious human life to have a special time-space organisation, or a ‘picture of the world’; the latter comes into being with the help of the semiosphere that structures itself so as to fulfil this basic need (cf. 133). In my exposition, I refer to the special time-space organisation of the semiosphere as a ‘mythic world’ or ‘mythic universe’. Every culture organises itself in the form of a mythic time-space, producing a stereoscopic picture of reality, one that maps out the existentially essential coordinates of human life: the temporal axis of past, present and future and the spatial axis of internal and external space as well as the boundary in-between (cf. 133). Lotman posits that every culture begins its self-description by “dividing the world onto ‘its own’ internal space and ‘their’ external space”, a process that represents one of the human cultural universals (131). As a result of this process, ‘our’ inner world tends to be perceived and dubbed as an organised cosmos while ‘their’ outer world tends to be branded as chaos, “the anti-world, the unstructured chthonic space, inhabited by monsters, infernal powers or people associated

14 Note, for example, that both in English and German Romantic literature, local ‘gypsies’ are conferred the status of ‘familiar other’ (Houghton-Walker 9; see also Margalit 29).

with them" (140). Lotman proceeds to enumerate the elements of the anti-world. It is a travesty underworld symbolised by the robber whose time is the nocturnal time presided over by the moon, whose anti-home is the forest, who speaks an anti-language (obscenities) and engages in anti-behaviour: "he sleeps when other people work, and robs when other people are sleeping" (141). It is worth considering in this context the US film *Under a Gypsy Moon* (Dir. Frank E. Jessop), whose official synopsis sums up the story in just one word: "Crooks" (BFI). The film's title and short description demonstrate in a succinct and unequivocal manner that in artworks the imagined 'gypsy' world is modelled on the anti-world of the semiotic boundary.

As a general model of culture, the semiosphere is both abstract and highly schematic (centre vs. periphery/boundary) and yet simultaneously all-encompassing – comparable to a museum that contains exhibits from different periods of time, in different languages and with various instructions for decoding them (cf. *Universe* 126–127). If I am to adopt Lotman's museum metaphor to my research, the exhibits that come under scrutiny here are film texts displaying a high degree of diversity as to the time and space of their production, i.e. when we consider their historical and cultural contexts of origin. However, as to their content and aesthetics, these works of art display a high degree of similarity, drawing heavily on a shared racialising (antigypsy) matrix. Moreover, 'gypsy'-themed films are not "dead exhibits", but continue "to play a part in cultural developments as living factors" (*Universe* 127). Most of them still circulate in the European and US American cultural realm and worldwide; they are freely available for purchase and are regularly screened on festivals dedicated to Roma culture. What is of great significance is that their essentialist, racialising (antigypsy) content and aesthetics are commonly regarded as 'normal' and, to a great extent, still remain a 'blind spot' in the film industry as well as in academic scholarship. To account for the perceived 'normality' of 'gypsy'-themed films and their regulative functions within and between national states in Europe, I have mapped out Lotman's model of culture onto the European cultural realm, meant to encompass the nation states on the territory of Europe and the USA. In this thus defined European (Eurocentric) semiosphere, the cultural boundary aligns with the 'gypsy' construct, while the cultural centre aligns with the aspirational ideal of 'whiteness'. The two main structural components of the semiosphere represent two complementary constructs that mirror each other in reverse, sustaining one and the same 'picture of reality'.

In academic scholarship, the critical study of the 'gypsy' construct and the critical study of 'whiteness' fall, respectively, into the domains of Antigypsyism Studies/Stereotype Research (see Bogdal, Brittnacher, Patrut, Reuter, von Hagen, Bell, End) and Critical Whiteness/Critical 'Race' Studies (see Dyer, Forster, Garner, Bonnett, Miles, Griffin, Benthien, Hund). As already pointed out, the mask is a particularly valuable concept for film analysis, so for the sake of brevity and terminological synchronicity, I use the 'white' mask and 'gypsy' mask as meta-concepts to denote the cultural centre and the boundary of the European semiosphere. The main endeavour of my research is to examine the 'gypsy' mask – both as an object- and a meta-concept – in the medium of film, to defamiliarise it, spelling out its content, form and functions within the cultural dynamics of European national narratives. Over the length of the exposition, the 'gypsy' mask is described in detail, first as a cluster of attributes, then as a narrative or a life script, i.e. a role charting a symbolic life trajectory. As to its form, the 'gypsy' mask is considered with regard to cinematic conventions and devices, and, finally, attention is paid to its various functions.

1.3.3 Norm Face and Anti-face

In his book *Sehen: Wie sich das Gehirn ein Bild macht*, the German scientist Rudolf E. Lang draws on a series of neural studies to explain the infinitely complex physiology of seeing and face recognition. In the current section, I recap some of his conclusions as they furnish novel evidence attesting to the validity of Lotman's model of culture with its two main structural elements: the centre and the boundary. Significantly, the findings from recent brain research, discussed by Lang, also bear direct relevance for representational arts and for my critical analysis of racialised screen images.

Lang explains that for its ability to make out the image of a human face, the brain relies on a specialised neural system for face recognition. It develops a network of brain cells specialised in one of the seven basic elements that make up the standard human face: face oval, hair, eyebrows, eyes, iris, nose and mouth. What is particularly interesting is that the brain cells are sensitive not only to the form of the said features but also to their size and proportions. In processing the image of the face, the brain acts similarly to a painter invested in giving the most accurate depiction of the object seen. It is as if the brain cells place an imaginary ruler over the facial features and engage in measuring both

the features and the geometric connections they form among each other (cf. 87–89).

Over time, the brain creates an inner normative face, a prototype allowing it to recognise one face amongst hundreds of others in the matter of a split second. The norm face is an artificial product, a face that the brain has never actually seen. The neural recognition system has defined this face, though, by overlaying all observed faces one upon the other and calculating their average value. This inner face prototype explains, for example, why Chinese people are accustomed to seeing small noses, which they perceive as 'normal', while for Europeans, it is the long nose that constitutes the norm. What Lang calls an 'anti-face' (*Gegengesicht*) also has an important function to fulfil. As one experiment¹⁵ demonstrates, the brain needs significantly less time to recognise a given target face when it is briefly exposed to the same face with antithetical features. Such an anti-face has all the characteristic features of the target face but reversed in their opposite: if the target face has a broad forehead, a thin nose and full lips, the antithetical face will have a narrow forehead, a broad nose and thin lips, for example. The main function of the 'anti-face', as Lang observes, is to sharpen the brain's alertness, preventing it, as it were, from going blunt (cf. 91–93).

The findings presented in Lang's book reveal something important about the relationship that the anti-face bears to the norm face. If the norm face created by the brain is grounded in real-life experience, the anti-face created by the scientists for the purpose of their experiment is merely a functional image. Its utility has to do with its ability to invigorate the mental norm image by exhibiting attributes of opposite/negative value, i.e. the anti-face has a derivative nature and has little bearing on actual human faces. This revelation, in turn, has significant implications for the representational arts, where effective contrasts constitute the essence of the craft. One might expect that the task

15 Lang refers to an experiment devised by the neurobiologist David Leopold from the University of Tübingen, who sought to establish if face recognition occurs via a comparison to an inner prototype face. Leopold asked the participants in his experiment to commit to memory the faces of four men. Afterwards, the participants were shown a series of images of a face that gradually assumed the identity of one of these men. The scientist recorded the point at which the participants were able to recognise the target face, noting that the speed of recognition increased significantly when, prior to seeing the image series, the participants were exposed briefly to an 'anti-face' of that person. The face with antithetical features helped the participants recognise the target face when the face shown in the image series had reached a similarity of less than 20% (cf. 92–93).

of breathing life into a literary figure defined solely by its being an inversion/negation of norm images and conceptions would pose a challenge to any writer or visual artist. In fact, succeeding to create such a figure is often a measure of craftsmanship. So, as an illustration of great literary dexterity, I want to bring up in the discussion two quintessential ‘gypsy’ figures from nineteenth-century French literature, indisputably generated with recourse to the principle of the anti-face: the abandoned ‘gypsy’ child Quasimodo in Victor Hugo’s novel *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* (1833) and the ‘gypsy’ temptress Carmen in Prosper Mérimée’s tale of the same name (1845).

It is with visible pleasure that the narrator in Hugo’s novel expands upon Quasimodo’s physical deformities – and, as his overly detailed descriptions inform us, defects plague almost all of the character’s body parts and faculties. The text establishes a clear parallel between Quasimodo’s “misshapen form” and the “blind movements” of his soul, urging the reader to interpret his physical monstrosity as a natural expression of his spiritual depravity from which, one should surmise, both the narrator and his readers are absolved: “he was savage because he was ugly. There was logic in his nature, as there is in ours” (140–142). Here, I quote a small portion of the narrator’s voluminous descriptions, from which portion it is immediately obvious that Quasimodo’s figure has been modelled on the obverse image of the ‘normal’ or average human being.

It was, in truth, a countenance of miraculous ugliness (...) we shall not attempt to give the reader any idea of that tetrahedron nose, of that horse-shoe mouth, of that little left eye, stubbled up with an eye-brow of carotty [*sic*] bristles, while the right was completely overwhelmed and buried by an enormous wen; of those irregular teeth, jagged here and there like the battlements of a fortress; of that horny lip, over which one of those teeth protruded, like the tusk of an elephant; of that forked chin; and above all, of the expression, that mixture of spite, wonder, and melancholy, spread over these exquisite features. Imagine such an object, if you can. (43)

When he had taken the child out of the sack, he found him to be, in fact, a monster of deformity. The poor little wretch had a prodigious wart over his left eye, his head was close to his shoulders, his back arched, his breast-bone protruded, and his

legs were twisted (...) He baptized his adopted child and named him Quasimodo, either to commemorate the clay on which he had found him, or to express the incomplete and scarcely finished state of the poor little creature. In truth, Quasimodo, with one eye, hunchback, and crooked legs, was but an apology for a human being. (138–139)

In sculpting his 'gypsy' figure, Hugo brings the logic of inversion to an extreme, producing an impossible monster. His contemporary Mérimée, in comparison, comes up with a more balanced but just as compelling solution. The narrator in Mérimée's tale introduces the reader first to the Spanish conception of female beauty – as it were, the cosmic order embodied in a female face – and then, against this background, he delineates Carmen's features in a point-counterpoint manner, noting how they conform to and deviate from this beauty ideal.

I seriously doubt whether Señorita Carmen was of the pure breed; for she was infinitely prettier than any of the women of her race whom I had ever met. No woman is beautiful, say the Spaniards, unless she combines thirty points of beauty; or, if you prefer it, unless she can be described by ten adjectives, each of which is applicable to at least three parts of her person. For example, she must have three black things: eyes, lashes, eyebrows, etc.

My gypsy of the Cordova bathing hour could make no pretension to so many perfections. Her skin, albeit perfectly smooth, closely resembled the hue of copper. Her eyes were oblique, but beautiful of shape; her lips a little heavy but well formed, disclosing two rows of teeth whiter than almonds without their skins. Her hair, which was possibly a bit coarse, was black with a blue reflection, like a crow's wing, and long and glossy. To avoid wearying you with too verbose a description, I will say that for each defect she had some good point, which stood out the more boldly perhaps by the very contrast it offered. Hers was a strange, wild type of beauty, a face which took one by surprise at first, but which one could not forget. ("Carmen"¹⁶ 64)

16 In this particular instance, I refer to the uncredited translation of "Carmen" published in *Lotus Magazine* (1914) because, unlike the Oxford edition that is otherwise quoted here, it renders with significantly greater precision the effect of Mérimée's contrastive description.

What these two literary examples tell us is that there is no one logic or content plane of inversion: every writer as well as every artist can devise his/her own formula of effective juxtaposition, highlighting different aspects of human nature and using the strengths of the respective artistic medium. A realist fiction film, for instance, could hardly visualise Carmen's face in such a way that the spectators would immediately discern, feature by feature, the irregularity of its attractiveness against the Spanish paragon of beauty. Nor could the disfigurement of Quasimodo's face and body be shown on the big screen in its all-encompassing dimensions as it is described in the novel. (Interestingly enough, these two 'gypsy'-themed stories are among the most often filmed ones; "Carmen" being the most frequently filmed narrative in the history of cinema (Davis ix).)

This is also to say that the anti-face is just one of the numerous visualisations of the cultural anti-norm, the obverse image of the world that the cultural centre negates in its striving to maintain dominion over the entire semiosphere. In a way, the analysis of 'gypsy'-themed films here is a study of the cultural anti-norm in representational arts; an attempt to cover the variety of possible answers to the following question: How and for what purpose do filmmakers use the 'gypsy' mask in order to represent the anti-world of the cultural boundary, its anti-time and anti-space, its anti-human beings with their anti-faces, anti-homes, anti-language, anti-behaviour, and so on? As to examples from the big screen, I have already highlighted at the start of the chapter several film scenes that make use of the principle of obverse mirroring: the alternative ending in Kusturica's film *Time of the Gypsies* (**Fig. 1**), a frame from the opening scene in *Drei Birken auf der Heide* (**Fig. 2**) where the 'gypsy' characters are first introduced as mirror-inverted human shadows, and a scene from *I Even Met Happy Gypsies* (**Fig. 3**) where the drunken 'gypsy' character Mirta is transported in a rickety cart with his head dangling from the edge of the cart and dragging on the muddy ground.

1.4 The 'White' Mask or the Aspirational Ideal of 'Whiteness'

As already stated, the abstract notion of whiteness is one of the key concepts underpinning my analytical approach to 'gypsy'-themed films. The concept comes from the relatively new academic domain of Critical Whiteness Studies, which sees as its main project "making whiteness

strange" (Dyer 4). Since there are many aspects to whiteness and it itself has multiple layers of meaning, I outline and expand on the insights advanced by the film scholar Richard Dyer, drawing exclusively on his book *White* that, in a nutshell, is "a study of the representation of white people in white Western culture" (xiii).

In the book, Dyer applies his analytical eye to racial imagery that, in his words, "is central to the organisation of the modern world" (1). He develops the notion of whiteness in relation to his discussion of cinematic but also photographic and painted images of human bodies. Simply put, whiteness can be grasped as a surface property of images, a representational convention that makes use of the colour white to depict a specific group of people and, in doing so, to classify their bodies as white. To stimulate a new perception of this ubiquitous convention, Dyer examines a number of questions: Who gets to be associated with the colour white, which also happens to be the default colour of the medium in painting, photography and cinema (white canvas, white paper, white film screen)? What is the symbolic significance of the colour white in Western culture and what are the political implications of identifying some individuals and collectives with it, and others not? How did this artistic convention establish itself as a norm and what is the material and technical production underside to it?

Dyer organises his findings around the notion of embodiment, "the idea of an exercise of spirit within but not of the body in a mode that, as inflected by Christianity, 'race', and imperialism, comes to define the visible white person" (xiv). The logic of embodiment captures the ambivalent nature of whiteness: on the one hand, it reflects a surface property of images of human bodies; on the other hand, it makes manifest the presence of an elusive substance called "spirit, mind, soul or God" that white people have, albeit in different amounts, and that non-white people lack (16). Crucial to the motif of embodiment, as Dyer underlines, is that it makes it possible to think of human bodies in hierarchical terms as "containing different spiritual qualities" (17).

'Whiteness' posits not only a boundary that includes 'white' bodies and excludes 'non-white' ones; it is also inherent to its logic to generate a string of hierarchies among 'whites', cutting across gender, class and/or other socio-cultural affiliations,¹⁷ that is, whiteness never

17 The string of hierarchies described by Dyer is a concrete manifestation of one intrinsic property of semiotic space; as Lotman posits, "the entire space of the semiosphere is transected by boundaries of different levels, boundaries of different

exists separate from the other identity categories. Thus, “in representation, white men are darker than white women”, “[w]orking class and peasant whites are darker than middle-class and aristocratic whites”, “lower-class women may be darker than upper-class men; to be a lady is to be as white as it gets” (57). There is also a geographic gradation of ‘whiteness’ where Eastern Europeans are darker than Western Europeans, while Northern Europeans represent the pinnacle of ‘whiteness’ (cf. 12). As Dyer asserts “[t]rue whiteness resides in the non-corporeal” (45), which makes it a vague and unstable category and yet one that has a remarkable social and political cohesiveness, “often being terrifyingly effective^[18] in unifying coalitions of disparate groups of people” (19). Its strength hinges on its indefiniteness.

In addition to that, ‘whiteness’ can be conceptualised as a set of values, as social norms or as forms of cultural capital in the Bourdieu sense of the word, an approach put forward by the social scientist Steve Garner and extensively discussed in his book *Whiteness*. In the light of Garner’s approach, the notion of ‘whiteness’ can be treated as synonymous with the complex phenomenon that Lotman calls the dominant cultural grammar, a set of norms that is produced, in this case, by the centre of the European semiosphere (cf. *Universe* 128–129). A matching description is offered by Dyer, too, who identifies in whiteness a matrix for social cohesion: “whiteness as a coalition with a border and an internal hierarchy” (51). Historically, the idea of a white people has been instrumental for European rulers and nation states in establishing centralised control over chosen territories and their populations, first on the European continent and then through conquests outside of it (cf. 17).

Another way of approaching ‘whiteness’ is by equating the centre of the semiosphere with the panoptic eye of power that Foucault theorises in his fertile work *Discipline and Punish*. In this theoretical framework, ‘whiteness’ can be conceived of as the hegemonic European regime of seeing that associates one group of people with the colour white. Characteristic of this gaze is that it claims universal subjectivity and is oblivious of its own ‘racial’ position. It is “the (white) point in space from which we tend to identify difference” (Carby 193 qtd. in Dyer 3). The aim of Dyer, as well as the other proponents of Critical

languages and even of texts (...) These sectional boundaries which run through the semiosphere create a multi-level system” (*Universe* 138).

18 The concept of race, of the ‘white’ race, blots out class differences and – as Otto Kirchheimer demonstrates in his overview of the legal order established during National Socialism – it replaces equality before the law with racial equality (356).

Whiteness Studies, is to dislodge the Western European white subject from its invisible position of power,¹⁹ to shift the focus of the panoptical eye in 'white' Western European culture from the 'colourful fishes' to the 'transparent fishbowl' that holds them. The often-quoted fishbowl metaphor that marvellously illustrates the need for a self-reflexive readjustment of focus is Toni Morrison's brainchild. In her book *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, celebrated as the founding text of Critical Whiteness Studies, the American novelist muses over the linguistic strategies employed by 'white' American writers for the fabrication of the "Africanist persona" to come to the realisation that "the subject of the dream is the dreamer":

It is as if I had been looking at a fishbowl – the glide and flick of the golden scales, the green tip, the bolt of white careening back from the gills; the castles at the bottom, surrounded by pebbles and tiny, intricate fronds of green; the barely disturbed water, the flecks of waste and food, the tranquil bubbles traveling to the surface – and suddenly I saw the bowl, the structure that transparently (and invisibly) permits the ordered life it contains to exist in the larger world. (...) What became transparent were the self-evident ways that Americans chose to talk about themselves through and within a sometimes allegorical, sometimes metaphorical, but always choked representation of an Africanist presence. (17)

The call for a self-reflexive shift of focus is palpably necessary in the domains of photography and filmmaking where the relationship between racist/antigypsy narratives and the historical world is mediated, with heightened authority, by the mechanical eye of the camera. In *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*, the film theoretician Bill Nichols makes use of the fishbowl metaphor to discuss the effect of realism in ethnographic and pornographic films. These two film forms, as we shall see, share a number of assumptions and conventions with 'gypsy'-themed films:

The objects of both pornography and ethnography are constituted as if in a fishbowl; and the coherence, "naturalness", and

19 The point here is not to reject the idea of the universal human being but to make visible the racialising imagery that has been lumped together with it.

the realism of this fishbowl is guaranteed through distance. The fishbowl effect allows us to experience the thrill of strangeness and the apprehension of an Other while also providing the distance from the Other that assures safety. (223)

A fitting illustration of Nichols' point is one scene from the cult film *Queen of the Gypsies* (1975, Dir. Emil Loteanu) that has stamped itself indelibly in the memory of its millions of Soviet spectators and can be seen as a key to the compelling allure of Loteanu's style. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the director stages a spectacle in which the ethnographic is masterfully blended with the pornographic. Here is what happens in the scene [1'14'12:1'15'50]. After the free-spirited 'gypsy' Rada has succumbed to the passionate embrace of her suitor Zobar, both of them rolling unawares into the nearby river, the two fiery 'gypsy' lovers set about drying themselves. Naked to the waist, covered only with the wet strands of her long black hair, Rada starts undressing, removing one after the other her numerous skirts, each of them surprising the viewer with a different pattern and colour. Eventually, she spreads all of her skirts, nine in total, out on the ground, creating an alluring patchwork of colours and decorative motifs. What is particularly titillating to this para-ethnographic display of clothing is that, all the while, the viewers are bestowed with the rare opportunity of gazing at Rada's naked breasts, one of the first instances of female nudity in Soviet film.²⁰ Let us be reminded that the voyeuristic gaze and the audience's emotional arousal are both carefully choreographed by the filmmaker, whose gaze concurs with the allegedly objective and

20 Sokolova reports that, in its day, the scene was perceived as almost pornographic. The film director Loteanu refused to cut it out and his decision posed, for some time, great obstacles to the film's release (163). The photographic construction of the 'gypsy' female as seen by a sexually charged, tourist gaze is discussed in profuse detail by the German historian Frank Reuter, who gives various examples in his book *Der Bann des Fremden*: photo postcards from WW1, amateur photographs from WW2, professional photographs in popular magazines from the post-war period, etc. (327–329, 358–359, 458). This representational regime that assigns its subjects the status of colonised, coloured and sexually available 'natives' is also discernible in the documentary footage *Kampf-Geschwader 51 "Edelweiss"*, where a young Roma woman is made to remove her shirt and dance with her bared breasts in front of a soldier's camera [11'20'50:11'21'40]. The dancing scene was filmed during WW2 in Bessarabia, which is, interestingly enough, also the setting where Loteanu staged in the 1970s the undressing of his 'gypsy' Rada. The film *Kampf-Geschwader 51 "Edelweiss"* [Material No. 2] is located in Film Archive Agentur Karl Höffkes and I am grateful to the filmmaker Annette von der Heyde for sharing the source information.

objectifying gaze of the camera. Being an extension of the filmmaker, the mechanical eye of the camera occupies this 'white' or neutral point in space that the viewers unconsciously identify with and from the safe distance of which they can relish in the colourfully erotic display of 'gypsy' Otherness. The pleasure of voyeurism comes in double measure: not only does it grant access to forbidden sights, but it also implicitly affirms the rectitude of the 'white' national majority and its virtuous females, for it is the 'non-white' 'gypsy' who willingly and eagerly exposes her naked flesh and sexuality in public. The consistent portrayal of Rada (Svetlana Tomá²¹) and Zobar (Grigore Grigoriu) as 'non-white' in the modus of the 'gypsy' mask is at the core of the film's ideological workings, for it implicitly assigns characters and spectators to two antithetical universes, a 'black' one on the big screen and a 'white' one in the cinema hall. As the American anthropologist Alaina Lemon discusses in the chapter of her book called "Roma, Race and Markets", in the countries of the former Soviet Union, 'gypsies' are by and large perceived and self-perceived as 'black' (an attribute usually associated with the people of the Caucasus). At the same time, the scholar underlines, Roma "are no darker in complexion than some Russians" (69). Reflecting on the paradoxes of 'blackness', Lemon comes to the conclusion that this racialising category is a 'shifter', its meaning entirely dependent on the social context. For this reason, she argues, 'blackness' can be likened to a personal pronoun whose function is to point to *relations* between 'us' and 'them' rather than to a stable collective or to an actual skin tone (cf. 78).

A final note is in order here with regard to the strategies that can be used to deconstruct 'whiteness' or indeed any of the other racialising constructs ('blackness', 'gypsiness', 'yellow race', etc.), and these strategies move in two directions. One effective approach is to trace the historical development of the idea of 'whiteness' and to point to its varying forms across time and cultural space. The second effective approach is to highlight the discrepancies that surround the notion of 'whiteness' and that is what we shall consider next. In the section to follow, I hone in on the paradoxes and ambiguities that are intrinsic to the colour white as they bear a direct relevance to the analysis of cinematic representations.

21 The 'gypsy' temptress Rada with her long, raven-black hair is performed by the Moldavian actress Svetlana Tomá, who is actually a blonde.

1.4.1 The Visual Rhetoric of Whiteness

The visual identity of ‘white’ people is constructed mainly through association with the colour white. As Dyer points out, white has three distinct aspects that are unrelated to each other but are often collapsed into a single meaning: white as a hue, white as a skin colour and white as a symbol.

With the term ‘hue’, Dyer denotes white as a colour in its own right, a colour that occupies a segment on the colour palette and displays an infinite gradation of tones. The range of possible whites becomes obvious when one thinks of white kitchen tiles or textiles, for instance. Another meaning of white as a hue, found in dictionary definitions, is that of colourlessness. Paradoxically, white signifies both a presence and an absence of colour. It denotes a specific hue and yet a hue that is associated with colour neutrality. This innate ambiguity of white makes it ideal for the representation of a group of people that claims for itself the position of humanity in general. On the one hand, this specific hue guarantees visibility to the group in question, while on the other hand, it marks their position as colourless or neutral, as identical with that of the medium and for that reason invisible. What is more, in physics, white is conceived not as a specific colour but as all colours fused together. In colour theory, white is the colour of light, and neutral light (the painter Roland Rood calls it white light or whiteness) is the ever-present medium in which all other colours are submerged. There is a third important property to white as a hue: unlike other colours, it has an opposite, black. If white is light, black stands for its absence. This absolute polarity that appears natural and corroborates dualistic thought gains significance when it is inflected with whiteness as a skin colour and as a symbol (cf. 46–48).

‘White’ as a skin colour, Dyer argues, is an unclear, internally variable category with an unstable boundary. It is used to describe the pigmentation of human flesh and the latter, to begin with, is infinitely variable.²² In the wide spectrum of complexions, skin that stands the

22 The portrait project *Humanæ* created by the Brazilian photographer Angélica Dass shows that human flesh has a wondrous multitude of hues. In her TED talk “The Beauty of Human Skin in Every Colour”, Dass explains how she came to realise her idea “to document humanity’s true colours”: she photographs individuals, then takes an 11-pixel square from the area of the subject’s nose and paints the portrait’s background with it, matching it with the corresponding colour in the industrial palette “Pantone”. The talk delivered by Dass is a verbal equivalent to

chance of being categorised as white occupies the range between pink and beige. When we think of skin tones as the rich colour palette they make up, it is apparent that there is not and cannot be a clear demarcation line separating the 'whites' from the 'non-whites'. 'White' skin colour, then, is far from being a fixed epidermal fact. It is more adequate to think of it, as Dyer suggests, as an aspiration and, within bounds, as an ascribed attribute. He illustrates his point with the history of make-up in the West, which can be summarised as the history of whitening the face. White skin, the colour of milk or alabaster, used to be a status symbol associated with royalty, aristocrats and the rich, while today it is an overarching attribute of entire nations. The main question is who is in position to say who is 'white'. In this context, the politics of representation comes to play a crucial role. Dyer demonstrates that painters and photographers have often rendered 'white' people as partially or literally 'white'. This in turn has to do with the representational conventions in line drawing and black-and-white photography that depend on "the readiness to take the literally white graphic face as a rendering of the socially white face", a readiness that has been extended over to oil painting and colour film, too (48–49). Finally, to make things more complex, Dyer observes that skin pigmentation is not the only factor in determining one's skin colour ('race'); it is rather an interplay of elements in which skin hue is only one decisive physical feature, the others being the colour and the shape of the eyes, lips or hair. Focusing specifically on colour, Dyer comments that blue eyes and blond hair have come to be exclusively associated with the 'white' 'race', so that 'non-white' people with such features are considered curious exceptions (cf. 44, 48–57). When it comes to the Roma minority, there are many such tell-tale examples. In the introduction to her book *Between Two Fires*, Lemon has placed a photo of a blonde girl, a young dancer from the Moscow Children's Gypsy Ensemble *Gilorri*, photographed minutes before an outdoor performance in 1991. To highlight the perceived incompatibility of blonde hair and "real Gypsies", the scholar comments

her photographic pursuit. It provides beautifully detailed descriptions of her family members and their unique complexions: "an intense dark chocolate tone", "a porcelain skin and cotton-like hair", "somewhere between a vanilla and strawberry yogurt tone", "a cinnamon skin (...) with a pinch of hazel and honey", "a mix of coffee with milk, but with a lot of coffee", "a toasted-peanut skin", "more on the beige side, like a pancake" (Dass). The portraits in *Humanæ* demonstrate in an empirical manner the insubstantiality of the 'racial' ideology with its classification of human beings into four 'races' associated with the colours white, red, yellow and black.

under the girl's photo: "Audience members on this occasion in 1991 (as on others) questioned whether she was an 'authentic Gypsy' because she had blond hair. Sometimes the choir director addressed such doubts publicly before appearances" (15). The question is left open also for the reader, since Lemon explains that the dancers in *Gilorri* were both Romani and non-Romani children and – tellingly – provides no details about the girl's identity.

The third theoretically distinct sense that Dyer isolates in relation to the colour white is that of a symbol. Despite national and historic variations, the symbolic meaning of white is clear and, unlike its other meanings, more stable. Most often it takes the form of a moral opposition in which 'white' stands for 'good' and 'black' signifies 'bad'. Dyer states that this moral symbolism need not carry 'racial' implications. It is used to differentiate between good and bad characters and can be applied to people from the same social skin group. The opposition can work with 'white' people (as in the fairy-tale "Cinderella"), just as it can work with 'non-white' people, as in the film *Dances with Wolves* (1990, Dir. Kevin Costner), or with 'white' people in the deviant context of lesbian romance, as in the film *Desert Hearts* (1985, Dir. Donna Deitch). Since the Renaissance, it has become a commonplace to equate white with a list of moral connotations: purity (physical, sexual, 'racial'), innocence, chastity, cleanliness, goodness, and virtue (cf. 72–73).

The three definitions of white – white as a physical property of surfaces, white as a social/ 'racial' skin colour and white as a symbol of moral virtue – do not need to be activated simultaneously in written or visual texts. Dyer agrees that the contrastive use of black and white need not have 'racial' or moral implications. Yet his perceptive survey of dictionary entries, canonical texts (such as Shakespeare's plays), paintings and films provides ample evidence that there is a pervasive slippage between these three registers, to the effect that questions of colour are abridged into questions of morality²³ (62). In support of Dyer's observations, I want to bring up in the discussion D.W. Griffith's directorial debut *The Adventures of Dollie* (1908), a cinematic re-enactment of the literary motif of child-stealing 'gypsies' and a textbook example of antigypsyism. The official synopsis of the film provides a perfect illustration of the slippage between the three registers outlined by Dyer, focusing on not the colour white but its diametrical opposite,

23 Consider here also Forceville and Renckens's well-illustrated paper "The 'good is light' and 'bad is dark' metaphor in feature films".

the colour black. The Biograph Studio's publicity annotation gives an account of a man who comes to rescue to his distressed wife while she is being pestered by a 'gypsy' basket peddler:

[T]he husband, hearing her cries of alarm, rushes down to her aid, and with a heavy snakewhip lashes the Gypsy unmercifully, leaving great welts upon his swarthy body, at the same time arousing the venom of his black heart. ("Synopsis")

In the quote, there are three references to the 'gypsy' character. First, he is introduced with the ethnonym "Gypsy" and not with a personal name, as someone who is being subjected to lashings. The next clause delivers information about his skin hue – "swarthy" – that in other contexts could have been decoded as a description of a neutral epidermal fact, but here is used to make explicit and lay emphasis on the 'racial' subtext of the ethnonym. The real culmination, however, comes in the third clause. The phrase "the venom of his black heart" activates simultaneously all the three distinct senses of the colour black: black as a flesh hue (not only his skin, but even his heart is of a black hue), black as an 'ethno-racial' colour and black as a corrupted moral quality. The indirect message is that swarthinness is but the physical manifestation of an innate spiritual quality, that the 'gypsy' body literally secretes a poisonous lifeblood. The abridged causal relationship between the man's 'ethno-racial' identity and his spiritual depravity is also what the text offers as a justification for the violence inflicted upon him by the 'white' husband.

1.4.2 Whiteness as an Aesthetic Technology

From the Renaissance onwards, whiteness has also been operative as an explicit aesthetic ideal in Western culture and arts. Dyer details the way in which folklore and literature, the visual arts and intellectual thought have elevated whiteness to a universal paragon of beauty. In Western myths and fairy-tales, for instance, blondness is synonymous with beauty or fairness. By the end of the Renaissance, Christian iconography had succeeded in gentilising and whitening the image of Christ so that in the nineteenth century the son of God was represented not only as light-skinned but also as blond and blue-eyed (cf. 68). In sixteenth-century England, whiteness was identified with beauty, especially in connection to Queen Elizabeth. In his *Farbenlehre*,

Goethe declared the white man to be the most beautiful. The idea of the non-particular, white man also resonated with the Enlightenment ideal of the subject without properties. Intertwining science with aesthetics, nineteenth-century racist thought proclaimed the Aryan race as the pinnacle of human development, including in terms of beauty.

Whiteness as a universal epitome of beauty is identified above all with the 'fair sex', while men are often conceived of as the dark desire that strives after whiteness. Dyer emphasises that this gendered relationship to 'whiteness' is a central feature of the construction of the white skin identity (cf. 70–81). There is a direct link between the idealised image of the fair-skinned, blonde and blue-eyed female who glows with whiteness, as if illuminated by the spirit within, and the development of modern technologies of light, namely photography and cinema. Underscoring the social nature of technologies, Dyer demonstrates that, historically, innovations in the field of film stock, cameras and lighting were geared by the desire to render visible the white beauty ideal. The main concern that steered improvements in photographic equipment was how to render right 'white' flesh tones, how to ensure visibility to the right image, the one that conformed with the prevalent ideas about humanity. The technology of lighting and movie lighting (exposures, lighting set-ups, make-up, developing processes) took the 'white' female face as a norm. This prevalent practice, as Dyer rightly observes, has 'racial' implications. The main argument he puts forward is that photography and cinema have a tendency to assume, privilege and construct the idea(l) of the 'white' person. In this dominant technological regime, the task of photographing people who strongly deviate from the typical subject – generally accepted to be a 'Caucasian' with skin reflectance of approximately 36% – is then seen as a problem.

1.5 The Dynamic Principle of the 'White' Mask and the Dynamic Principle of the 'Gypsy' Mask

In this concluding section to Chapter One, I bring together the various theoretical strands, concepts and insights presented so far, in an attempt to produce a single coherent picture and account for the multi-level identity dynamics within the European semiosphere. As already pointed out, to facilitate the analysis of cultural processes, I refer to the 'gypsy' construct and the construct of whiteness as the 'gypsy' mask and the 'white' mask. The synchronisation of terms is beneficial

to my endeavour because the term 'mask' points to the dual nature of whiteness/gypsyess, the fact that these are conceptualised as a set of attributes and visualised in an embodied form, signifying an abstract cultural norm/anti-norm and a material screen image of a human face.

As an expression of the cultural centre, the 'white' mask refers, as already stated, to a set of heterogeneous attributes whose main purpose is to regulate the various and very different aspects of human existence: the bodily aspect of human life, or how to deal with one's own body – bodily maintenance and grooming (hygiene, health, the socially accepted code for hair styling, etc.), clothing (dress code), sexuality (continence, reproduction, socially accepted rituals); the social aspect of human life, or how to establish relations with other members of society – respect for the individual (individuality, privacy), family structure (nuclear family), social structure and political organisation (sedentary life, private or collective property, capitalism or communism); the spiritual aspect of human life, or within what value coordinates to situate one's existence – religion (Christianity, Jesus and Mother Mary as symbolic ideals), culture (written culture with emphasis on education, rationality and modern science; European/'white' national ideologies; state-supported national literature, music and fine art).

Being an image and a narrative at the same time, the 'white' mask is more than just an aesthetic condensation of socially desirable attributes; it stands for a dynamic principle. It is a shorthand for the paradigm of social integration within the European (read: 'white') semiosphere, specifying the conditions and rules according to which human beings are successfully woven into the fabric of the nation. And so it would not be an exaggeration to say that the 'white' mask encodes the principle of life. Thus, the process of socialisation within the European semiosphere can be understood as a teleological aspiration towards the 'white' mask. This is a self-perpetuating process that should say that newcomers, i.e. new-born children or foreigners, are as a rule indoctrinated into the principle of the 'white' mask as a way of ensuring their successful social integration. Moreover, the principle of the 'white' mask is that of positive reinforcement; it is the benign approach the cultural centre adopts to discipline its members. Adherence to the model behaviour exemplified by the 'white' mask promises the reward of social respectability (i.e. one blends with the majority) and access to resources. The social matrix of power crystallises in the 'white' mask, which underwrites the legitimacy of such figures of symbolic or real power as the Christian deity, the king, the

aristocrat, the bourgeois, the communist, the policeman/judge, the universal human being.

The 'white' mask produces the 'gypsy' mask: both are an expression of the same cultural norm representing the two extreme modes of European cultural consciousness in the context of nation-building projects (two regimes of seeing and of exercising power; two regimes of photographing and filming people). The 'white' mask is the dominant, positively loaded core (read: presence of socially desirable qualities), while the 'gypsy' mask is the peripheral/lowest ranking negatively loaded extreme (read: absence of socially desirable qualities) – both mark the two ends of a hierarchically stratified continuum of attributes along which human nature is culturally codified. This coding can also be reserved so that the 'gypsy' mask is associated positively with primal life energy, as opposed to the 'white', which is associated negatively with lifelessness; this re-coding will be dealt with later. As to time and its narrative encoding, it is important to add that the 'white' mask is associated with the linear progress of time and points to the ideal/modern human being of the future, whereas the 'gypsy' mask stands for the cyclical time of nature and points to the pre-modern human in a state of eternal present. This stratification and hierarchisation of time by means of 'white' and 'black' figures is not confined to antigypsyism only but is a defining feature of racist thought, as David Roediger points out in reference to George Rawick's book *From Sundown to Sunup*:

The racist, like the reformed sinner, creates 'a pornography of his former life... In order to insure that he will not slip back into the old ways or act out half-suppressed phantasies, he must see a tremendous difference between his reformed self and those whom he formerly resembled.' Blackness and whiteness were thus created together. (95)

Viewed as signs, the 'white' mask and the 'gypsy' mask also mark the two extremes on the continuum of relationships formed between signs and their referents; they signify two diametrically opposed relationships between form and content. The 'white' mask stands for the stable, supposedly natural connection between signifier and signified and therefore generates the most authoritative knowledge within the semiosphere, whereas the 'gypsy' mask stands for the loose, arbitrary connection between signifier and signified, opening up a vast space for epistemological uncertainty. The sudden encounter of 'white' Europeans

with 'non-white' 'gypsies', a set piece in many artworks, explores the tension between signs with a fixed referent and signs without a fixed referent. Leafing through the modern European literary canon in her perspicacious article, Katie Trumpener comes to the conclusion that 'gypsies'

become a major epistemological testing ground for the European imaginary, a black box, or limit case for successive literary styles, genres, and intellectual moments. Thus for neoclassicism they are there to symbolize a primitive democracy; for the late Enlightenment, an obstruction to the progress of civilization; for romanticism, resistance and the utopic of autonomy; for realism, a threat that throws the order and detail of everyday life into relief; for aestheticism and modernism, a primitive energy still left beneath the modern that drives art itself; and for socialist and postcolonial fiction, finally, a reactionary or resistant culture force that lingers outside of the welfare state or the imperial order. (874)

If the 'white' mask encodes the principle of life in the films analysed here, the 'gypsy' mask encodes the principle of social disintegration, of failure and death. It stipulates the deviations that condemn the individual to public punishment and exclusion, to symbolic, social and/or physical death. To be labelled a 'gypsy' is a severe form of punishment²⁴ in itself: it means to be categorised socially or 'ethno-racially' as the lowliest form of a human being, to be openly ridiculed, denigrated and denied access to social respectability and resources. When a community ostracises the 'gypsy', it reinforces, in effect, its own norms, rules and values, confirming anew its abidance by the established order.

The strategies of positive and negative reinforcement linked to the cultural norm and its anti-norm can be explained more easily if we draw an analogy to a dance lesson. When a teacher introduces her/his students to a traditional dance, s/he first shows them what is right: the right steps, the right rhythm, the right figures. Performing before the group, the teacher offers a model dance that the students then strive to emulate. After the students have tried out the steps themselves, the second part of the lesson begins: the teacher, who has in the meantime

24 Significantly, the trap of labelling has grave implications for community development projects and policies.

observed the students practising, draws attention to their mistakes. S/he then directs their attention towards the wrong moves – often in an exaggerated manner – delivering the same lesson but this time in the negative. By showing what is wrong, by making a show out of the mistakes made, s/he can elicit laughter, shame or even fear, depending on the pedagogical approach. The dance lesson as such represents a miniature version of the larger process of socialisation within any of the national cultures in Europe, all of which, notably, use the spectacle of ‘gypsy’ mistakes to get their normative message across. The ‘gypsy’ example in the negative is especially useful when a culture’s ‘dance’ evolves at a fast pace with too many complex figures that require an increasingly greater level of skill and discipline; then the negative lesson – the often highly entertaining punitive spectacle of ‘gypsy’ (read: wrong) movements – can acquire crucial political importance and will be restaged with greater frequency and fervour.

Furthermore, the ‘gypsy’ mask can be conceptualised as a collection of heterogeneous attributes that stand in reciprocal relation to the qualities subsumed under the ‘white’ mask. Consequently, the process of socialisation and civilisation, of internalising the achievements of European modernity, can be described as a process of striving to bear the least resemblance to the ‘gypsy’ mask. The ‘gypsy’ mask stands for qualities that – in relation to the qualities laid down by the ‘white’ mask – signify absence, misapplication or reversal, all of which are a form of negation. Here, I give only a short sketch of this construct to pinpoint, once again, its implausibility. Just like Quasimodo, the deviances of the ‘gypsy’ body have a synchronous multitude of dimensions: it is ‘non-white’ and dirty (and thus implicitly attests to the ‘whiteness’ and physical and ‘racial’ cleanliness of the national/European body); it is marked by physical deformities and other shortcomings, such as unkempt hair, scars and tattoos, missing teeth, etc. It is a naked body, a body wrapped in rags, dressed as a caricature of the aristocrat or the suited businessman or the working-class hero. It is a sexually incontinent body, hungry for sexual escapades and abandoned carnal pleasure. It disrespects and misapplies established rituals, rules and laws. It has no proper religion, practising paganism and superstition. It speaks a broken language, a language full of mistakes and malapropisms, or, as Lotman puts it, the anti-language of obscenities. It has no work habits: it is an indolent body, a thieving body or a dancing body, and so on. Thus, the ‘gypsy’ construct – in a reverse form – makes visible certain normative values that have lost their public salience. By claiming, for

instance, that 'gypsies' are lazy, Europeans indirectly remind themselves that they should be industrious and that hard work is one of the core values that should be held in high esteem.

In support of my view that the 'gypsy' mask is antithetical to the 'white' mask, its negation, I draw once again on Katie Trumpener's text, quoting her illuminatingly succinct account of "the Western construction of the 'Gypsy Question'" (848). Importantly, negation, as Trumpener's analysis shows, can also be couched in spatial terms; it can be represented not only through absence, misapplication or inversion, but also as occupying a space that is outside or beyond the domain of the 'white' mask:

Gypsy life remains in the popular imagination as a carefree, deviant, disruptive alternative to a Western culture (...) Moving through civil society, the Gypsies apparently remain beyond the reach of everything that constitutes Western identity (...) outside of historical record and historical time, outside of Western law, the Western nation state, and Western economic orders, outside of writing and discursivity itself. (860)

Invariably, 'gypsy' reality is imagined as antipodal to the 'white' national projects in Europe and, as Trumpener stresses, its purpose is purely instrumental: "[c]ompact, transportable, self-perpetuating, the tropes of racism express the same essentializing beliefs again and again in widely diverging situations and for a whole range of reasons" (861). At this point, it is necessary to readjust Trumpener's geographic map of references and add the rest of Europe to it: for even though 'whiteness' and 'gypsiness' are indisputably products of the Western literary and political imagination, the black-and-white racist dynamics that they unleash are palpably present well beyond the so-called West.

On this last point, we can turn to Bulgarian folklore tradition for one example of astonishing clarity; I refer here to an initiation ritual which is mentioned in passing in an article by the Bulgarian professor of folk arts Georg Kraev. Kraev's text concerns itself with underwear (as a type of cultural immunisation), a topic which has no relevance to our discussion here. Yet it is noteworthy that the scholar introduces the reader to the subject of his analysis by way of commenting on the meaning and significance of initiation rites in Bulgarian oral tradition and, in just three sentences, sketches out one revelatory folklore ritual. Here is how Kraev's article opens up:

Която и да е социално-антропологична общност имунизира културата си (или ценностната си система) против някакъв вид заплаха, „болест“ или синдром за болест. Най-често това е чуждостта. Класическият фолклор или по-право „устността“ се имунизира чрез институцията на „табу“-то. Нарушаването или преодоляването на табуто води до социалната „смърт“ на индивида и преминаването му в нов социален статус. В класическата фолклорна сватба другоселската булка, когато е достигала до междата на мъжовото си село, са я пременявали в носията на селото и тя, прекрочвайки междата, е наричала: „Мойто село – циганско! Батъвото село – царско!“

Any socio-anthropological community immunises its culture (or value system) against some kind of threat, “disease”, or disease syndrome. Most often it is alterity. Classical folklore, or more properly “orality”, is immunised through the institution of the “taboo”. Breaking or overcoming the taboo leads to the social “death” of the individual and his/her transition to a new social status. In the classical folklore wedding, the bride from another village, upon reaching the border of her husband’s village, was re-dressed into the attire of that village and when crossing the border, she called out: “My village – gypsy! The village of Batjo²⁵ (my master) – kingly!” [my translation, R.M.]

This initiation ritual from Bulgarian folklore tradition is yet another example in support of my thesis of the reality-maintenance functions of the ‘gypsy’ mask in a pan-European dimension. The bride’s vocal affirmation of her new abode simultaneously involves the negation of her birth home; the hierarchical opposition between these two spatio-temporal worlds is established with reference to two mythic figures: the old world of the birth village is labelled as “gypsy” and thus assigned, symbolically, to the lowliest and least desirable social position, and, temporally, to the past, while the new world of the husband’s village is labelled as “kingly” and thus assigned to the highest and most desirable social position, and to the future. Kraev leaves

25 The Bulgarian word ‘Баре’ or ‘Батъ’ means ‘older brother’, but also ‘master’, ‘leader’, ‘husband’; etymological dictionaries show that in the early history of the Bulgarian state, the word ‘bat’ was used as a ruling title meaning ‘prince’ or ‘king’.

the bride's ritual affirmation uncommented-on, and proceeds with his topic, clearly assuming that by quoting the bride's call, he can offer his readers a straightforward, easily decipherable explanation as to how the institution of the taboo functions in classical oral tradition. Kraev's scholarly text itself is a testament to the widespread, if not universal, signification of the stigma 'gypsy' and we can discern the reality-structuring effect of the latter both by the manner in which the phantasm 'gypsy' has been incorporated into classical Bulgarian folklore (in a mythic opposition: 'gypsy' vs. kingly) and by the uncritical manner in which this phantasm has been referred to by the scholar, i.e. as a self-explanatory antipode to "kingly".

Here, another important point comes to light from Alaina Lemon's research, in which the pertinent observation is made that scholars often fail to account for the Roma minority through a lens of normality, even when they consciously try to detach themselves from the racialising perspective afforded by the 'gypsy' mask:

In this representational void, many non-Romani investigators see themselves as penetrating a hidden social world, pulling back a curtain of false stereotypes to reveal the variety of the "real Gypsies." But these unveilings sometimes reproduce the veil, if only because the model of a curtained proscenium divides observers and actors into two realms of "reality." The two realms continue to be imagined as maximally different. (80)

The metaphoric description Lemon gives of this peculiar kind of intellectual myopia is very accurate and can be easily remapped onto Lotman's model of culture. Via the veil metaphor, she describes the scholars' inability to reconcile – within themselves, within their own mental universe – the world of the semiotic centre with the anti-world of the semiotic boundary, the two defining structures of consciousness whose main function is to sustain one's inner sense of reality. In this instance, the 'white' mask and the 'gypsy' mask clearly reveal themselves to be externalisations of human consciousness and its two main functional structures; therefore, these two constructs need to be understood as signs that point to inner psychic phenomena rather than to actual humans in the socio-historical world.

The positively coded 'white' mask and the negatively coded 'gypsy' mask create, in other words, the force field that ensures the unity within European national cultures. These two constructs sustain one and the

same myth of the 'white' 'race' and the 'picture of reality' the said myth entails. Just like the 'good cop, bad cop' routine, these two inversely coded forces share the same goal but take recourse to two mutually reinforcing tactics: the tactics of reward and the tactics of punishment. Immersed in the force field of European culture, the individual is inculcated (not to say house-trained) to emulate and strive towards the cultural centre, whose artistic abstraction is the 'white' mask, while, at the same time, despising and distancing him/herself from the cultural boundary, whose artistic abstraction is the 'gypsy' mask. A Janus-faced construct, the 'white' and the 'gypsy' masks lie at the core of European cultural grammar, generating a string of hierarchical boundaries²⁶ that cut, in addition, across nationality/ethnicity, class and gender. This string of bilingual or two-faced boundaries codifies the processes of socialisation on a familial,²⁷ national and supra-national level, specifying at each level what is socially desirable and what is socially unacceptable.

One final note should be made here of Romantic literature in Europe and its role in (re-)shaping and popularising the 'gypsy' mask. When we consider Romanticism in the context of Lotman's model of culture, we can argue that some, if not many, of the Romantic writers envision a radical shift in their works, re-coding the cultural force field defined by the 'white' mask (read: norm (+)) and the 'gypsy' mask (read: anti-norm (-)). Taking a critical stance on the normative worldview in their respective cultures, a handful of Romantics succeed in reversing the values attached to these two constructs, so that the 'gypsy' mask becomes the new norm (+), while the 'white' mask

26 As Alastair Bonnett points out in his book's first chapter, entitled "Who is white? The disappearance of non-European white identities and the formation of European racial whiteness": "the development of whiteness as a racialised, fetishised and exclusively European attribute produced a contradictory crisis-prone identity. Two sets of conflating discourses are implicated in the process: first, colonial imperial and national rhetoric of European racial equivalence that, ostensibly, offered the privileges of white identity to all European-heritage peoples; second, the denial or marginalization of certain European-heritage groups' whiteness, a process of racial suspicion fostered by social exclusion based on gender, class and ethnicity" (8).

27 Consider, for example, the scare story of child-stealing 'gypsies' that was part of the arsenal of so-called poisonous pedagogy (*schwarze Pädagogik*) practised in nineteenth-century Europe; surprisingly or not so surprisingly, this scare story is still in use today. For a study of the motif's journey through popular media and arts, see Mladenova's publication *Patterns of Symbolic Violence*.

is demoted to its anti-norm (-);²⁸ these few Romantics are thus able to uncover the positive potential of psychic phenomena banished to the mythic underworld of 'gypsies'. Here, the analogy with the dance lesson can be helpful again in highlighting one specific intellectual achievement of Romanticism. If we imagine that European societies have been struggling since the late eighteenth century to keep up with the ever-accelerating tempo of modernisation and industrialisation, the Romantic movement signals a halt in the 'dance' and an abrupt change of rhythm and steps. By uncovering the value of the 'gypsy' 'dance', what had been deemed wrong and punishable is now considered a desirable ideal. With recourse to the positively coded 'gypsy' mask, Romantic writers are able to envision and communicate effectively alternative 'dances' to the status quo and these 'dances' are, notably, of two very different kinds: the first kind of 'dance' is past-oriented, i.e. a return to slower and simpler version of the already familiar steps and figures, whereas the second kind of 'dance' is novelty-oriented and as such it represents the point at which true originality can enter the semiosphere.

The majority of the Romantics simply idealise 'dances' of the past, casting literary 'gypsies' "as spokesmen for cultural conservatism" (Trumpener 844) or as tropes of nationalist nostalgia, "envisioned as a kind of time capsule for storing national forms (music, folklore, traditions)" (Lemon 41). Still, a small number of authors brave enough to explore the radical, utopian position that rejects any prescribed 'dance' and, instead, bestows value on steps and figures that arise spontaneously out of the dancer, making the entire idea of mistakes obsolete.

28 Commonly, the idealised and positively connoted image of the 'gypsy' is associated and even equated with the figure constructed by nineteenth-century Romantic writers; hence, it is abridgedly called the romanticised 'gypsy' or the Romantic construct. A closer look at Romanticism and its manifestations in European literatures, however, reveals a different story: the 'gypsy' phantasm is far less often idealised and positively imagined than scholars tend to assume. Since it is beyond the scope of my work to examine the extent to which Romantic 'gypsy' constructs are genuinely positive idealisations, I want to call attention to several literary works, representative of German, French and English Romanticism, which manifestly purvey antigypsy tropes. The reader may consider Achim von Arnim's exceedingly anti-Semitic tale "Isabella von Ägypten", a text that at the same time greatly contributed to the popularisation of the epithet *Zigeunerromantik* (Gypsy Romanticism) (Brittnacher, *Leben* 280). Two more examples, already discussed here, are Victor Hugo's novel *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* and Prosper Mérimée's tale "Carmen". William Wordsworth's poem "Gipsies" is one further example, studiously analysed by Houghton-Walker in her book *Representations of the Gypsy in the Romantic Period* (126–154).

Using the 'gypsy' mask as their main expressive device, as a figure of self-reflexivity and a source of genuine novelty, poets like Alexander Pushkin,²⁹ Nikolaus Lenau or Karel Hynek Mácha indeed broaden the cultural consciousness of the European semiosphere, redeeming the value of freedom and individuality, of love and emotionality, of femininity, of nature, intuition, the subconscious, etc. It has to be stressed here that the Romantics, too, made use of the 'gypsy' mask (and *not* of Roma representations), a genuinely Western construct, universally recognisable, designed to enable the expression of those aspects of the human psyche that are, so to speak, left out in the shadow of enlightened thought. Nevertheless, even when positively connoted, the 'gypsy' mask in Romantic writing preserves its antithetical relationship to the 'white' mask; the normative world and its anti-world may swap their values, with the anti-world turning into an invigorating source of aesthetic innovation, but the line of division between the imagined majority and the imagined minority remains in place.³⁰ Assessed from the perspective of its potential, the Romantic period provides evidence that the 'gypsy' mask is a potent identity tool that can be used to radically re-configure and/or expand cultural consciousness. Scholars are only now beginning to acknowledge the significance of the 'gypsy' construct for 'white' (European/national/social) identity formation, an area of research that has received little academic attention to date. As to cinema, it goes without saying that each national cinema in Europe needs to write its own chapter on the deployment of the 'gypsy' mask in the history of establishing, individualising and stabilising the national self-image as 'white' and European. The current work hopes to provide the basic framework and the impetus for such further research.

29 For an insightful analysis of Pushkin's 1824 Byronic poem *Tzygany* (*The Gypsies*), which extolls "the free exercise of will and caprice, volja" as opposed to "the ordered liberty from rule (svoboda)" (37), see Lemon (35–46).

30 Such is the premise of the clichéd story in Baz Luhrmann's romantic comedy *Strictly Ballroom* (1992), whose title is explanatorily translated in German as *Strictly Ballroom – Die gegen alle Regeln tanzen* [those who dance against all rules]. As David Callahan comments in his article "His Natural Whiteness: Modes of Ethnic Presence and Absence in Some Recent Australian Films", Luhrmann's film uses "ethnic opposition in order to critique what passes for the Australian norm", where the contrastive ethnicity to 'white' Australians is none other but Spaniards-cum-Andalusian 'gypsies'. In the film, the 'gypsy' dancer even gets the steps of the *paso doble* wrong (cf. 97–98).

2

On the Film Corpus



The creation of the film corpus at hand has been steered by two aims. The first is a broader one, and it is to identify a body of films in a pan-European and US American cultural context that – put in very general terms – address in some way the topic of imaginary ‘gypsies’. The second aim is more specific in that this research aims to identify regularities and describe common cultural tendencies in the conception, production and reception of what – again, very broadly formulated – I call ‘gypsy’-themed films. The current chapter presents the five main criteria that have been used for the selection of these films: their theme, form, spatial and temporal provenance, and their level of popularity.

2.1 The Corpus Structure and Selection Criteria

During the phase of film research and film viewing, my primary interest has been to identify film titles that centre around the topic of the imaginary ‘gypsy’ figure, its world and way of life. Such films, very broadly categorised as ‘gypsy’-themed films, form the core of the corpus and are the main object of critical assessment. As a peripheral residue resulting from the selection process, there are a number of titles in the filmography that feature isolated ‘gypsy’ figures, having other topics as their central concern. These films can also be of relevance to the study because a brief appearance of a minor ‘gypsy’ figure can often suffice as a trigger to evoke the imaginary underworld of the ‘gypsy’ Other and shape the film’s overarching message. One example that illustrates

this point well is the Czechoslovak film *Jánošík* (1935, Dir. Martin Frič), in which a female ‘gypsy’ figure makes a fleeting appearance near the end of the saga [56’16:56’26]. With her head covered in a dark-striped cloth, the nameless woman is of crucial importance for the story’s dénouement: she brings false tidings to the national hero Jánošík, and it is through her treacherous agency that the legendary Slovak finds his death, executed publicly at the gallows.

A second residual group of films that can be subsumed only tentatively under the thematic category of ‘gypsy’-themed films comprises works of a paradigmatically different nature. Conceived in conscious opposition to antigypsy imaginations, these films strive to offer a more adequate representation of Roma individuals and/or collectives. Considerably fewer in number, they present an alternative to the core of the corpus, forming an aesthetic countertendency to those films that can be unequivocally termed ‘gypsy’-themed. In short, as for its subject matter, the film corpus is organised around a topic that covers the spectrum from imaginary ‘gypsies’, on its one extreme, to representations of Roma, on its other extreme. Significantly, the boundary between these two constructs at the two ends of the thematic spectrum is permeable, often blurred and subject to playful artistic redefinitions.

As to the filmic model, during the film selection phase priority was given to feature-length films where the fictional element comes to the fore. As a result, the corpus contains ‘gypsy’-themed films that belong to a broad variety of local fiction genres and subgenres: the *bondefilmer* or peasant films from the 1920s in Sweden; Gainsborough period dramas from the 1940s; *españoladas* or Spanish folkloric musical comedies from the 1950s; films that supposedly represent “the endemic Balkan cinematic celebration^[31] of free-wheeling Roma” (Iordanova, *Cinema* 214); auteur works that borrow from magic realism, film *noir* and/or ethnographic documentaries; trash cinema and other forms of fashionable slumming, and so on. At the same time, the corpus contains a number of film titles that belong to the non-fiction spectrum of cinematic forms and/or have other formats, such as full-length and short documentary films, TV series and reportages, or short videos uploaded on social media platforms. The decision to maintain an open stance

31 I strongly disagree with this often-quoted formulation of Dina Iordanova’s. In my detailed study of Aleksandar Petrović’s film *I Even Met Happy Gypsies* (1967), I shed light on the ‘ethno-racial’ masquerade that lies at the core of ‘gypsy’-themed films, and especially the kind of ‘gypsy’-themed films produced by national cinemas in the south-eastern part of Europe (see “Figure”).

towards the fiction and the non-fiction form, often seen as mutually exclusive, results from the observation that 'gypsy'-themed films frequently tend to employ a quasi-documentary style in recreating their imaginary topos, while documentary films about the socio-historical world of Roma individuals or groups often borrow motifs and expressive devices from cult 'gypsy'-themed fiction films. In summary, as to form, the film corpus encompasses the broad spectrum ranging from fiction films, on the one extreme, to documentary films, on the other extreme, the boundary between these two distinct cinematic forms being, once again, fuzzy and subject to idiosyncratic interpretations.

A third selection criterion for films was their popularity, taking at the same time geographic provenance as a primary cue. This rather broadly formulated criterion, which is indicative of the aesthetic long-term impact of the films, can be defined with greater precision by considering the films' international distribution, their participation in film festivals and thematic programmes, the number of awards they have won, and also by the frequency of their appearance in academic and other writing, as well as by the practical aspect of market availability, such as DVD or Blu-Ray re-editions, and/or accessibility on the internet. By coupling the criterion of popularity with that of geographic provenance, it is also possible to identify titles that have gained special prominence in certain language zones and national cultures. The phenomenon of cult 'gypsy'-themed films, ones that hold a distinct appeal for (inter)national audiences, deserves serious scholarly attention, especially with regard to its occurrence in time and across space. In my view, the phenomenon of obsessively popular 'gypsy'-themed films is symptomatic of larger, hard-to-reach, virtually invisible processes of 'white' national identity formation and/or stabilisation.

The geographic scope covered by the film corpus encompasses the European (Eurocentric) cultural zone, including the European family of national states, and the USA. By opting for such a sizeable cultural map, my aim has been to underscore the transnational nature of film production and reception, to acknowledge the significant contribution of translation and migration, and to throw light on the different speeds at which 'white' national identities establish themselves as such within the cultural realm of Europe and the USA. So, while, on the one hand, 'gypsy'-themed films are characterised, albeit tentatively, in terms of their country of origin and language, on the other hand, it is possible to view them from a supra-national perspective, one that goes above and beyond national and/or linguistic boundaries, thereby enriching the

analysis with one more significant dimension. Such a perspective is virtually non-existent in academic research conducted on the intersection of film studies and antigypsyism and, as recent literary scholarship has demonstrated (see here the works of Bogdal and Brittnacher), it can be very fruitful, without precluding the need for more narrowly focused studies. Also supporting my approach is Lou Charnon-Deutsch's observation that it is a dialogue both intercultural and interdisciplinary that has given rise to the construction of the imaginary 'gypsy' and this cultural phenomenon has eluded scientists until recently due to a certain tendency to primarily focus on a single culture or to stay within the framework of a single discipline (cf. 11).

The broad spatial axis of the film corpus is matched by a similarly broad temporal axis: there have been no limits imposed with regard to the release date of the selected films, again with the aim of promoting the contrastive-comparative approach in the ensuing discussion.

2.2 Quantitative Description

In its entirety, the film corpus comprises 153 film titles released between the years 1897 and 2019 within the cultural zone of Europe and the USA, forming a fairly representative body of works on the ambivalent topic of imaginary 'gypsies' as well as representations of Roma. The earliest title in the corpus is the British short film *A Camp of Zingaree Gypsies* (1897) shot on the first wide-gauge film (68 mm, no sprocket holes) and included in the compilation film *The Brilliant Biograph: Earliest Moving Images of Europe (1897–1902)* (2020, Dir. Frank Roumen).³² The latest title in the corpus is the British hybrid documentary feature film *The Deathless Woman* (2019) directed by Roz Mortimer. The titles in between are distributed fairly evenly across time, with a tendency to grow in number the more recent they are.

Broken down by film form, the corpus contains 118 fiction films (including twenty-two silent films, five television films, four television series, two children's films, one short film, and two animations) and thirty-five documentary films (including four television reportages, two silent shorts, two short films, two online video clips, and one student

32 Released by Eye Museum and British Film Institute, *The Brilliant Biograph: Earliest Moving Images of Europe (1897–1902)* shows a selection of digitally restored one-minute "time capsules" from the Mutoscope and Biograph Collection.

film). It should be noted that film series, like the British television drama *Peaky Blinders* (2013), count as one title, just as the German documentary project *Antigypsyism: a film series about Sinti and Roma and Antigypsyism* (2014, Dir. Yvonne Warsitz, and Andreas von Hören) does. The Bosnian film *An Episode in the Life of an Iron Picker* (2013, Dir. Danis Tanović), treated here as a fiction film, is a good example of the borderline problematics that emerge with respect to the categorisation of films according to their form. Tanović's film belongs to both the fiction and the documentary filmic models and to neither of them. Various labels such as drama, semi-documentary, docudrama or documentary leaning towards conventional *cinéma vérité*, *An Episode in the Life of an Iron Picker* reconstructs a real-life story in which the members of a Roma family are cast as the film's main protagonists, re-enacting before a handheld camera their own experiences, with their private home and the surrounding area serving as the film set.

Broken down by country of origin, the film corpus contains twenty-eight titles from the USA; twenty-four titles from Germany, including East and West Germany; nineteen titles from the UK; twelve titles from the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Czechoslovakia; twelve titles from France; eleven titles from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Serbia, and the Former Republic of Yugoslavia; ten titles from Spain; nine titles from Bulgaria; seven titles from Hungary; four from Russia and the Former Soviet Union; three titles from Poland; two titles from Finland; two titles from Sweden; two titles from Romania; and one title respectively from Austria, Australia, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Norway, and the European Union. The sheer number of films is of minor significance here; the focus is rather on their geographic distribution, which allows me to spotlight 'gypsy'-themed films with a cult status/special prominence in the different European and US American geographic and language zones. One such example is the long-neglected Norwegian silent film *Gipsy Anne* (1920, Dir. Rasmus Breistein), recently released in a newly restored version that, it is hoped, will catapult Breistein's masterpiece "back into contention for a place among canonised Norwegian films" (Diesen 17). *Gipsy Anne* is based on a story written in 1879 by the Nynorsk novelist Kristofer Janson and as such "is the first Norwegian film adapted from literature" (Myrstad 184). It is also the first film in the history of Norwegian fiction films that explores the countryside, becoming at the time of its release "an immediate hit both with the critics and the audiences" (Diesen 18). The daily newspaper *Dagbladet* from 14 September 1920 comments that the



Fig. 4a and Fig. 4b. Screenshots from *Gipsy Anne* (1920, Dir. Rasmus Breistein): Gipsy Anne (Aasta Nielsen) working as a milkmaid at the summer farm in Storlien.

merit of *Gipsy Anne* lies in depicting “authentic Norwegian rural life” (25), a new cinematic topic that scholars deem “a breakthrough for the national character traits in Norwegian film” (18). Myrstad concludes in her analysis that the film is “nationalist in its choice and use of rural setting” (191). Paradoxically enough, it is by deploying a central ‘gypsy’ character that the pioneer director “succeeded in confirming ‘Norwegianness’” (Diesen 29), in emancipating Norwegian cinema from the Swedish influence and in establishing “his own ‘Nynorsk’ trend” (19). The character Gipsy Anne is the emblem of nature in his film: it is mainly in association with this female figure (Fig. 4a and Fig. 4b) that Breistein introduces the much-celebrated scenes of contemporary rural life that will come to define Norwegian national iconography³³ (cf. Iversen).

Back to the description of the film corpus, it should also be said that the breakdown of films according to their country of origin contains an element of arbitrariness and aims, in the first place, to provide a bird’s-eye overview. Many of the films, and especially contemporary

33 In a rather similar way, the British silent film *Betta the Gypsy* (1918, Dir. Charles Raymond) is celebrated for featuring British nature in a novel way. As one film review for *The Bioscope* from 1918 puts it on record: “[i]n selecting, for their first British production, a Romany story, Famous Pictures have certainly scored a triumph, for they have demonstrated once and for all that our island is capable of affording scenic effects equal to those of any other country. We have grown to regard flat fields and typical pastorals as our specialty, but here we have mountain gorges, roaring cataracts, and dizzy precipices, and if they are not in reality important enough to open a Cook’s office and tramway to the spot, then all credit is due to the producer who has so contrived each picture as to be a masterpiece of dramatic natural setting” (“*Betta the Gypsy*” 30).

productions, are the outcome of a multinational enterprise; they are often multilingual, some featuring up to six different languages, and quite often they are set in several countries. Therefore, in categorising a film, in the cases when there is more than one country of origin listed, decisive factors were the film's main language, the setting and/or the director's nationality. For example, the film *Just the Wind* (2012, Dir. Benedek Fliegau), a co-production of Hungary, France and Germany, is categorised here as Hungarian, because the film's main language is Hungarian (in addition to Romanian and English), the story takes place in Hungary and the director is Hungarian. Tony Gatlif's film *The Crazy Stranger* (1997), a co-production of France and Romania, featuring the French, Romanian and Romani languages, set in Romania, is however categorised here as French on account of the director's nationality. The international and multilingual aspect of individual films is highlighted to point out the limitations of the category "country of origin", its historical instability and vagueness, and at the same time to offer another argument in support of my view that 'gypsy'-themed films need to be assessed from a supra-national perspective.

2.3 Sources of Information

It goes without saying that the singular make-up of the filmography of 'gypsy'-themed films presented here has been influenced both by my specific research interests and by my personal circumstances. Throughout the duration of my research from 2015 to 2020, I was based in the town of Heidelberg, the site of the Documentation Centre of German Sinti and Roma, which explains my over-reliance on sources located in Germany. My main sources of films include:

- my personal collection of films on the topic;
- the film archive at the British Film Institute, London;
- the film archive at the Deutsche Kinemathek, Berlin;
- the film archive at the Documentation Centre of German Sinti and Roma, Heidelberg;
- the film archive at the goEast Festival, Wiesbaden;
- the film collection at the Library of Heidelberg University's Slavic Institute;

On the Film Corpus

- the film programme of the goEast Symposium “Constructions of the Other – Roma and the Cinema of Central and Eastern Europe”, screened in Wiesbaden in 2019;
- the film programme “Kino Romanes”, screened at Kunstverein Heidelberg in 2015.

Further sources of information that were consulted during the phase of film selection, categorisation and description include the official websites of the respective films, when these are available, the *Internet Movie Database* (IMDb), the websites *Amazon*, *YouTube* and *Vimeo*, and the online catalogues and archives listed in Annex I.

2.4 The Corpus Building in Retrospect

The process of compiling the film corpus at hand can be described as a progressive transition from total chaos to relative order. At the beginning of my research, I strove to view every single film I could track down, which in itself is an overwhelming task. At the same time, I had a specific interest in abstracting the cultural grammar that governs the ‘gypsy’ mask on the big screen, and more specifically that invariable component in its content and form that is decipherable across time, culture or medium. Working on this assumption – that the ‘gypsy’ mask is a material expression of a cultural universal – I have developed a set of selection criteria that steer towards an ahistorical, interdisciplinary, cross-cultural and transmedial approach to film analysis.

In order to work out the universal component encoded in the ‘gypsy’ mask, I have made a point, on the one hand, of considering these films as autonomous works of art, each of them creating their own system of signification that functions independently, outside of their cultural and historical embeddedness. On the other hand, I have been interested in the ‘translatability’ of the ‘gypsy’ mask, a tell-tale sign of its universal dimension, and have, therefore, attempted to establish connections, to highlight lines of tradition across time zones, across cultural and linguistic zones, and across genres and media. More than half of the films in the corpus have been subjected to numerous viewings, coupled with meticulous note taking and a review of the accompanying promotional materials, the so-called ‘paratexts’, such as film press kits, magazine reviews, DVD bonus features and commentaries, interviews with film directors and the cast, festival programmes, etc., as well as scholarly

articles. My first and foremost questions with regard to each film have been: Does the film aim to authenticate the 'gypsy' mask? Does it stage 'ethno-racial' alterity? If so, how? If not, what does it do instead? As a result, I was able to identify three aesthetic tendencies in film productions that make use of the 'gypsy' mask. Characteristic of the first type of films is the (often non-reflected) intention to authenticate the 'gypsy' mask, to simultaneously reify its existence on- and off-screen, and thus by implication to authenticate and reify the 'white' mask. Such films perpetuate an essentialist worldview of 'gypsy' culture and insist on the identity between the socio-historical world and the fabricated screen images, between really existing humans and the figures of film language. These films employ an intricate technology for truth production, which is an object of comprehensive discussion in the ensuing chapters. The second type of films tend to take a consciously playful stance towards the 'gypsy' mask, and while making deliberate, even exaggerated use of it, they furnish it with a new content. The development of this artistic strategy can be well traced by studying Tony Gatlif's prolific body of work. The third type of films are films that transcend the 'gypsy' mask; they entirely abandon the essentialist aesthetics of authenticity, directing instead their critical gaze towards the dominant culture and its structures of power. These films tend to embrace a constructivist worldview, displaying a high level of self-reflexivity; they develop representational alternatives to the 'gypsy' mask, i.e. more balanced and adequate depictions of Roma individuals and/or collectives. My initial intention was to also cover here this body of innovative artistic work, but in the process of writing, I realised that the topic of 'gypsy'-themed films is large and complex enough to fill the pages of a single book. It also became clear to me that to do justice to the phenomenon of oppositional films, I would need to analyse them in the same level of detail as I do 'gypsy'-themed films, and this is something I intend to do in the near future as a logical continuation of this study. A final remark: the reader should also bear in mind that the research presented here attempts to offer an interpretative coordinate system for a sizeable number of unique works of cinematographic art. So, in many cases, the proposed coordinate system is bound to appear schematic and will not always do full justice to the complexity of the material; that is to say, the films categorised as one of these three types often adhere not only in different degrees but also in a different manner to the respective aesthetic tendency.

3

The Literary Motif of Child-stealing ‘Gypsies’ and Silent Film



Appraising ‘gypsy’-themed films produced in the beginning of cinema, and more precisely, in the period between 1894 and 1927, known as the silent film era, constitutes in itself a Brobdingnagian task, and saying this is hardly an exaggeration. Silent films that avail themselves of ‘gypsy’ tropes are astonishingly numerous and just as astonishing is their popularity in the first years of filmmaking production; works like *Rescued by Rover* (1905), to give one example, are cited nowadays as aesthetic landmarks in the evolution of film language. However, up until today, there has been no sustained research that examines the scale and the impact of antigypsyism during the silent film era, not to mention a systematic survey of film productions. Therefore, as an effective point of entry into this vast and hitherto untraversed territory, I focus attention on the tenacious motif of child-stealing ‘gypsies’. As I have shown elsewhere, the literary motif of child-theft lies at the core of the ‘gypsy’ construct and forms a stable component of its malleable content. Over the past four centuries, this motif has been re-interpreted in a plethora of art forms, only to be revived anew with the tools of the seventh art in silent film. What makes this motif particularly intriguing is the fact that it disappears in the era of sound film. During the silent period, it enjoyed immense popularity, but with the advent of sound, the highly lucrative drama of ‘gypsy’ child-theft vanished from the silver screen almost immediately and for good. One cannot help but wonder why.

To navigate the complexity of the topic – and for that it is necessary to develop a perspective that transcends traditional academic distinctions between art forms as well as between national cinemas – I take

the following steps in the current chapter. In Section 1, I examine the motif's narrative content and visual form, paying special attention to the aesthetics of whiteness as the latter has been transposed to the silver screen. For this purpose, two silent films are subjected to a close study, namely D.W. Griffith's cinematic debut *The Adventures of Dollie* (1908) and the work of an unknown filmmaker entitled *Zigeuneren Raphael* from the year 1914. Section 2 offers new, further evidence of the motif's widespread popularity in the silent era,³⁴ commenting on its disappearance or rather fragmented residue in cinema as we know it. Section 3 throws light on the motif's indebtedness to Cervantes' *novela* "La gitanilla" (1613); the analysis here aims to emphasise the fact that Cervantes' exemplary tale provides a nascent narrative blueprint for national identity formation, hence the tale's remarkable sway over national literatures across Europe. Section 4 considers the motif's plausibility, its disciplinary function and its specific relation to what a given culture perceives as reality. By comparing four cinematic versions of *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*, Section 5 focuses on a number of variations in the motif's content and form, showing how the fictional and intrinsically metaphoric 'gypsy' persona is stabilised on the big screen into an 'ethno-racial' one, which is racialised,³⁵ colour coded in a realist style. By taking an analytical stance that intersects media and

34 The impulse to examine the child-theft motif in the context of film and to write this chapter came from the conference 'Gypsy' Images in Children's and Youth Literature („Denn sie rauben sehr geschwind jedes böse Gassenkind...“ „Zigeuner“-Bilder in Kinder- und Jugendmedien), which took place in Berlin in 2016. In 2018, I took a year's break from my doctoral research to coordinate the pilot project *The Stigma 'Gypsy'. Visual Dimensions of Antigypsyism*, in the framework of which I had to examine the motif of 'gypsy' child-theft in visual media. My findings were published in 2019 under the title *Patterns of Symbolic Violence*. The book concludes with an un-commented, annotated filmography of 49 works on the motif; the main source for my annotated filmography is *Filmography of 'Gypsy' Films: 1897–2007* (*Filmografie des 'Zigeunerfilms': 1897–2007*), a database containing more than 2,500 film titles. Due to these developments, I had to re-work Section 2 of the current chapter. It is now no longer the principal source of evidence that attests to the motif's popularity in the silent era and its later disappearance, as originally conceived, but only furnishes additional proof, listing further film titles, which I have also been able to view and provide summaries of.

35 The term 'racialisation' is employed here in the sense of Robert Miles. In his book *Racism*, the British sociologist posits that 'racialisation', or its synonym 'racial categorisation', is "a process of delineation of group boundaries and of allocation of persons within those boundaries by primary reference to (supposedly) inherent and/or biological (usually phenotypical) characteristics. It is therefore an ideological process" (74–75).

national cultures, my aim is to shine a light on the interdependence of modern visual media, and especially film, the aesthetics of illusionist realism, and the ideology of racism. Furthermore, by adding a diachronic dimension to my film survey, I want to redress the presumed East-West geographic asymmetry in the production of ‘gypsy’-themed films. It is rather significant that the cinema of the silent era – which came into existence and flourished in Western Europe and the USA – abounds in films about ‘gypsies’, a thematic domain associated nowadays almost exclusively with Eastern European and “Balkan cinema”, as the latter has been problematically dubbed by the film scholar Dina Iordanova³⁶ (*Cinema of Flames* 213).

3.1 The Symbolism of Light and Colour in *The Adventures of Dollie* and *Zigeuneren Raphael*

Early silent films are for the most part black-and-white works, to re-state the obvious; they employ the full spectrum of tones – from the brightest white to the darkest black – to create the illusion of form, showing a three-dimensional world on the two-dimensional screen. However, in early films about ‘gypsy’ child-theft, the black-and-white value contrast – the basic prerequisite for the effect of reality – is

36 Re-charting the cultural space of Europe, the film scholar Dina Iordanova creates a new field of film scholarship that she calls “Balkan cinema” and that she then analyses and evaluates from a perspective which, while being mostly critical of the Western gaze, at times however coincides with it. Thus, unsurprisingly, ‘gypsy’-themed films are treated as a characteristic feature of this newly coined and under-researched cinema, as “endemic” to ‘the Balkans’ (*Cinema of Flames* 214). Again, not surprisingly, Iordanova’s book *Cinema of Flames: Balkan Film, Culture and the Media*, published in 2001 by the British Film Institute, is one of the few largely accessible and often-quoted academic publications that consider the phenomenon of ‘gypsy’-themed films in a broader cross-cultural framework. By reviving the perception of ‘the Balkans’, Iordanova’s book attains international visibility. It is much easier, indeed, for Western (academic) audiences to relate to the inclusive concept of ‘Balkan cinema’ than to work on a differentiating list of cinematic traditions belonging to remote and ‘obscure’ nations. But the book does little justice to the region in question and its seventh art. It maps out a new field of film studies by bundling a broad range of national cinemas under the label of ‘the Balkans’, limiting at the same time its inquiry to the perceived Europe/Balkan divide and to a critique of the Balkanist discourse. Although the author claims to have been influenced by seminal texts from post-colonial studies, Iordanova runs the risk of reproducing the colonial gaze with an approach that perpetuates the language of hierarchical asymmetries in its spatial map of references. (cf. 5–26, 213–232).

layered, in addition, with a number of metaphorical significations. The drama of child-theft stages the encounter, a rather hostile encounter, between two mutually exclusive worlds: the world of the 'white' mask and the (under)world of the 'gypsy' mask. If we take recourse to Lotman's terminology, we can say that these films elaborate an edifying visual juxtaposition of the embodied cultural norm (or centre) and the embodied cultural anti-norm (or boundary). And if the contrastive relationship between white and black (the colours used to represent light and darkness) is that which allows the human eye to make out physical forms, the contrastive juxtaposition of 'white' vs. 'gypsy' figures provides viewers with a mental coordinate system, moulding their inner 'picture of the world' and assigning them a place in it, and thus nourishing a collective sense of reality. These fictional stories spell out the basic moral coordinates a given culture lives by, training the mind to distinguish that which is good and commendable from that which is bad and despicable. With recourse to 'white' and 'gypsy' characters, the photographic effect of three-dimensional verisimilitude attains a fourth, psychological dimension; the fictional reality of film world is expanded into a shared cultural reality.

When approaching these films, a wealth of information can be drawn from analysing the strategies that filmmakers use to stage 'normality', on the one hand, and the strategies they employ to stage alterity, on the other hand. Here, I pay special attention to the correlation that the films establish between the characters' appearance, inner qualities and their role in the story. When it comes to the figures' outer appearance, it is illuminating to examine who is privileged by the use of light and the colour white, who is not, and how. The question of how this is achieved foregrounds the technological options that early filmmakers had at their disposal and that were required for the construction of the highly demanding – from a cinematographic point of view – ideal of 'whiteness'. The photographic apparatus available at that time imposed various limitations, so, as the films here evidence, it is the medium of dress that filmmakers use to articulate social and 'ethno-racial' taxonomies; 'whiteness' as well as 'gypsiness' are marked mostly through the costumes. When filmmakers are able to construct 'whiteness' on the level of skin colour, the emphasis, naturally, falls on facial skin colour, especially in close-ups, as well as on hair colour. Still, costumes – with their cut, fabric, colours, designs, and accessories – remain the privileged medium for designating the characters' social status and 'ethno-racial' affiliation.

Before moving to the film examples, it is necessary to consider one substantial difference that sets apart textual from cinematic portrayals of characters. In a written text, be it a literary or a scientific one, it suffices to describe a character's appearance once; usually this is done upon introducing that character. If the text brings up the fact that a given character is clad from head to toe in white every time it refers to that character, the text will be criticised for undue repetitiveness, even for its bad style, unless we talk of epos, with its pervasive use of epithets. In film, by comparison, the attribute 'white' is part and parcel of the medium; in fact, it is a portion of visual information that is repeated throughout the entire length of the story. If a character is clad from head to toe in white, the image of its white body will be reproduced with each and every successive frame and it plays an integral part in the film's overall visual design. This is to say that the medium of film – unlike the medium of written text – is predisposed to give greater prominence to the black-and-white colour symbolism underpinning the characters' portrayals and, therefore, can leave a stronger impression on the spectator's mind. This specific asymmetry in aesthetic impact that privileges the cinematic portrayal of characters should also be borne in mind when reading the text descriptions of film scenes in this as well as in the following chapters.

3.1.1 *The Adventures of Dollie* (1908), USA

There is one moment in D.W. Griffith's debut film *The Adventures of Dollie* (1908), one portion of a scene only about twenty seconds long, that captures the pith of the drama hinged on the elusive threat of child-thieving 'gypsies'. The subtlety of the moment provides an insight into the cinematic genius of this controversial American director. In the scene, we can see little Dollie (Gladys Egan), a three-year-old girl with a white ribbon in her hair and an impeccably white dress playing on the lawn at her family's country residence. She is bathed in sunlight, which makes her doll-like figure glow with whiteness. Her loving parents have left her for a minute on her own. (Dollie looks like a smaller image of her mother (Linda Arvidson), also clad in white from head to toe; whereas her father (Arthur V. Johnson) wears a darkish trim suit.) In that short moment of parental absence, out of the shady bush behind Dollie's back jumps the vengeful 'gypsy' (Charles Inslee) running at full speed towards the child. We have seen him earlier in the film when he tries to peddle his handmade baskets to Dollie's mother and snatches



Fig. 5. Screenshot from *The Adventures of Dollie* (1908, Dir. D.W. Griffith): clad in a radiant white dress, little Dollie (Gladys Egan) is contrasted to her 'gypsy' abductor (Charles Inslee), whose shady figure looms threateningly behind her.

at her purse but is caught in the act and beaten up by Dollie's father. The 'gypsy' wears a rural outfit; his clothes have, in comparison to the elegant bourgeois family, a dowdy look and are dark in colour. So, when he is sprinting towards Dollie, the man appears like a fast-moving shadow among the trees. Instead of snatching the girl and disappearing, though, he halts in the shaded area right behind Dollie. His threatening dark body makes several lunges at the girl, yet for some reason he is unable to reach her (**Fig. 5**). It is as if the 'gypsy', this shadow of a human being, is afraid of the light: in one of his lunges, his face catches a ray of sunlight, quivers and instantly shrinks back into the shade. All the while, Dollie, radiating whiteness in the sunlit area at the foreground, stands within an arm's reach. Eventually, the man from the shadow manages to pull the small girl towards him, grab her in his arms and exit the lawn.

In a condensed manner, the child-snatching scene juxtaposes light and darkness, conjuring up the archetypal fear of darkness engulfing light. What Griffith so finely achieves in his first film is to overlay the

age-old dichotomy of light and darkness (lack of light) with the colours white and black (non-white), and to associate this with the complex matrix of social hierarchies. The figures are associated with light and the colour white³⁷ in strict accordance with their gender, social class and – there are reasons to assume – ‘ethno-racial’ affiliation. Judging by the costumes, Dollie and her mother are modelled as true incarnations of physical, moral and ‘ethno-racial’ purity, and as such are virtually defenceless against the ‘gypsy’ intruder. It is a responsibility of the father to stay alert and protect them. To provide for the security of his family, he is allowed to retain his aggressive streak, which is also signalled by the darker tone of his otherwise elegant suit. We can read about the father’s encounter with the ‘gypsy’ peddler in the *Biograph Bulletin* from 1908:

There has come into the neighborhood a band of those peripathetic Nomads of the Zingani type, whose ostensible occupation is selling baskets and reed ware, but their real motive is pillage. While the mother and child are seated on the wall beside the stream, one of these Gypsies approaches and offers for sale several baskets. A refusal raises his ire and he seizes the woman’s purse and is about to make off with it when the husband, hearing her cries of alarm, rushes down to her aid, and with a heavy snakewhip lashes the Gypsy unmercifully, leaving great welts upon his swarthy body, at the same time arousing the venom of his black heart. (“Synopsis”)

By implication, the film’s official synopsis leads one to believe that the father has a ‘white’ body and a virtuous heart, while the violence he inflicts upon the ‘gypsy’ male is morally justified, because it constitutes nothing other than a necessary self-defence measure.

It is important to note that the film does not construct ‘ethno-racial’ differences on the level of skin colour, for all characters are of the same skin hue. This uniformity of facial skin colour can be probably explained by limited skill and technical constraints: Griffith composed his first film out of medium and long shots; only later would he come to employ

37 When discussing white as a hue, Dyer points out that it is considered by most Western theorists of colour to be the colour of light. The paradox of white is that it signifies both colourlessness and the fusion of all colours, which makes it very suitable for the designation of a social group or ‘race’ that considers itself universal. Unlike other colours, white has an absolute opposite, black (cf. 46–48).

close-ups with protagonists wearing the typical thick layer of white make-up (on the functions of white make-up in early film, see Section 7.3.1). In other words, in medium and long shots, the character faces have a surface that is too small for intelligible 'ethno-racial' coding. Again, due to technical constraints, it was not possible to construct difference with regard to hair colour. *Dollie* was shot on an orthochromatic film stock, an early type of film stock that was insensitive to reds and yellows and did not allow cinematographers to capture such significant traits as blond hair. The story takes place in the open, so for the lighting Griffith used natural daylight, which has a blue colour temperature and is therefore well suited for the orthochromatic film stock. When it comes to facial skin or hair tone, the characters are indistinguishable from one another, so 'ethno-racial' difference is marked on the surface of their bodies: through integration with sunlit or shadowy décor and through the amount of the colours white and black apportioned to their apparel. The female 'gypsy', for example, is given a bit of whiteness: under her dark bib apron, there is a white shirt showing, but the lower part of her body is wrapped in a black skirt; the 'gypsy' male is covered head to foot in dark clothes.

Circulated as an advertisement text by the Biograph Studio,³⁸ the official film synopsis provides a first-hand indication that the carefully graded light and colour symbolism in Griffith's film is meant to be deciphered not only in moral and social but also in 'ethno-racial' terms (see also Section 1.4.1). So, it is legitimate to say that the tension created between light/white and shadow/black in the child-snatching scene has one more layer of signification, and that is 'ethno-racial' affiliation. The short scene dramatises, in other words, the existential danger that 'non-whites' pose to 'white' society. What is at stake here is the family's heiress. By stealing 'white' *Dollie*, the swarthy 'gypsy' not only commits a heinous crime against a loving parental couple; he also poses a threat to their hereditary bloodline from a classist point of view, and creates conditions for miscegenation from a racist point of view. The 'gypsy' child-theft as such threatens to destabilise the regnant model of social integration based on inherited property and 'blood' purity.

To sum up, if we read *Dollie* as a dialogic exchange between the cultural centre and the cultural boundary, we can say that the 'white'

38 Peter Gutmann, for example, quotes the official film synopsis, giving *New York Dramatic Mirror* from 18 July 1908 as his source, which shows that the synopsis appeared in the press.

protagonists in the film embody and act out the dominant socially integrative force that, in these particular socio-historic circumstances, is marked with the following positively loaded constellation of values: white (= good, enlightened, of noble blood, white 'ethno-racial' identity), bourgeois class, love, family, property, affluence, modern sedentary lifestyle. The 'gypsy' protagonists embody and act out respectively the peripheral force of social disintegration brought into association with the following negatively charged constellation of values: dark (= evil, unenlightened, of impure blood, non-white 'ethno-racial' identity), social outcasts, vengeance, (domestic) violence, theft, poverty, pre-modern nomadic lifestyle. Cinematically, all these values are colour coded mainly via the characters' outfit: the elaborate costumes – with their colours, forms and accessories – assist the viewers in making out who the figures are, what social and 'ethno-racial' groups they belong to, how they relate to one another, and, not unimportantly, what their inner qualities and intrinsic motivations are.

3.1.2 Lucrative Literary Motif

The story of the little 'white' girl who is first kidnapped by a vindictive 'gypsy' and then restored to her loving parents is pivotal in the career of D.W. Griffith, the man who pioneered modern filmmaking and whose prolific body of work³⁹ earned him the title of the "Father of Film" and "Inventor of Hollywood" (Brownlow and Gill). Before making his director's debut, Griffith scraped by as an actor and writer. He had a scornful attitude towards cinema and agreed to shoot *Dollie* – stepping in as a replacement for an indisposed director – forced by financial difficulties and on the condition that he could resume his acting job with Biograph afterwards. His entry into the filmmaking industry, in the words of Tom Gunning, "was a matter of financial necessity rather than an act of preference" (Gunning and Mottram 1). *Dollie* was, above all, a profit-oriented venture. As the opening lines in the synopsis suggest, the topic of 'gypsy' child-abduction was deemed to be the film's

39 In addition to *The Adventures of Dollie*, there is one more work in the director's long filmography that takes up the motif of 'gypsy' child-theft, namely *The Peach-basket Hat* (1909); see the synopsis in Section 3.2. At least another five of Griffith's films revolve around the topic of 'gypsy' vengeance: *An Awful Moment* (1908), starring Florence Lawrence; *A Tragic Love* (1908), starring Arthur Johnson; *What the Daisy Said* (1910), starring Mary Pickford; *A Romany Tragedy* (1911), starring W. Christy Cabanne; and *The Spanish Gypsy* (1911), starring Wilfred Lucas.

main selling point: "One of the most remarkable cases of child-stealing is depicted in this Biograph picture, showing the thwarting by a kind of Providence of the attempt to kidnap for revenge a pretty little girl by a Gypsy" ("Synopsis").

In all fairness, D.W. Griffith cannot be held responsible for choosing the story of 'gypsy' child-theft: the film script was written by Stanner Taylor. Yet Griffith was able to produce a piece of work that "showed a remarkable understanding of the medium" and "was as good as most films made by veterans of five years of direction, and better than many" (Everson 42). Film scholars underline the artistic merit of Griffith's early Biograph films and emphasise that these films should be evaluated on their own and not "merely as stepping stones to *The Birth of a Nation* and *Intolerance*" (Gunning and Mottram 2). In *100 Silent Films: BFI Screen Guides*, Bryony Dixon describes *Dollie* as "a little proto-feature film – like a seed. Sprinkle it with a few subplots and swell to an hour's running time and it would make a perfect little American drama that generations of us are familiar with" (8).

In his book *Before the Nickelodeon: Edwin S. Porter and the Edison Manufacturing Company*, the film historian Charles Musser explains that the kidnapping genre emerged in 1904; it was made popular in the USA by such English imports as *The Child Stealers* (1904). As illustrious examples of this family-centred drama Musser gives Cecil Hepworth's *Rescued by Rover* (1905) and D.W. Griffith's *The Adventures of Dollie*, commenting⁴⁰ that:

All have remarkably similar narratives. A gypsy or some other outcast steals and then abuses the young child of a respectable, upper-middle-class family. The parents experience a range of emotions – anguish, guilt, remorse – over their loss. As in *Stolen by Gypsies*, the situation is usually more poignant because the victim is an only child. In the inevitable happy ending, the child is rescued and the nuclear family restored. (314)

The film scholar Jon Gartenberg argues in turn that "[t]he apparent sophistication in his [Griffith's] first directorial effort may be due more to the genre conventions of the gypsy films (including camera pans)

40 Setting Musser's film appraisal aside, it cannot be left unremarked that this well-known film scholar and practitioner refers to the Roma ethnic minority as one type of social outcast.

having been established in 1904 and 1905 than to Griffith's ingenuity." In an exhibition on early cinema that Gartenberg curated for "the Whitney Museum of Modern Art [sic]" in November 1979, and more specifically in a programme entitled "Makes and Remakes: The Kidnapped Child Story", he compares *Weary Willie Kidnaps a Child* (1904), *Rescued by Rover* (1905), *The Lost Child* (1904), *Stolen by Gypsies* (1905), *Rescued from an Eagle's Nest* (1908), and *The Adventures of Dolly* (1908). Tracing the development of chase films in these stories of child-kidnapping, Gartenberg shows that "plot elements of inattentive parents, the disappearance of the child, worried adults, and a reunited family became established as conventions of the genre. (...) Griffith brought to *The Adventures of Dollie* these plot elements. In structure, his film is transitional, looking forward to his rescue films" (16n8).

In his book *D.W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film: The Early Years at Biograph*, the film historian and theoretician Tom Gunning also points to the structural identity between *Dollie* and Griffith's later works:

Dollie's story forms a perfect match with Todorov's "minimal complete plot". It provides an archetype for many Griffith Biograph films: the threat to a bourgeois family by an invading alien causes narrative disequilibrium, while narrative closure is achieved by regaining family harmony. (65–66)

Gunning explains Griffith's breakthrough with the intelligibility of his storytelling and with the film's reliance on stock character types. The understanding of stock character types, as the next quote shows, partially overlaps with the term 'mask' adopted for the analysis of films here. As has been explained in Chapter One, the notion of the mask stands for a decipherable sign embodied by the face; it is a visual form subject to representational conventions that has control over the body and expresses itself in culturally coded behaviour, a face-as-a-sign that triggers a social role (cf. Belting 44–55). In the case of *Dollie*, due to the cinematographic constraints, it is the characters' entire bodies, their clothing and movements, and not their faces, that take over this expressive function:

With its stock melodramatic character types and simple moral dualism, *Dollie* deals in action rather than psychology. Camera distance limits access to characters. The small, puppetlike figures

are of necessity limited to a series of stock, easily recognizable gestures. (...) In his first film, Griffith showed his ability to supply the easily comprehensible stories that nickelodeons demanded. (69)

Gunning's comment can be pushed a little further to say that in *Dollie* D.W. Griffith showed his ability to shoot black-and-white films that sold well, because their narrative fed into the black-and-white paradigm of racist mentality in US American culture at the turn of the century. Griffith's debut film evidences that the 'gypsy' mask – with its complementary function to the 'white' mask – already belonged to the arsenal of stock characters in the first years of cinema history. What is more, the motif of child-stealing 'gypsies', which had a career-turning effect for the Father of Film, was inflected in the aesthetic modus of whiteness, a filmmaking approach Griffith later raised to new heights of craftsmanship in his excessively popular white supremacist work *The Birth of a Nation* (1915). Turning to take a look at the silent films made in the same period on the Old Continent, we can see that film directors in Europe used the same black-and-white visual design in their ecranisations of child-theft stories, creating racialised images of 'gypsies' in juxtaposition to 'white' representatives of the dominant culture. Certainly, European nations did not share the US American history of slavery and 'race' relations, a history that to a great extent can be held accountable for Griffith's mind-set, yet what Europeans did have in common with their US American counterparts is the self-commendatory self-perception of belonging to a 'white' nation and thus of being 'white', something which the following Danish film demonstrates.

3.1.3 *Zigeunereren Raphael* (1914), Denmark

The silent feature film *Zigeunereren Raphael*, shot by an unknown director, tells the story of a noble heir who is stolen as an infant by 'gypsies', only to discover his true identity twenty years later by falling in love with a 'white' lady. The film's opening sequence centres on the figure of a small fair-haired boy – clad in white – who is raised high by a group of gentlemen during a social gathering in an affluent residence hall. The gentlemen wear black tie, while the ladies are predominantly costumed in white dresses. An intertitle informs us that "Baron Wilhjelm feiert die Taufe des Stammhalters" (Count Wilhjelm celebrates the baptism of his son and heir). One may notice that the boy is not introduced by

his name in the explanatory text; the omission tells us that the boy's significance in the story derives from his place in the family's genealogic lineage rather than from his individual personality.

In the next sequence, we see the arrival of a group of 'gypsies' who scramble chaotically out of a wheel-wagon, each carrying a different musical instrument. The uninvited entertainers pour into the hall where the count's celebration is taking place and cause havoc among the genteel guests by begging and making all-too-insistent offers to play music. The 'gypsy' intrusion foreshadows a rupture in the patrician family, as the arrangement of bodies in **Fig. 6** foreshadows. Soon after their entry, the 'gypsy' king and queen succeed in separating husband from worried wife, settling themselves in the unlit space in between the couple.



Fig. 6. Film still from *Zigeunerer Raphael* (1914, Dir. unknown): the 'gypsy' interlopers posing a threat to the unity of Baron Wilhelm's family. Film still courtesy of the Danish Film Institute.

The scene's main appeal lies in the taxonomic spectacle of dress: the contrastive display of various costumes is there to stress the figures' belonging to two diametrically opposed social and 'ethno-racial' groups.

The elegant formalwear of the aristocrats is set off by the 'gypsy' attire, an assembly of disparate elements that evoke associations with pirates, circus entertainers and exotic Indians. In the still, the 'gypsy' king has taken off his hat, revealing his long, dark, somewhat unruly hair and bushy beard in stark contrast with the clean-shaven and balding count. In this and most of the other scenes, the insignia of the 'gypsy' king are his big black pirate's hat trimmed with long feathers and coins, his ornamental kingly robes and his voluminous black cloak. The costume of the 'gypsy' queen comes close to white here, but her skirt – compared to the count's snow-white shirt or to his wife's fine gown – appears worn out and in need of washing. She is adorned with numerous flashy decorations and carries a black-haired baby strapped on her back – all of which give her figure a darker appearance. Disgruntled, the count sends the intruders away. In revenge, the 'gypsy' king sneaks into the count's mansion later that day and steals his son, enveloping the child's white figure in his black cloak. During the night, the boy is christened Raphael by an old 'gypsy' sorceress in a ceremony that can be best described as an inversion of the Christian ritual. The 'gypsy' baptism takes place under the cupola of the dark sky, by the light of an open fire, amidst smoke and wild vegetation. It is notable that the count's heir acquires his individual first name, which will stay with him throughout the story, through the agency of the 'gypsy' sorceress; paradoxically, it is the contact with the shady 'gypsy' world that confers individuality on the 'white' hero.

Twenty years later, Raphael is a full-fledged member of the 'gypsy' clan, his distinguishing marks being a pair of round earrings, often highlighted in close-ups, and a beplumed hat. Raphael's fellow companion is the 'gypsy' princess Zelma, who stands out through her headdress, decorated with coins, beads and long feathers, and her eye-catching skirt in broad black-and-white stripes. The true drama in the film ensues when Raphael and his cousin Inger, a light-haired girl invariably dressed from head to toe in immaculate white, meet, unaware of their kinship, and fall in love with each other. Between them stands jealous Zelma (Fig. 7).

Just as in *The Adventures of Dollie*, the story follows the circular structure of an initiation rite. The main 'white' hero enters the dangerous zone of the shadows (psychologically, a sign for his unconscious self), represented as a narrow dark space or as the night world of the 'gypsies': when the 'gypsy' king snatches Raphael, he envelopes the boy's white body in his black cloak; later the 'gypsies' hide Raphael in a bass guitar;



Fig. 7. Film still from *Zigeunerer Raphael* (1914, Dir. unknown): the once stolen-child Raphael (Emanuel Gregers) participates in a dangerous circus act in which the ‘gypsy’ princess Zelma (Emilie Sannom) plays a knife-thrower, aiming at him, while the ‘white’ lady Inger (Zanny Petersen) acts as his protectress. Film still courtesy of the Danish Film Institute.

in the still above (**Fig. 7**), he finds himself at the far end of a ‘gypsy’ tent (Dollie is also hidden by the male ‘gypsy’ in a wooden keg). In the zone of the shadows, the ‘white’ hero undergoes a series of trials. As we can see in the still (**Fig. 7**), Raphael participates in a dangerous circus act: he is the target boy, the jealous ‘gypsy’ Zelma plays the knife-thrower aiming at him, while the high-born ‘white’ Inger acts as his protectress. Eventually, the hero returns to the normal world of daylight or to his conscious self, gaining in the process a new understanding of himself. If ancient myths couch this ordeal in plastic metaphors of light and shadow, modern texts and especially film tend to provide a literal, black-and-white interpretation that bears directly on the hero’s social and ‘ethno-racial’ identity and contributes to its stabilisation. What Raphael discovers through his ordeal in the shady world of the ‘gypsies’ is the skin-deep truth of his noble descent, his helper being a ‘white’ girl who vouches his noble origin by falling in love with him.

In *Zigeuneren Raphael*, modelling facial skin colour through lighting and make-up⁴¹ is not the main strategy for racialised Othering. White facial make-up is used in the film primarily to ensure visibility, to make the faces of the main actors legible, no matter whether they play a 'gypsy' role or that of a noble aristocrat. Still, some difference is marked with regard to hair tone, grooming and styling: it is noticeable, for example, that Inger, like Raphael's mother, is fair-haired, while Zelma is an indisputable brunette. The significant colour coding, however, as in *Dollie*, occurs on the level of the costumes: the finely graded amount of white renders social hierarchies visible in terms of their class, gender and 'ethno-racial' ingredients. It is the aristocratic children and women that form the top end of the whiteness hierarchy and 'gypsy' men its bottom end. The film's black-and-white visual design coupled with its archetypal narrative structure serves to re-affirm the superiority of the 'white' upper class, providing visual evidence for its genealogically essentialist rationale. Adjacent is the idea of the superiority of the 'white' 'race' and its biologically based rationale. Even though Raphael has been brought up by 'gypsies', the story seems to argue, he knows to recognise the virtues of a 'white' lady and succeeds in winning her heart because he, too, has noble blood running in his veins.

The fact that social and 'ethno-racial' difference is marked with recourse to the characters' costuming is of crucial consequence for the story's dénouement: Raphael can return to his birth family and resume through marriage his rightful place in the upper class. As in a theatre play, it is enough for him to change his 'gypsy' attire for a 'white' one; he is not hindered by skin colour. In this early silent film, 'white'/'gypsy' identity are not linked to a realist and thus immutable 'ethno-racial' colour: they are not systematically modelled by the use of lighting and make-up. 'White'/'gypsy' identity are mutable, which

41 In analysing the aesthetic technology of light, Dyer states that "it was developed with white people in mind", the human face being the touchstone and the white face, the norm (89–90). Dyer exemplifies his point by taking a look at the interaction of film stock, lighting, and make-up in the early years of cinema. Until 1926, filmmakers had no other choice but to use orthochromatic film stock, which was insensitive to the colours red and yellow and rendered them dark. The solution to this problem was to use white make-up in combination with carbon arc lights; the latter were, however, very hot and highly unpleasant for the actors. An alternative and much more convenient option would have been incandescent tungsten light, but the filmmaking industry refrained from it, because it contained red and yellow, which made faces look dark on the orthochromatic stock (89–92).

suggests that they are to a great extent metaphoric in content. At this point, the underlying matrix of masquerade clearly transpires: the film stages an initiatory change of masks, where the mask functions as legible signs for psychological and social roles. Raphael has first to experience the 'gypsy' spectrum of life values before he can truly commit to their 'white' opposites. But if this initiatory cycle is believable and fully legitimate in fiction texts or on the theatrical stage, it falls short of plausibility in the medium of film as we know it. The more film-storytelling is dominated by the aesthetics of realism, the more obsolete become plots like in *Zigeuneren Raphael*, where the *full* cycle of initiation is related, that is, the hero's temporarily changing his 'white' mask for a 'gypsy' mask as a way of gaining access to his individuality and acquiring his name. To put it in other words, a film that is invested in illusionist realism cannot support a story in which the leading character is initially 'white'-skinned, then turns 'non-white' to re-emerge again as 'white'-skinned, not in a modern culture whose picture of reality is underpinned by the biological concept of 'race'. What contemporary film narratives tend to do instead is focus exclusively on one of the two worlds that are part of the hero's initiation rite, thereby stabilising his metaphorical 'white'/'gypsy' identity as an 'ethno-racial' one. (This phenomenon is further discussed in Section 3.5 in reference to four contemporary screen adaptations of Victor Hugo's novel *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*.) In this line of thought, the silent era provides an invaluable insight into the mechanism by which fiction texts are transformed into cinematographic ones. Sharing greater affinity with the figurative language of literature and theatre, silent films resort with greater ease and more frequently to the motif of 'gypsy' child-theft, thereby laying bare the motif's multiple layers of signification: the psychological, social, 'ethno-racial' aspects conflated in this initiatory narrative, as well as its black-and-white aesthetics of representation. Meaning is produced through juxtapositions between light and shadow and their human embodiments: the world of the 'white' hero is set in stark contrast to the world of the 'gypsy' anti-hero.

Without doubt, *Zigeuneren Raphael* is a work of remarkable artistry. In its narrative structure, it follows the logic of 'ethno-racial' masquerade by the force of which modern 'white' and 'gypsy' identities are (re-)produced in complementary juxtaposition to each other, being the two defining structures of the European semiosphere, one embodying its centre; the Other, its boundary. If we are to sum up, in the form of



Fig. 8. Film still from *Zigeunereren Raphael* (1914, Dir. unknown): the 'gypsy' king (Valdemar Møller) leaves the stolen count's heir on the ground, which leads to the incident with the snake-bite. In the still, the 'gypsy' king, who blends in with nature, is even shown to hold a writhing snake directly above the child's head. Film still courtesy of the Danish Film Institute.

keywords, the cluster of attributes which the two masks represent in this silent Danish film, we can say the following. The 'white' mask is coded positively with the attributes of whiteness, aristocracy, love, family, Christianity, wealth, sedentary life. The 'gypsy' mask is coded with the opposite values of non-whiteness, social pariah, vengeance, jealousy, child-theft, pseudo-Christianity, poverty, nomadic life and, in addition, it is also associated with snakes and calamities. The association of the 'gypsy' mask with reptiles and natural disasters is rendered in such a haunting way that it deserves a mention here by way of a short digression. Images of reptiles appear both at the start and at the end of the film. At the beginning, just after having kidnapped Count Wilhelm's heir, the 'gypsy' king leaves the child on the ground and while he is away throwing his pursuers off track, the boy is bitten by a snake (**Fig. 8**). (This scene represents a contrastive inversion of the formal gathering in the count's affluent mansion, in which the

not-yet-baptised child is raised high towards the ceiling by his father and his fellow gentlemen.) Snakes also appear towards the end of the film, when the vindictive 'gypsy' Zelma sets about to collect vipers in a pond and then secretly slips into Inger's bedroom to fill her bed with the horror-instilling reptiles. There are very evocative close-ups in this sequence, one of them showing Inger's white leg – so white it almost blends in with her white bed sheets – covered in black vipers, (or so we are informed by the intertitle; at a closer look, the vipers look more like lizards). On account of the snake incident, the townsmen gather and decide to chase the 'gypsies' away. The latter flee, and in an attempt to obstruct their persecutors, they set the heath on fire, causing a large-scale calamity.

Before moving to the next section that foregoes a close reading of filmic texts to offer instead a bird's-eye view of the silent era and its preoccupation with child-theft stories, I want to draw attention to some intriguing details that concern costume colours and patterns. As the close analyses of *The Adventures of Dollie* and *Zigeuneren Raphael* have shown us, early black-and-white films use costumes to mark their wearers' social status, 'ethno-racial' affiliation and inner traits. Not only the amount of white or black colour apportioned to the clothes, but also the fabric, the cut and the accessories are carefully placed clues that help the viewer to locate characters within the complex matrix of social and 'ethno-racial' hierarchies and to decode their role in the film – how central or peripheral they are for the story's dénouement. Most films feature the ideal female figure, often the mother of the stolen child, who is a woman of noble descent elegantly dressed from hat to shoes in impeccable white. As a symbol of beauty, status and wealth, she is also the aspirational presentation of the collective social and/or 'ethno-racial' self. In antithetical contrast, the ignoble 'gypsy' figures wear predominantly black – exotic, mismatched, variously patterned, or simply ragged clothing. Interestingly, in many black-and-white films, 'gypsy' figures stand out with their striped outfits; in fact, the stripes in 'gypsy' costumes appear to be singularly characteristic of early black-and-white films, because we see them disappear with the advent of colour film.⁴² Beside Zelma in *Zigeuneren Raphael* (Fig. 7), the reader

42 In colour films, 'gypsy' costumes mobilise, more often than not, a colour of symbolic significance. This colour can be black, intense red, a mixture of bright, contrastive tones, or even white, but in juxtaposition with swarthy skin. The costume scholar Sarah Street notes, for instance, in her book *Colour Films in Britain* that 'gypsy' costumes are used to display colour in *Wings of the Morning* (1937, Dir.



Fig. 9. Screenshot from *Betta the Gypsy* (1918, Dir. Charles Raymond): Betta (Marga Rubia Levy) and her beloved Hubert (Edward Combermere), both dressed in photogenic striped clothing, take a love pledge by making a small cut on the wrist and mixing their blood.

can find further examples of 'gypsy' figures marked by a striped piece of clothing in the section to follow, as well as in Annex II; consider in particular *Rescued by Rover* (1905), *The Firefly* (1913), or *Betta the Gypsy* (1918) (**Fig. 9**). In Ernst Lubitsch's *Carmen* (1918), towards the film's end, Asta Nielsen moves about with a long, striped cloth over her shoulder. In *Jánošík* (1935), as discussed in Chapter Two, a stripy shawl is the distinguishing trait of the 'gypsy' traitor.

Harold D. Schuster), the first Technicolor film made in the British Isles. The film tells the story of a love affair between a horse trader and a young 'gypsy' girl. When the girl "first visits Clontarf's castle, her dress is distinguished by a daisy pattern which is differentiated from the less decorative costumes worn by the non-gypsy women. One of the gypsy dancers has an orange underskirt which is shown as her outer dress swirls up as she dances for the guests, emphasising the spectacle of the dance as well as the revelation of colour" (Wigley).

3.2 The Motif of 'Gypsy' Child-theft in Silent Film

As films that cash in on the story of 'gypsy' child-theft, *The Adventures of Dollie* and *Zigeuneren Raphael* represent just the tip of the iceberg. The silent period abounds in 'gypsy'-themed films and, as I demonstrate in the annotated filmography in *Patterns of Symbolic Violence* (149–181), the stock motif of child-abduction is among the truly popular ones in the formative years of cinema, if not the most popular antigypsy motif. In the present study, I provide a list of twenty-two films that offer further evidence of the motif's ubiquity, expanding the above-mentioned filmography with yet another fifteen titles (see Annex II).

It is notable that some of these silent films are, in one sense or another, pivotal works: they are either debut films or provide a fruitful platform for the development of new stylistic devices, making a lasting contribution to the development of film language. Such titles are Lewin Fitzhamon's short film *Rescued by Rover* (1905), which, according to the British film scholar Michael Brooke, "ranks amongst the most important films ever made", marking "possibly the only point in film history when British cinema unquestionably led the world", because it represents "a key stage in the medium's development from an amusing novelty to the 'seventh art'",⁴³ or Edwin S. Porter and Wallace McCutcheon's short film *Stolen by Gypsies* (1905) (see here Gartenberg⁴⁴ 9–10; and

43 Brooke adds that the film enjoyed an unprecedented success, with more than 400 copies ordered, which prompted the producer Hepworth to re-shoot the film twice so that he could produce new negatives. *Rescued by Rover* also appears to have influenced the innovative style of D.W. Griffith; it has two sequels, also produced by Hepworth and directed by Fitzhamon, which represent variations of the same story: *Dumb Sagacity* (1907) and *The Dog Outwits the Kidnappers* (1908). In *Fifty Key British Films*, the film historian Ian Christie points out that *Rescued by Rover* succeeds in incorporating several well-known motifs "that would prove to be a winning formula", namely a nursemaid who is distracted by a soldier while tending to a baby, a snubbed beggar-woman who avenges herself by stealing the baby and a faithful dog who helps the family find its stolen child. Christie remarks in a footnote that the kidnapper is not strictly a gypsy "since we see her attic lair" (7), but his argument does not hold ground, because it is not uncommon for silent films to portray 'gypsies' as slum dwellers and, moreover, the film credits are very clear on this point, naming Mrs. Sebastian Smith "as Gipsy" (BFI).

44 Jon Gartenberg discusses the stylistic device of camera movement in a number of chase films produced by Edison and Biograph from 1900 to 1906; the scholar takes a particular interest in the question of how camera movement was employed to suggest or articulate simultaneous action. One of the paradigmatic films that he analyses is *Stolen by Gypsies*, which through panning "creates a more sophisticated narrative with two autonomous stories: on the one hand, the chase, and on the

Musser 314–317); or Charlie Chaplin's film *The Vagabond* (1916), which Graham Fuller defines in one article for the British Film Institute as "Chaplin's first masterpiece", a "pivotal work" of his Mutual period "and his most touching"; or Karel Anton's directorial debut *Gypsies* [*Cikáni*] (1921), which together with his film *The May Fairy* (1926) is credited with inaugurating the lyrical tradition in Czech cinema (Bock 15). The selected listing also suggests that some silent film directors like Lewin Fitzhamon and A.E. Coleby literally specialised in the motif.

Finally, at the risk of repeating myself, I have to say that the filmography on the 'gypsy' child-theft motif is still far from complete. So far, I have been able to identify the presence of the motif primarily by surveying the films' titles, synopses or the keywords of their content and, of course, by viewing the works. The real number of films that take up this archetypal story, however, must be significantly larger if one considers works from other cultural zones, as well as films with non-transparent titles that lack a synopsis or keywords of content, or in which the motif of child-stealing 'gypsies' is used as a subplot.

In all of these films, the main drama involves the temporary loss of one's 'white' mask to the 'gypsy' mask and its subsequent (re-)discovery. This carnivalesque change of masks, as already discussed, represents an archetypal story pattern for identity formation, be it individual or collective identity. The psychological function of the story aside, it is not difficult to spot here another function of the 'gypsy' child-stealing motif that is very cinematic and has to do with the technical challenge of indoor and outdoor shooting: the provisional acquisition of the 'gypsy' mask allows for a visual study of two diametrically opposed modes of existence. On the one hand, there is the world of 'normality' situated in spaces that are in themselves signs of the attainments of Western culture and civilisation: solid mansions and castles, rich interiors full of fine furniture pieces, books and scientific contraptions, inhabited by human beings sporting shapely apparel and making use of advanced transportation devices, etc. Placed next to the world of the 'gypsies', this 'normality' appears estranged, enabling the viewer to re-evaluate and appreciate it in its own right. Unlike 'white' people, 'gypsies' move through spaces that are the sole work of a magnanimous but often merciless nature; there are hardly any material signs of culture in their surroundings. The camera rejoices in contemplating dramatic

other, the recovery of the baby, unrelated to the apprehension of the supposed culprits" (10).

landscapes, such as vast fields, steep mountains, overflowing rivers, majestic waterfalls where one can directly experience the extremities of the weather: snow, rain, flood, or mud. The 'gypsy' world is populated by human beings clad in old-fashioned, striped or tattered clothes, their property amounting to musical instruments, makeshift tents and wooden wagons. In films that construct and exploit such clear-cut oppositions, the motif of 'gypsy' child-theft comes to serve as a ploy that enables filmmakers to bring these two mutually incompatible modes of existence into a single story and to demonstrate, at the same time, their technical skills and the technological advancements in photographic equipment. The motif furnishes the narrative logic behind the repetitive jump cuts from one world to the other; it connects these two worlds in a contrastive study producing a thrilling visual spectacle, both in psychological and cinematic terms.

3.3 The Motif's Literary Roots: "La gitanilla" (1613), Spain

The literary roots of the 'gypsy' child-theft motif, as scholars have pointed out,⁴⁵ go back to Miguel de Cervantes' *novela* "The Gypsy

45 In his book *Zigeunerbilder: Ein dunkles Kapitel der deutschen Literaturgeschichte. Von der frühen Neuzeit bis zur Romantik*, the German literary scholar Wilhelm Solms dedicates an entire chapter to the child-abduction motif, arguing that the rumour of child-stealing 'gypsies' has been circulated primarily by literature and belongs to one of the most infamous antigypsy stereotypes. The author notes that all works in German literature published before 1800 that make mention of this motif are directly or indirectly indebted to Cervantes' tale "The Gypsy Girl". This observation brings him to the conclusion that the pernicious rumour does not rest on historical events but is a literary borrowing from Cervantes which has been subsequently transformed. Solms provides a list of more than fifteen German writers who employ this literary borrowing in their texts, among which Goethe, Schiller and E.T.A. Hoffmann (cf. 159–167). In *The Spanish Gypsy: The History of a European Obsession*, Lou Charnon-Deutsch reports that the classic 'gypsy' motifs of Golden Age Spanish literature – baby-snatching being one of them – were already tested in the sixteenth century by Cervantes' Spanish and Portuguese literary predecessors (18). Lope de Rueda, one of these authors, had used the motif of child-stealing for his play *Comedia llamada medora (A Comedy Called Medora, 1567)* having, in turn, borrowed the device from Luigi Giancarli's *La Zingana (The Gypsy Woman)* written in 1545. According to Charnon-Deutsch, the myth of baby-snatching by 'gypsies', though, was first propagated by German historians in the fifteenth century (56). It should also be born in mind that stories about paupers who turn out to be nobleman as well as other tales of mistaken identity were the literary stock in trade at the time (35).

Girl" ("La gitanilla"); published in 1613, it is the first tale in the famous collection *Novelas ejemplares*.

A brief note is in order here: Cervantes wrote his exemplary tale at the beginning of the seventeenth century, when, obviously, key organising concepts of present-day modern societies like 'race', 'nation' and 'ethnicity' had different functions and signification. It is beyond the scope of this work to delve into the history and the semantic complexity of these concepts; it is also beyond the scope of this work to trace how these concepts are related to the ideologies of *limpieza de sangre* that emerged in mid-fifteenth century Spain (cf. Hering Torres 1) and which Cervantes mocks in his tale through a ludic play of subversive elements (cf. Patrut 70). However, it is important to point out the significance of these concepts for the analysis of the text, because already on page one Cervantes' tale introduces 'gypsies' as a "nación" (2), (translated in English as a "race" (3)), and then, in a very elaborate manner, also by including a para-ethnographic description, juxtaposes 'gypsies' to Spanish nobility. The thesis that I advance here is that Cervantes' early modern *novela* has been (mis)used as a narrative model for the nation-building fictions which would later reconfigure the political boundaries in Europe and bring about the establishment of modern nation-states.⁴⁶

When discussing "La gitanilla", scholars generally highlight the exceptional personality of the main female figure, Preciosa, just as the story's omniscient narrator does through the title and the numerous descriptions of her wit, talent and wisdom. What needs to be stressed here, though, and what, in my view, constitutes a pivotal element in "La gitanilla", is the masquerade structure of the narrative, in which Spanish nobility temporarily assume a 'gypsy' name and dress, undergo trials as in a rite of passage and only then are seen fit to take their due place in society.⁴⁷ In fact, the story stages a rite of passage for both its main

46 As I have demonstrated elsewhere, the story of 'gypsy' child-theft gains unprecedented popularity in nineteenth-century print media, because the 'gypsy' figure is "instrumental for the transformation of 'whiteness' from an aristocratic (classist) attribute to an 'ethno-racial' (racist) attribute" (*Patterns* 101).

47 In "Inszenierte Alterität: Spiel der Identitäten in Cervantes' *La gitanilla*", Kirsten von Hagen proposes a performative reading of Cervantes' story, pointing to the parallels between early modern and postmodern storytelling. Her analysis focuses on the three central characters Preciosa/Costanza, Andrés Caballero/Don Juan de Cárcamo and Alonso Hurtago/Clemente, examining in detail the theatrical manner in which gender and ethnic identities are staged and simultaneously subverted by the text's self-conscious use of names, costumes, gestures, speech and behaviour

characters: not only is Preciosa put to a test, but so is her admirer Don Juan de Cárcamo. I consider the characterisation of both protagonists to emphasise the centrality of the masquerade rite, for it represents in itself an aesthetic technology for cultivating socially desirable human beings, as well as for establishing social hierarchies based on gender, class and 'ethno-racial' affiliation.

Preciosa, *la gitanilla*, is raised by an old 'gypsy' woman, yet everything about her says that she is a woman of noble birth and that she belongs to another *nación*. At the beginning of the story, some chance admirers of her singing comment: "It's a pity this little lass is a Gypsy! Truly, truly, she deserves to be the daughter of a great lord" (7). The text provides many indications that Preciosa is an exceptional human being who cannot be placed on a par with her fellow 'gypsies'. The story reaches its culmination when Preciosa's true identity is revealed: the old 'gypsy' admits to stealing the girl-child years earlier; the noble parents ascertain her identity with recourse to various pieces of evidence, including a birthmark, and only then is the all-too-precious virgin given in marriage to the nobleman of her heart. His identity, by the way, is also ascertained via his clothes.

Through the character of Preciosa, Cervantes constructs an aesthetic model of femininity that aligns, albeit ironically, physical beauty with light and 'whiteness': fair skin, blonde hair and green eyes. Already on page one, we learn by inference that Preciosa has 'white' skin, since her 'gypsy' way of life was "not able to tarnish her face or tan her hands" (3). The omniscient narrator informs the reader that she "shone forth among the rest like the light of a torch among other, fainter lights" (23). We can also see her through the eyes of Doña Clara who, upon meeting Preciosa, exclaims: "Yes, this can really be called golden hair. These really are emerald eyes!" (23). Later in the story, Preciosa herself mentions that her beauty is esteemed "more highly than the sun" and praised "beyond gold" (65).

In the same breath, Preciosa's external beauty is fused with her inner virtue, as the latter has been laid down by the Christian tradition. Though raised amongst 'gypsies' who, as the text claims, do no care for

styles. In reference to Deleuze, von Hagen suggests that the text portrays the main figures as oscillating between an actual and a virtual (mirror-reflected) identity whereby the latter are not to be treated as distinctly separate but rather as overlapping. The ludic instability of the text, according to the author, is indicative that Cervantes aimed at opposing antigypsy tendencies in his time and experimented with a novel discursive articulation of established stereotypes (162–177).

marital ceremonies and even tolerate cases of incest, Preciosa places exceptional value on her chastity, "the jewel of my intact virginity", which she esteems more highly than her life (35). So, when her fellow 'gypsies' offer her as a wife to Don Juan, Preciosa cleverly manages to postpone the consummation of the 'gypsy' matrimony by putting Don Juan's love to a test, setting up a masquerade rite of initiation for him: "assuming the garb of a Gypsy, you must study in our schools for two years" (37).

While Don Juan thinks over Preciosa's proposal, she visits his home and interacts with his family. At this point, the text itself mimics a repetitive change of masks (or if we bring the argument one step further, points to the two complementary modes of the character's consciousness): in every second or third paragraph, the name of Preciosa's admirer changes, alternating between Don Juan and Andrés (51–57). Eventually, the Spanish nobleman Don Juan de Cárcamo becomes the 'gypsy' Andrés Caballero; his temporary identity transformation is signalled by a change in costume ("Think about when you want me to change clothes" (38–39)), and described as a rite of initiation:⁴⁸ "they performed the ceremonies of Andrés's initiation as a Gypsy" (59). What follows is one of the story's moral lessons: Don Juan may alter his name and outward appearance, but already "his first lesson in theft" demonstrates that his inward character remains constant (note that Preciosa's baptismal name is Doña Costanza): "but even though they gave him many lessons during that excursion, none stuck with him; on the contrary, in accordance with his noble blood, his soul was pained with every theft his teachers committed" (69). In his seminal work *Europa erfindet die Zigeuner*, Klaus-Michael Bogdal describes the life among 'gypsies' that the young noble lovers go through as a "besonders

48 In her article "Role Playing and Rites of Passage: *La ilustre fregona* and *La gitanilla*", Ann Wiltrout argues that the story structure in "La gitanilla" hinges on the completion of an initiation rite. The analysis is concentrated expressly on the male protagonists, placing them on a par with artists in general. In the author's words, the 'gypsy' milieu crystallises as a space where one can "escape the paternal hearth" (399), dissociate from the paternally imposed name and social status, undertake a journey of self-discovery and undergo a personal transformation, before reincorporating oneself into society (cf. 388–399). I can elaborate on Wiltrout's observations by saying that in literary or cinematic texts the world of the 'gypsies' often comes to signify the symbolic space beyond established social control, being as it were the blind spot of European culture's panoptic eye. One can also think of it as the border area where one can experience life directly and accumulate information about it without the controlling mediation of language.

ausgefallene Tugendprobe" (a particularly striking test of virtue), a life phase in which their virtue is put to a test (100).

The exemplary figures of Preciosa and Don Juan represent a concentration of socially desirable qualities: both, but especially Preciosa, embody simultaneously the beauty paragon of whiteness and the ideal of Christian morality while participating in a story that is constructed so as to provide evidence that these qualities should be regarded as hereditary, transported by blood and pertaining to the nobility. Bogdal makes no specific mention of the ideal of 'whiteness', yet he registers Preciosa's aristocratic pallor and proceeds with a description of the heroine that supports the argument put forward here:

Die Figur ist der Idee ›reinen Blutes‹ verpflichtet. Auch ohne ihr Wissen fließt es durch ihre Adern. Ehre hat sich durch Geburt erworben, ein Gut, das durch das ›Zigeunerleben‹, das Gegenteil des von Überwachung und Einsperrung charakterisierten Lebens eines adligen Mädchens der Zeit, nicht verloren geht. Ihre adlige Herkunft ist ein soziales Kapital, das durch die widrigen Umstände sogar eine Wertsteigerung erfährt. (94)

The figure is bound to the idea of "pure blood". Even without her knowledge, it flows through her veins. Honour has been acquired through birth, a possession that is not lost on account of her "gypsy life", the opposite of a noble girl's life in those days, one that was characterised by surveillance and confinement. Her noble origin is a social capital, which even grows in value due to adverse circumstances. [my translation, R.M.]

The 'gypsy' figures, in contrast, since their main function is to provide a testing ground and a contrastive background, are repeatedly associated with the figure of the devil and with the negative qualities it symbolises, especially deceit and rejection of charity. The omniscient narrator informs the reader that 'gypsy' girls "have for teachers and instructors the devil and experience, which teaches them in one hour what would otherwise take them a year to learn." (23). A similar opinion is directly voiced by the constable in the story: "These Gypsy women have the devil in them!" (31). Even the old 'gypsy' chimes in with the remark: "You've got the Satan in your heart girl!" (39). At one point, the narrator strays away to give a brief para-ethnographic lecture on 'gypsy' habits and customs; I will spare the reader the taxonomic enumeration of the

'gypsy' stereotypes interspersed throughout the text, but it is worth taking a look at the story's notorious opening:

It would seem⁴⁹ that Gypsy men and women were only born into the world to be thieves: they are born to parents who are thieves, they grow up among thieves, they study to be thieves, and finally succeed in being thoroughgoing thieves on every occasion; and the desire for stealing, and the act of stealing, are like inalienable traits in them, not extinguished except by death. (3)

Parece que los gitanos y gitanas solamente nacieron en el mundo para ser ladrones: nacen de padres ladrones, críanse con ladrones, estudian para ladrones y, finalmente, salen con ser ladrones corrientes y molientes a todo ruedo; y la gana del hurtar y el hurtar son en ellos como accidentes inseparables, que no se quitan sino con la muerte. (2)

In a single sentence, the omniscient narrator expounds the blood argument, relaying it with a negative inflection in relation to the 'gypsy' *nación*. The opening provides the counter-narrative in a nutshell. What the rather intricate story structure communicates in positive terms with regard to the Spanish nobility is asserted here in reverse. If noble blood secures Preciosa social capital, 'gypsy' blood guarantees social stigma, with the spectre of capital punishment lurking at the end of the sentence. The 'gypsy' milieu is laid out as a negative foil against which the positive face of the Spaniards gains its individual contour. It is no accident that the only characters delineated as recognisable, memorable individuals are the Spanish aristocrats in a 'gypsy' garb, while their 'gypsy' companions serve as a negative frame of reference, either crudely sketched or portrayed as a whole group. Stanley Appelbaum,

49 Kirsten von Hagen stresses that the verb '*parece*' (translated with "it would seem" in English) destabilises the statement to follow and creates, in the words of Selig, a "state of non-reality" (167). Indeed, the strategy of self-subversion is consistently pursued by the omniscient narrator who devises various ways to point at the sign-like nature of 'gypsy' identity, its mask status, and later drops the following remark: "because a thief thinks everyone is of the same nature as himself" (75) / "porque piensa el lardón que todos son de su condición" (74). Yet the self-reflexivity and the ironic subtlety of the text are lost on most of its readers and, as Solms and Bogdal show, the reception of the story tends to disregard its fictional nature, ascribing factual truth to some of its elements (cf. Solms 159; Bogdal 92–93).

the book's editor and English translator, makes a pertinent observation in his introduction:

Yet the author's obvious belief that heredity does more than environment to mold the personality borders on racism, as his three "purely Spanish" protagonists display their natural leadership qualities: they are not only brighter than their Gypsy companions, but even excel them at physical sports. (vii)

At this stage, it is tenable to raise the interpretation to another level and discuss Cervantes' story as a programmatic text, one that outlines, as far back as 1613, the idea of the nation as a possible matrix for social cohesion and also furnishes it, in metaphorical terms, with its core elements. By core elements, I mean a negative background and positive ideal figures – inflected in terms of gender, class and 'race' (nationality/ethnicity)⁵⁰ – performing ideal roles in a narrative set up as an initiatory test of virtue. In support of my argument, I recapitulate some of Ruth Seifert's main findings in her perceptive semiotic analysis of war that focuses on the cultural constructions of nation and gender. Seifert posits that the nation as an imaginary community should be understood as a hetero-masculine project, in which women and subordinate males occupy specific, hierarchically ordered positions (cf. 236). In the context of the nation, the female body functions as a particular cultural sign. It is the focal point of materiality and respectability, women being the biological reproducers of the nation and symbolising the nation's moral integrity. They also embody the nation's frailty, its need for protection and its boundary (cf. 239). The woman's body is claimed by the nation; she commits a "national adultery" when she associates with men from another nation (cf. 240). Moreover, if the state and citizenship are seen as masculine, the nation and national identity as a body, but also as a spiritual principle and moral conscience, are seen as feminine (cf. 245). It is difficult to overlook the parallels with Cervantes' story and the interconnectedness between the idea of the nation, the racialising ideal of 'whiteness' and its negative foil in the face of 'gypsies'. None other

50 Here, I am not interested in the specificity of and fine distinctions between the notions of 'race', nationality, and ethnicity as identity ingredients, but rather in the constellation that constitutes an identity-forming opposition between a 'white' ethnic majority that also coincides with a nation vs. a 'non-white' ethnic minority within the European semiosphere.

but the aristocratically pale Preciosa can stand the test of spiritual and physical purity and succeed in maintaining a clear-cut boundary between herself (her virgin body and soul) and the marginalised, suntanned 'gypsies'. Stylised as an allegory for poetry, as the lost and recovered soul of Spain in Bogdal's words (cf. 100, 96), 'white' Preciosa is indisputably the incarnation of the nation, elevated through the singular obstacles in the story to an ennobling (= 'whitening') source of collective identity. If her accomplishments are judged in literal terms, she comes across as a highly improbable character. Appelbaum, for instance, remarks that the plot contains "improbable, 'romantic' events and states of mind (such as Preciosa's innocence in the midst of crime, and her savoir vivre, incredible for her age and situation)" (vii). But if we read "La gitanilla" in metaphoric terms as a fictional blueprint for a nation-building project, then we can understand the story's immense political value, its precocity and its extraordinary influence across cultures in the centuries to come.⁵¹

Before we move to the topic of film, one further note is in order here. In my case study *Patterns of Symbolic Violence*, I consider the transformations of the 'gypsy' child-theft motif across visual media, placing a special focus on seventeenth-century Dutch history painting. Since these findings have a direct bearing on Critical Whiteness Studies as the approach opted for here, it is worthwhile to recapitulate them in summary form. Firstly, it has to be borne in mind that in its time the genre of history painting was deemed the highest form of art: the stories chosen for the painter's canvas were thought of as eternal stories. Secondly, a good number of eminent seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Dutch history painters chose to immortalise the scene of anagnorisis from Cervantes' tale "La gitanilla", the establishment and recognition of Preciosa's high birth. Thus, by closely analysing three

51 Bogdal cites the first translations and adaptations of "La gitanilla" and the way they popularised the image of the beautiful 'gypsy' in Spanish, French, German, English and Dutch literature (92). Appelbaum enumerates some of "La gitanilla"'s literary and musical descendants, highlighting their genre diversity: theatre plays (*Preciosa* (1821) by Pius Alexander Wolff, *Don Álvaro; o la fuerza del sino* (1835) by Duque de Rivas); ballets (*La Gypsy* (1839) by Benoit, Thomas and Marliani); and operas (*La forza del destino* (1862) by Verdi, *The Bohemian Girl* (1843) by Michael William Balfe); as well as other stories and stage works with different plots but analogous inspiration: the play *Don César de Bazan* (1844) by Dennery and Dumanoir; the opera *Maritana* (1845) by Vincet Wallace; Prosper Mérimée's tale "Carmen" (1845); Georges Bizet's opera *Carmen* (1875); and Victor Hugo's novel *Notre-Dame de Paris* (1831) (viii).

works by Jan Lievens, Paulus Bor and Jan van Noordt, I show in my book how the fetish of 'white' skin was conveyed on the canvas, and importantly how the visual effect of 'white' skin was achieved with recourse to 'gypsy' figures. In metaphorical terms, Preciosa's 'white' skin colour stands for her virginity; by safeguarding her chastity while growing up among 'gypsies', the stolen girl proves herself to be of noble origin and thus attests to the superiority of her kind. On the canvas, the whiteness of her skin is, on the one hand, positively correlated with objectively white artefacts, such as white linen lace or the very fine and highly expensive white fabric of shirts, sleeves or headgear, or white feathers and white animal fur, white freshwater pearls, white marble and white paper. On the other hand, Preciosa's white skin is negatively correlated with her 'gypsy' thief-mother, who is contrastively depicted as a shadowy figure in brown, earthly tones. Moreover, Dutch history paintings present complex figure compositions which sometimes also include Africans of a very dark skin tone, as well as artefacts that are objectively black, such as textiles or birds with black feathers. Thus, the eye of the viewer is trained to perceive and recognise the objective whiteness of skin and attribute it to European aristocrats, and through juxtaposition to differentiate it from the dark skin of 'gypsies' and 'black' African servants.

3.4 Stock Characters in an Improbable Story

Cervantes' influential *novela* provides evidence that the 'gypsy' mask and the child-abduction motif are constitutive elements of a civilisational spectacle that aims at inaugurating the 'white' mask. As explained in the theoretical part, the 'gypsy' mask is a dynamic conceptual shorthand which describes a symbolic position, as well as a set of attributes associated with this position, and is materialised using a number of artistic conventions. It is visualised by reference to a specific appearance (countenance, grooming, jewellery, costumes, etc.), behaviour (gestures, actions, states) and a space-time continuum. What we have at hand is a legible sign that has been transposed from the medium of literature into the medium of cinema, already gaining great popularity in the silent era. This universally recognisable sign, or stock character as it may also be called, is significantly, if not entirely, removed from its denotatum and the following incident from the early years of filmmaking in the USA is a case in point.

On 14 October 1923, the *New York Telegraph* newspaper published an open letter by the American director Maurice Tourneur that speaks of the high demand for recognisable stock character types in the filmmaking industry. Tourneur's statement, addressed to the American Farm Bureau Federation, comes as a reply to the accusations that he failed to give a fair depiction of farmers. The filmmaker replies that "[t]he American public demands types. It recognises a farmer as a farmer only when he chews a straw, wears jeans and chin whiskers. It wants a Texas sheriff to wear a sombrero with a six-inch brim, not a derby, as one of my acquaintance does." Later in his letter, Tourneur refers specifically to 'gypsy' stock characters:

Gypsies, today, I found during several weeks of visiting Southern California camps, travel in motors and live in tents. Some of them even have gasoline stoves and hot water flowing from the tank through a faucet. But when I filmed a gypsy story, *Jealous Fools*, this summer, I pictured a band of them living in the wagon; tradition says they do. Gypsies in a motor would not have been accepted by the motion picture public. Life as it exists in the imagination of the American public is not life as it is lived, but it is the life that must be pictured for the public's entertainment, whether in a novel or a newspaper, on the stage or on the screen. ("American Public")

Not only are 'gypsy' figures removed from life but so are the stories, in which they are introduced as main or subsidiary figures. If judged on the basis of its plausibility, the widely popular motif of children stolen by 'gypsies' who then, years later, discover their true identity will prove highly improbable in both its parts: first, in the part that entertains the fear that 'gypsies' steal children and, second, in the part that upholds the naive belief that a child raised by 'gypsies' can seamlessly resume its place in its original, often upper-class, milieu. The motif's plausibility, however, has hardly been discussed. Dixon notes in relation to *The Adventures of Dollie* that "[t]here is nothing remarkable about the plot – it is faintly ludicrous, the gypsies are portrayed in an unsympathetic way that would no longer be tolerated today" (8). Gutmann offers an explanation that is not as antiquated as he thinks: "Even setting aside more enlightened modern notions of political correctness, the story of Dollie seems ridiculous and incredible by any standard. Yet, in the context of its times, the notion of gypsies as evil incarnate was tantamount

to an axiomatic truth.” Fuller observes that “[e]ven in 1916, audiences must have known that the idea of the Tramp being integrated into a wealthy family ruled by a society matriarch was absurd.”

The most salient verdict on the motif’s plausibility, however, is delivered by the medium itself: in films of today, increasingly dominated by the demands of verisimilitude and the documentary style, stories of young children first stolen by ‘gypsies’ and then restored to their (upper-class) families are virtually absent. In my annotated filmography on the theme of ‘gypsy’ child-theft, I have identified all in all nine sound films, mostly titles from the 1940s and 1950s, where the motif is significantly altered, either staged in a burlesque manner or refashioned into a story of passion where adults rather than children are kidnapped (see *Patterns* 129–170). One telling example is the American comedy operetta *The Bohemian Girl* (1936),⁵² starring the famous duo of Laurel and Hardy. In their film, the story of stolen ‘white’ Arline is pushed to the background and is used simply as a frame onto which the two comedians can string their gags and slapstick routines. In addition, the psychological portrayal of Arline’s character proves, on close inspection, to be highly improbable: little Arline does not protest at the abduction and embraces with sweet graciousness her new ‘gypsy’ parents, while grown-up Arline is shown as woman who has all her life been readied to return to the mansion of her patrician father. This is only to underscore that if filmmakers attempted to treat the drama of child-kidnapping and recuperation in all earnestness, they would be confronted with insurmountable difficulties in creating believable, that is, psychologically realistic, characters and dialogue situations. It is not plausible that a child who has grown up among ‘gypsies’, say in a city ghetto, could seamlessly resume its place as a rightful heir in an aristocratic milieu. The recuperated child would not be able to converse in the appropriate language register, to start with, nor have the social flair to blend in with its birth family. For all these reasons, the motif is no longer to be seen on the silver screen in its original form, but is also seldom staged in more plausible re-workings of the story. It may receive, now and again, a fleeting mention in film dialogues as in *The Loves of Carmen* (1948, Dir. Charles Vidor), but since its metaphoric structure cannot match the level of realism achieved in sound film, the motif

52 The film is inspired by the opera *The Bohemian Girl* (1843) by Michael Balfe (libretto: Alfred Bunn), while the opera itself is based on Miguel de Cervantes’ tale “The Gypsy Girl” (1613).

itself clearly loses its power of fascination. In this respect, the recent German production *Nelly's Adventure* (2016, Dir. Dominik Wessely), in which the child-theft story is recycled in a decidedly realist mode, is a striking exception. (In Chapter Eight, I discuss the claims to truth raised by this fiction film for children and juveniles as well as some of its authentication strategies.) Still, if we compare the obsessive popularity of the 'gypsy' child-theft story in the silent era with its almost sudden disappearance in the age of sound, there is a clear signal that the medium has undergone some profound changes.⁵³

3.4.1 The Disciplinary Message of *The Bohemian Girl* (1936), USA

At this point, a slight digression is called for to highlight the theme of punishment that runs throughout the story in *The Bohemian Girl*, because it suggests one more viable reading of the motif. The imaginary threat of 'gypsy' child-abduction can be understood as an aesthetic tool for corrective disciplining since it has the power to activate the primal fear of social exclusion. Read figuratively, the motif serves as an indirect warning, which says that if a child, or generally any member of society, fails to internalise the 'white' mask (i.e. the cultural norm, the internalised values that ensure one's social integration), they will be severely punished for being a 'gypsy'. *The Bohemian Girl* provides a good example in this line of thought, because it consistently constructs 'gypsies' as punishable by default.⁵⁴ Repeatedly, they are portrayed as trespassers who deserve castigation regardless of their actual actions. In the first part of the film, Count Arnheim sentences the 'gypsy' Devilshoof – note the religious implications of the name – to public lashing for trespassing. There is no criminal investigation or court verdict; instead, the sternness of the count's order is justified implicitly with

53 The interest of filmmakers has shifted to child-adoption stories, and especially to documentary stories about Roma children placed in institutions who are adopted by families from the dominant culture; such stories stir the fascination of contemporary audiences for one specific reason: while stilling the spectators' hunger for realism, these stories offer titillating material for the debate about nature vs. nurture. The film examples from the corpus here include the documentaries *The Long Way Home* (2014, Dir. Boriana Puncheva) and *Bread and TV* (2013, Dir. Georgi Stoev), as well as the fiction films *Brats* (2008, Dir. Zdeněk Tyc) and *Baklava* (2007, Dir. Alexo Popov).

54 In seventeenth-century Spain, for example, various laws stipulated that a citizen could be brought before a trial court merely on account of being declared a 'gypsy' (Charnon-Deutsch 21).

the help of the parallel editing. The action with Devilshoof, who enters the count's property, alternates with scenes of his fellow 'gypsies' mercilessly robbing – be it of the upper or lower social strata – the good-hearted and admirably generous inhabitants of the nearby town, a territory that falls within the count's jurisdiction. Thus, what initially comes across as ungrounded cruelty turns out to be the count's far-sighted concern for and protection of his townsmen. Twelve years later, 'gypsy' Arline is also convicted by him to public lashing, but luckily, in the nick of time, Count Arnheim recognises her as his stolen 'white' daughter, aided by a family medallion and a birthmark. Unlike innocent and noble Arline, 'gypsy' Ollie and Stan cannot escape the punishment they have earned with their multiple offences, a punishment that, interestingly enough, is reminiscent of the methods used by the Holy Inquisition. Its disciplinary effect clearly sounds in Jeff Stafford's personal reaction to the film finale:

Despite a light and whimsical tone, *The Bohemian Girl* is dark around the edges unlike most of Laurel and Hardy's features from this period. Those who saw this film as children will be forever haunted by the grotesque final shot of the boys, emerging from a torture chamber – Ollie stretched by the rack to the size of a giant while Stan has been crushed down to dwarf size. Could there be a more graphic representation of Laurel and Hardy as outsiders and social outcasts?

The theme of punishment deserves special attention, because it bears direct relation to the dominant perception of reality and by extension to the aesthetics of realism. Before considering this relationship, it is necessary to comment on a process of fragmentation that has gradually become apparent in the exposition here and that the reader may have already taken notice of. In its original design, the motif under scrutiny has the structure of an initiatory rite and consists of two distinct phases: separation or the hero's entry into the world of darkness, and incorporation or the hero's return to the world of light. Over the course of time, however, this structure has been reduced to and identified with its first phase, the act of child-stealing, and has been used primarily for disciplinary purposes. As discussed in the previous subsection, Cervantes' urtext constructs the world of 'gypsies' as an ironic inversion of the established order. This world is a metaphoric representation of the dark phase in the 'white' hero's journey towards personal or collective

(national) individuation. From the perspective of the normative centre, the obverse 'gypsy' world and its inhabitants are by definition subject to punishment. Cervantes juxtaposes the suntanned 'gypsies' to 'white' Spanish aristocrats to underscore, albeit in a subversive, ironic and self-reflexive manner, the inborn physical and moral superiority of the upper class. The high point in his *novela* is the second phase, the uncovering of the protagonists' 'white' identity and their incorporation into society. The child-stealing act is of lesser importance in the dramatic economy of the text; it is a precondition for the carefully staged culmination. The talk of child-stealing 'gypsies' then, as we know it nowadays, is but a fragment of a literary mechanism for 'white' (class and/or nation) identity formation, and represents its first phase. This fragment has gained a life of its own and is still in currency today due to some new functions it has acquired, and is thus widely exploited in all forms of popular culture.⁵⁵ Not only were American children watching *The Bohemian Girl* in 1936 warned via the silver screen about the consequences of acting like a 'gypsy', similar messages belong to the standard repertoire of admonitions that Bulgarian parents, for example, resort to nowadays. The threat "Do as I say, or the 'gypsies' will take you away!" in its numerous variations is an effective and affecting way to communicate to children that disobedience brings about punishment, spanning the whole spectrum from ridicule and denigration to physical abuse, social ostracism and even death.

Punishment, and especially ultimate punishment, whose task is to instil fear and terror in individuals, is not only a proven and time-honoured method for moulding human behaviour towards a desired social norm, it is also a method for producing reality itself, or what a society takes for reality. In support of this claim, I refer to Alexander Kiossev's "An Essay on Terror", in which the scholar illustrates by way of an anecdote the role of violence in the process of imposing and internalising social norms and conventions:

Lyotard recounts how the King of Ou ordered his general, Sun Tze, to make fine soldiers out of 180 of his favourite wives. The general started drilling them to turn "right!", "left!", and "about face!" to the drumbeat. The women giggled, chatted, and refused to obey. The general drew his sword and chopped off the heads

55 On the use of the child-theft motif in children's and young adult literature, see Josting.

of two of the king's best-loved wives. He got perfect discipline. The new symbolic order promptly triumphed: the women started behaving as soldiers. The lapse into laughter was no longer possible. Death stabilizes the new realities. (140)

In addition to that, as an interpretative frame for the anecdote, Kiossev puts forward an understanding of reality that greatly supports my critical approach to 'gypsy'-themed films:

Realities are symbolic conventions which are forgotten to have been conventions. (...) Conventions are the result of ultimate violence – a violence which does not concentrate on a visible bursting point, but drains through an infinite network of invisible channels: violence so stark that it suppresses its own terror turning it into a habit, into naturalness, naturality, reality. Realities are conventions which are forgotten to have been conventions; conventions are violence forgotten to have been violent. Suppressed (from "suppression" or *Verdrängung*) violence is what welds the signifier and the signified together. To be born, "the world" was terrorized. (137)

There are, however, some details in the 'broader picture' presented by the scholar here that need further elaboration. The mechanism of reality production outlined by Kiossev acknowledges only the visible centre of power in the semiosphere, while turning a blind eye to its boundary, the other, inverted pole of symbolic power. In other words, Kiossev's explanatory model has the capacity to account for abrupt political changes, such as the instalment of a totalitarian regime, during which a set of social norms and conventions is imposed by means of an exemplary act of violence that is directed to select members of the in-group and is bound in time; the result is that with the passage of time, the violence being forgotten, these norms become normality or are generally perceived as such. At the same time, what Kiossev's model fails to account for is the unremitting violence exercised upon the perceived 'gypsies' over the past five centuries across all of Europe, not only in real life but also in cultural artworks, ranging from scorn, vilification, social exclusion and persecution to public executions and genocide (see also Section 9.2). Another tell-tale symptom pointing to the agency of symbolic 'gypsies' in the production of European reality is the degree of public concern, compared to other minority groups, regarding the

ritual violence unleashed upon them. To state the obvious, brutality against 'gypsies' is so commonplace that, in spite of its breath-taking magnitude, it seldom warrants attention, having turned into a norm, a collective habit, a natural reaction, normality, a shared reality.⁵⁶

3.5 Masquerade at a Stand-still: Four Cinematic Versions of *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*

The motif of child-abduction and recuperation poses a specific difficulty for films with a realist aesthetic and form. It is particularly ostensible in the cinematic versions of Victor Hugo's novel *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*, also a text thematically and structurally indebted to "La gitanilla". Just like Cervantes, Hugo stages a figurative masquerade in his novel, a game of fluid identities, in which the main characters, Esmeralda and Quasimodo, are able to swap their 'white' and 'gypsy' masks, and by doing so, they allow the author to examine tensions and discrepancies between outer appearance and inner nature, between social/'ethno-racial' origin and individual character. Esmeralda is the daughter of a prostitute and an exiled rogue king who was stolen as a child and brought up by 'gypsies', while Quasimodo is a 'gypsy' foundling raised by the Notre-Dame clergy. The revelation of their true identity is the highest point in the novel. In the medium of film, in dire contrast, this moment is cut out. Not only that, the whole concern with true identity is relegated to the periphery, which also means that the dynamics of masquerade are brought to a stand-still; the characters' fluid identities are conceived of instead as rock solid. Here, I refer in particular to three of the cinematic versions, namely the American film from 1939 directed by William Dieterle and featuring Charles

56 Cinematic works that set themselves the task of exposing the mechanisms of symbolic, systemic and/or direct physical violence against perceived 'gypsies' are still a rarity. Among the documentary films included in the corpus here, a mention should be given to: *Zigeuner sein* (1970, Dir. Peter Nestler); *Das falsche Wort: Wiedergutmachung an Zigeunern (Sinti) in Deutschland?* (1987, Dir. Katrin Seybold); *Natasha* (2008, Dir. Ulli Gladik); *Our School* (2011, Dir. Mona Nicoara and Miruna Coca-Cozma); *Revision* (2012, Dir. Philip Scheffner); and *Judgement in Hungary* (2013, Dir. Eszter Hajdú). The list of fiction films that question the conventions of European reality include: Tony Gatlif's filmography; *The Raggedy Rawney* (1988, Dir. Bob Hoskins); *And the Violins Stopped Playing* (1988, Dir. Alexander Ramati); *Brats* (2002) and *El Paso* (2009), both directed by Zdeněk Tyc; *Just the Wind* (2012, Dir. Benedek Fliegauf); *Peaky Blinders* (2013), scripted by Steven Knight; and *Aferim!* (2015, Dir. Radu Jude).

Laughton and Maureen O’Hara in the main roles; the French-Italian film from 1956 directed by Jean Delannoy starring Anthony Quinn and Gina Lollobrigida; and the British-American TV film from 1982 directed by Michael Tuchner with Anthony Hopkins and Lesley-Anne Down. In these films, the role of Esmeralda is performed by famous actresses who – in the pro-filmic world – are situated, being fair-skinned brunettes, on the ambiguous border between ‘white’ and ‘gypsy’. Their Esmeraldas all stay in the role of the ‘gypsy’ throughout the entire length of the film. However, the films offer different visual interpretations of the leading ‘gypsy’ heroine, modelling or rather fixing her skin colour through the use of make-up, lighting and costume. Accidentally or not, films that imagine Esmeralda as ‘ethno-racially’ ‘white’ also come up with a new, happy ending to her story, whereas the films that construe her as ‘ethno-racially’ ‘non-white’ stick to Hugo’s original plot and stage her death. In this respect, cinematic interpretations significantly deviate from the novel, where Esmeralda is portrayed simultaneously as ‘ethno-racially’ ‘white’, being a child stolen by ‘gypsies’, and destined to a tragic death. The screenshots below (**Fig. 10** to **Fig. 14**) show the three film renditions of Esmeralda enacted respectively by Maureen O’Hara, Lesley-Anne Down and Gina Lollobrigida.

In the 1939 black-and-white version of *The Hunchback*, O’Hara’s ‘gypsy’ is lit in the classical Hollywood style, that is, in the modus of whiteness. In the screenshots (**Fig. 10a** and **Fig. 10b**), we can see that her face receives profuse light from above, exuding the mandatory white glow⁵⁷ expected of female characters. Again, following the Hollywood lighting conventions, O’Hara’s Esmeralda is a shade whiter than her male companions, the Archdeacon and Phoebus, who provide a good reference point, being representatives of the indisputably ‘white’ majority. In terms of skin colour, the ‘gypsy’ girl is in no way different to them. At the end of the film, she not only escapes death but also finds her happiness with the ‘white’ poet Pierre Gringoire. Throughout the story, Esmeralda remains a ‘gypsy’ girl; she is spared the experience of discovering her true identity. Her lower position in society is communicated through her clothes (**Fig. 11a** and **Fig. 11b**), and contrasted with Phoebus’ fiancée, who is pale blonde and clad in white (**Fig. 12a** and **Fig. 12b**). Esmeralda’s skin colour and the story’s happy ending,

57 See Dyer, especially the subchapter “The Glow of White Women”, for an insightful analysis of this lighting convention (122–142).

The Literary Motif of Child-stealing 'Gypsies' and Silent Film



Fig. 10a and Fig. 10b. Screenshots from *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* (1939, Dir. William Dieterle): two-shots of Maureen O'Hara as Esmeralda and Edmond O'Brien as Pierre Gringoire: both characters share the same skin colour, 'white'.



Fig. 11a and Fig. 11b. Screenshots from *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* (1939, Dir. William Dieterle): Esmeralda's and Gringoire's black-and-white costumes mark their lower social rank, their social 'non-whiteness'.



Fig. 12a and Fig. 12b. Screenshots from *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* (1939, Dir. William Dieterle): the white costumes of Phoebeus (Alan Marshal) and his blonde fiancée Fleur de Lys (Helene Whitney) mark their high social station, their social 'whiteness'.



Fig. 13a and Fig. 13b. Screenshots from *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* (1982, Dir. Michael Tuchner): a medium shot of Lesley-Anne Down as Esmeralda and a two-shot of her and Gerry Sundquist as Pierre Gringoire: the characters share the same light brown hair and skin colour, both are ‘white’.

though, can be regarded as the filmmakers’ indirect hint as to her being a stolen ‘white’ child.

The case of the 1982 colour TV version of *The Hunchback* is similar. Lesley-Anne Down’s Esmeralda (**Fig. 13a**) is a blue-eyed, fair-skinned beauty, a clear sign that she is a stolen ‘white’ child: she is visibly whiter than her ‘gypsy’ companions, who exploit her looks, forcing her to dance in front of the crowd, so that they can perform their pick-pocketing activities undisturbed. Again, however, the ‘gypsy’ identity of the heroine is not ‘corrected’ or contested in the film. At the end, assisted by Quasimodo, Esmeralda manages to run away with the man of her heart, the ‘white’ poet Pierre Gringoire (**Fig. 13b**).

The 1956 colour version of *The Hunchback* offers a different interpretation of the story and its main heroine. Lollobrigida’s ‘gypsy’ (**Fig. 14a**) has a darker skin tone; her complexion bears a perceptible hue, unlike the literal white we see with O’Hara. Clearly, this reflects the technological advancement in filmmaking, for not only Esmeralda, but also the other characters in this colour film have discernible flesh tones. Next to Phoebus or next to the people in the crowd, however, Lollobrigida’s complexion appears to be a tone darker, as if the actress had been sent for further baths by the film director; and on this point, she differs from Lesley-Anne Down’s blue-eyed, fair-skinned Esmeralda, too. What is more, during her dance show, the camera frames Lollobrigida’s Esmeralda in a two-shot with the ‘gypsy’ musician who accompanies her and who has a very dark skin tone (**Fig. 15**). His complexion is a carefully placed cue which is there to suggest that the actress’s Southern



Fig. 14a and Fig. 14b. Screenshots from *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* (1956, Dir. Jean Delannoy): a medium shot of Gina Lollobrigida as Esmeralda; a two-shot of Phoebus (Jean Danet) and his fiancée Fleur de Lys (Danielle Dumont).



Fig. 15. Screenshots from *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* (1956, Dir. Jean Delannoy): a two-shot of Esmeralda and the 'gypsy' musician who accompanies her. The man has a very dark complexion that serves as a visual cue to suggest that Esmeralda's Southern beauty should be interpreted in the film's diegesis as 'non-white' in 'ethno-racial' terms.

beauty should be interpreted in the film's diegesis as 'non-white' in 'ethno-racial' terms, an interpretation that is additionally supported by the use of colourful costumes and strategic contrasts. The voluptuous body of the 'gypsy' dancer enveloped in a signal-red dress gains its full meaning when set in opposition to the slim, fairy-like highborn ladies in broadly cut whitish gowns with green undertones. Among them, Phoebus' fiancée stands out with her light complexion and pale white dress (**Fig. 14b**). The film's intricate colour scheme employs intense colours establishing contrasts on the level of costumes but also on the level of hair and skin tones. In this colour scheme, it is hard to imagine Lollobrigida's Esmeralda as a stolen 'white' child, and so it is hardly a coincidence that, unlike O'Hara's and Down's 'white' Esmeraldas, Lollobrigida's swarthy 'gypsy' has to part with her life at the end of the story (see also Section 6.3 for a discussion of the plotlines reserved for the 'gypsy' mask).

The 1996 Walt Disney animation film directed by Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise takes the next logical step. Hugo's story is again re-structured, so that Esmeralda can remain firmly entrenched in her 'gypsy' identity. Here, the ambiguity of human skin hue is replaced by the straightforwardness of painted colour. For the sake of clarity – since much of the action takes place in the dark hours of the night – Esmeralda's flesh is set in contrast with her snow-white blouse (**Fig. 16a**), the latter being a reliable reference for 'whiteness', so that viewers can avoid the mistake of interpreting her dusky complexion as affected by the night light or an overcasting shadow. The animated version also endows the 'gypsy' girl with bright green eyes that seem to have a cat-like glow in the dark.⁵⁸

58 The female 'gypsy' figure is traditionally attributed animal features. The strategy of animalisation is, for instance, profusely employed in Prosper Mérimée's undying tale "Carmen". The text repeatedly draws parallels between Carmen and different animal species, among which chameleons, cats, wolfs, monkeys and ravens. Carmen's eyes are said to be like wolf's eyes: "'Gypsy's eye, wolf's eye' is a phrase Spaniards apply to people with keen powers of observation. If you don't have time to visit the zoo in the Jardin des Plantes to study the look in a wolf's eye, watch your cats when it is stalking a sparrow" (14–15). In spite of being directly inspired by Cervantes' "La gitanilla", Mérimée's tale is of a paradigmatically different nature. It is a fictional story that disguises itself – through a number of textual gestures – as an eye-witness account written by a well-read and well-travelled French scientist. The tale was published in 1845 in *Revue des Deux Mondes*, a French monthly magazine which specialised at the time in travel and foreign affairs, having the reputation of an elite liberal vehicle of *haute culture*.

It goes without saying that the skin colour coding of the characters in **Fig. 16a** precludes the possibility of Esmeralda's discovering her true 'white' identity. The markers of 'whiteness' are attributed in full measure to her suitor Phoebus, whose name identifies him with the sun. Befittingly, he is not only fair-skinned, but also blue-eyed and golden blond (**Fig. 16b**).



Fig. 16a and Fig. 16b. Screenshots from *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* (1996, Dir. Gary Trousdale, and Kirk Wise): black-haired Esmeralda, whose snow-white blouse aids the viewer to perceive her as 'non-white', and yellow-blond Phoebus.

At this point, it would be useful to go back to the beginning of this chapter and remind ourselves of 'gypsy' portrayals in black-and-white silent films, where differences are coded primarily on the level of costuming and protagonists are free to participate in a game of identities exploring through transformational reversals the full spectrum of life experiences. Juxtaposed to these early films, the Disney animation marks a truly profound change in the representation and perception of identities, a change that has taken place within less than a century. Not only is the carnivalesque element annihilated and together with it the opportunity to explore aesthetically life's extremes, but there is also a radicalisation of colour difference, so that immaterial variations in skin tone are exaggerated and strategically employed to racialise characters constructing their unmistakable 'ethno-racial' alterity.

The four cinematic versions of Hugo's novel *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*, all of them stemming from Western European imagination and spanning a timeframe of fifty years, provide a good example of the general tendency towards racialisation or stabilisation of 'ethno-racial' identities in films featuring 'gypsy' characters. What this tendency brings about is an obfuscation of the fictional nature of 'white' and 'gypsy' masks (as the two complementary lenses of European cultural

consciousness), coupled with an emphasis on unequivocal visual markers of 'ethno-racial' alterity. It also entails a disregard for the transformational effect of carnivalesque reversals, obliterating the paradoxical logic inherent in initiatory rites, namely the psychologically tenable technology of producing 'white' identity via a transitory phase in the 'gypsy' world. The result is a complete fragmentation of the original masquerade rite, so that the 'white' mask and the 'gypsy' mask are perceived as biologically determined and belonging to two separate and seemingly unrelated realities. In the next chapter, I consider how these fragments of European fiction are staged, substantiated, and sustained by films inflected in the aesthetic modus of realism.

3.6 Conclusion

Looking at the black-and-white films from the silent era through the prism of the motif of 'gypsy' child-theft, we can see that, on the one hand, the black-and-white colour dichotomy can be deciphered as presence and absence of light. In this case, the primary question is who gets to be in the limelight, whose face becomes the focus of public attention or, to put it even more simply, who qualifies as the main hero in the story? The white and black colours, on the other hand, have social and 'ethno-racial' implications: the higher the class standing, the 'whiter' the person (in the pecking order of social classes); the more (North) Western European (the USA is also included here) the background, the 'whiter' the nationality or the 'ethno-racial' background in the pecking order of nationalities. In all these scenarios, however, the 'gypsy' mask remains the rock-bottom benchmark, a stable marker for the European 'non-white'/'black' part of the colour spectrum. The connotations of the black and white colours have direct relevance to our initial question, namely who is deemed sufficiently worthy of being the main hero in the story? It seems that the answer here is left to the aesthetics of the photographic medium: the upper class and Western Europeans 'naturally' gain greater visibility, being 'whiter' than the rest of humanity, so that stories in which they play the main heroes 'naturally' become everybody's stories. This dominant aesthetic tendency can be summarised as follows: the hero with the 'white' mask (in whiteface) is in the limelight and is the main hero; his/her story has universal visibility. Read in reverse, the same tendency posits that the hero who is 'non-white' is out of the limelight and stands at the periphery; his/her story is absent.

In this chapter, I have subjected to examination the forms, meaning and functions of the 'gypsy' child-stealing motif as it has been employed during the silent film era. Having traced the fictional roots of the motif back to Cervantes, its impact on the literary imagination across European cultures, its transposition from the written word to the moving image and subsequent proliferation in the silent film era down to its sudden disappearance in sound film, I have been able to draw a number of important conclusions. Firstly, the child-abduction motif in silent film testifies to the interdependence of the 'white' mask and the 'gypsy' mask as the two modes of cultural disciplining; the first relays the social norms (for a given historical period in a given culture), while the second, the sanctions that the failure to conform entails. In its original design, the motif has the structure and the function of an initiation rite set up in aesthetic terms, where the 'white' mask gains its individuality, visibility and salience through a rite of passage, i.e. exchange with the 'gypsy' mask, its inverted mirror image. The carnivalesque swap of masks employed by European writers and filmmakers as an identity formation mechanism activates three distinct, yet simultaneously present levels of meaning. It accounts for the formation of individual identity, i.e. for the psychological individuation of the single human being; it accounts for the formation of class identity, i.e. for the psychological individuation of a social group; and finally, it accounts for the formation of a national identity, i.e. the psychological individuation of an 'ethno-racial'/national group. Secondly, the disappearance of the motif in sound film, nowadays the dominant film form, speaks of the suppression or even obliteration of initiation rites that partake in the formation of national/'ethno-racial' identities in present-day modern culture. This is a culture that renounces fluid identities which allow for ambiguity and carnival reversals, and promotes in their place fixed 'ethno-racial'/national identities. By upholding the aesthetics of realism, modern mass media – of which sound film is a key form – reduce the mutable figurative meaning of the 'white' and 'gypsy' mask to an immutable skin colour, stabilising and reifying in the process the notion of 'race', but also, more importantly, legitimising and normalising social hierarchies as 'ethno-racial' ones. Finally, the scrutiny of the motif of child-stealing 'gypsies' offers ample reason to believe that the 'gypsy' mask is not only an emblematic sign of socially disintegrative forces and a representational shorthand employed by artists to attest to the certainty of social sanctions, but it is also the source of our modern perception of reality, its Other modus.

4

The Phenomenon of ‘Gypsy’-themed Films and Their Technology of Truth Production

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This chapter examines – from several important vantage points – the prevailing aesthetics that underpins the personation of the ‘gypsy’ mask on the big screen, or what I call the racialising aesthetics of authentication. This aesthetics manifests itself in a significant body of fiction films, produced in the European and US American cultural realm, which rest on the assumption that certain groups of people labelled as ‘gypsies’ are different in some intrinsic, radical and objectively graspable way and that the said films can open a window view to the Otherness of ‘gypsy’ way of life, taking the viewers, as it were, on a voyeuristic tour of their clandestine world. To account for the phenomenon of ‘gypsy’-themed films in a pan-European and US American context and lay bare their intricate technology of truth production, I proceed in my exposition in a top-down manner, moving from the general through the specific to end up with the singular. First, I present my findings by providing a bird’s-eye view of ‘gypsy’-themed films as such, highlighting entire segments from the film corpus to point out core and peripheral examples of their racialising aesthetics of authentication. In a next step, I present the algorithm of film analysis which I have developed inductively during an intensive phase of film viewing; this analysis has also guided me in the process of categorising and appraising individual works. For the assessment of a ‘gypsy’-themed film, there are five key levels of analysis to be taken into consideration. Each level of analysis is expounded here through a set of questions and a resumé of findings; afterwards, the same findings are compressed one step further, so that

the cinematic technology of truth production is distilled into five basic steps. Following this summary introduction to my research topic, in the next chapters, I proceed by providing a detailed and multi-perspective description of 'gypsy'-themed films and the racialising aesthetics of authentication they typify in view of current film theory, in comparison to blackface minstrel shows, and with regard to the films' content (character portrayal, storyline), form (visual design) and functions (aesthetic, disciplining, carnival, subversive, and socially integrative), applying my analytical lens to a selection of exemplary works and zooming in on paradigmatic sequences. It is important to stress here that each of the following chapters throws light on the subject matter from a new angle, expanding the discussion with a new set of analytical tools and theoretical coordinates. This systematic change of perspective requires in turn that the reader ready herself/himself with a new 'set of eyes' for each new chapter; each subsequent chapter requires a substantial readjustment of the mental lens. As to the film examples, the reader should bear in mind that my analytical focus is directed at one select aspect, so that the analyses cannot and should not be treated as evaluations of the works in their entirety.

4.1 The Racialising Aesthetics of Authentication Described as a List of Films

One way of describing the racialising aesthetics of authentication that prevails in the production of 'gypsy'-themed films is by listing a selection of prominent titles, which are presented here in chronological order. The chosen films are further divided into three sub-groups based on how they handle the 'gypsy' theme. Thus, the first group of fiction films, given below, are found at one end of the thematic spectrum: in these films, the focus is placed exclusively on the world of 'gypsies', imagined as a separate, autonomous universe with little or no contact with the given dominant national culture. In other words, these works cut out the world of the 'white' mask from the picture (thus turning a blind eye to the role that the majority society has in creating the larger socio-economic conditions within which the minority is forced to act). The central dramatic conflict is set up within the 'gypsy' universe, while 'white' characters are employed episodically for the sake of contrast and are given peripheral roles. If we are to describe these films in abstract terms, we can say that the mirror-inverted opposition between the

'white' mask and the 'gypsy' mask in them, which produces the effect of radical Othering, is communicated by implication. Or, if we resort to optical metaphors to point to the asymmetry of representational power, we can say that these films (re)produce the antigypsy mode of the European gaze:⁵⁹

- *Drama in a Gypsy Camp near Moscow* [Драма в таборе подмосковных цыган]. Russia, 1908
- *The Gypsy Charmer* [Mustalaishurmaaaja]. Finland, 1929
- *I am a Gypsy* [Ich bin ein Zigeuner]. Austria, 1932/33
- *The Last Camp. Gypsies* [Последний табор]. Russia, 1935
- *Hot Blood*. USA, 1956
- *I Even Met Happy Gypsies* [Skupljači perja]. Yugoslavia, 1967
- *Queen of the Gypsies* [Табор уходит в небо]. USSR, 1975
- *King of the Gypsies*. USA, 1978
- *Angelo, My Love*. USA, 1983
- *Blood Wedding* [Bodas de sangre]. Spain, 1983
- *El amor brujo*. Spain, 1986
- *Guardian Angel* [Анџео чувар/Anđeo čuvar]. Yugoslavia, 1987
- *Time of the Gypsies* [Дом за вешање/Dom za vešanje]. UK | Italy | Yugoslavia, 1988
- *Gipsy Magic* [Циганска Магија]. Macedonia, 1997
- *Black Cat, White Cat* [Crna mačka, beli mačor]. Yugoslavia | France | Germany | Austria | Greece, 1998
- *Gypsy* [Gitano]. Spain, 2000
- *Roming*. Czech Republic | Romania | Slovakia, 2007
- *A Ciambra*. Italy | Brazil | Germany | France | Sweden | USA, 2017

The second thematic grouping of fiction films comprises works in which the deviant world of the 'gypsies' is, once again, the main source of spectacle, but the central conflict is shifted to one between a 'white' and a 'gypsy' character. In these films, there is an explicit juxtaposition in visual and narrative terms between the 'white' mask and the 'gypsy'

59 It has to be said that the antigypsy mode of seeing can be prompted not only with regard to representatives of the existing Roma minority but also towards individuals and/or groups of people who occupy, vertically, the lower ranks of the social hierarchy, as well as towards individuals and/or groups of people who occupy, horizontally, the periphery of the European cultural realm, that is, migrants from the East, asylum seekers, refugees and generally everyone who is considered a stranger, an outsider, an intruder.

mask, as well as the mythic worlds they stand for. The dramatic encounter between these two worlds is purposefully used to affirm the film's overarching 'truth' about 'gypsies', not to expose power inequalities, but to show titillating evidence of alterity, be it symbolic, corporeal, sexual, linguistic, cultural and/or 'ethno-racial'. This ideological subtext is also present in the few cases when the 'gypsy' protagonist posits an exception to the group and is coded with positive qualities. With some variations, 'gypsies' are seen as agents of destruction, of social discord and national disintegration, and, metaphorically or literally, as 'non-white'. The following titles reveal the two modi of the European gaze, its bipolar structure:

- *The Adventures of Dollie*. USA, 1908
- *A Romany Spy* [*Das Mädchen ohne Vaterland*]. Germany, 1912
- *Zigeuneren Raphael*. Denmark, 1914
- *Betta the Gypsy*. UK, 1918
- *Carmen* [*Gypsy Blood: A Love Tale of Old Spain*]. Germany, 1918
- *Gipsy Anne* [*Fante-Anne*]. Norway, 1920
- *The Loves of Carmen*. USA, 1927
- *The Bohemian Girl*. USA, 1936
- *Dark and Bright* [*Morena Clara*]. Spain, 1936 & 1954
- *Carmen de la Triana*. Spain | Germany, 1938
- *Flower of the Tisza* [*Tiszavirág/Zwischen Strom und Steppe*], Hungary | Germany, 1939
- *The Vagabond's Waltz* [*Kulkurin valssi*]. Finland, 1941
- *Madonna of the Seven Moons*. UK, 1944
- *Jassy*. UK, 1947
- *The Loves of Carmen*. USA, 1948
- *Drei Birken auf der Heide/Junges Blut*. West Germany, 1956
- *Lola, the Coalgirl* [*Lola, la piconera*]. Spain, 1951 and 1969
- *Oh Pain, Little Pain, Pain* [*¡Ay, pena, penita, pena!*]. Spain | Mexico, 1953
- *Lowlands* [*Tiefland*]. Germany, 1954
- *The Gypsy and the Gentleman*. UK, 1958
- *And Hope to Die* [*La course du lièvre à travers les champs*]. France, 1972
- *Pink Dreams* [*Ružové sny*]. Czechoslovakia, 1976
- *A Roof* [*Покров*]. Bulgaria, 1978
- *Das Mädchen vom Hof*. West Germany, 1979
- *Carmen*. Spain, 1983

The Racialising Aesthetics of Authentication Described as a List of Films

- *Devils, Devils* [*Diabły, diabły*]. Poland, 1991
- *Black Swallow* [*Черната лятковица*]. Bulgaria | France, 1997
- *¡Ja me maaten...!* Spain, 2000
- *The Pilgrimage of Students Peter and Jacob* [*Zpráva o putování studentů Petra a Jakuba*]. Czech Republic, 2000
- *Carmen*. Spain | UK | Italy, 2003
- *Gucha – Distant Trumpet* [*Guča!*]. Serbia | Bulgaria | Austria | Germany, 2006
- *Papusza*. Poland, 2013
- *Koštana* [*Костана*]. (five TV adaptations) | Yugoslavia
- *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*. (numerous film versions)

As to their topic, the two groupings of films presented so far gravitate towards the one end of the thematic spectrum that, as far as my film corpus is concerned and as outlined in Chapter Two, stretches from the fictional phantasm ‘gypsy’ to representations of Roma. A distinctive feature of these works is that they contain an element of ‘ethno-racial’ masquerade and assume a homogenising and a racialising stance; as such they form the core of what I call ‘gypsy’-themed films, and represent the main object of my investigation. It is important to specify these works of fiction title by title and critically evaluate each of them for a number of reasons. Some of these films are celebrated for their supposedly truthful depiction of Roma lifestyle, even as veritable ethnographic documents. A number of the listed auteur films attained truly staggering levels of popularity at the time of their release; many of them have been distinguished with prestigious national and international awards, and are even today objects of praise and veneration in professional film circles, as well as in popular culture. Moreover, what is of crucial significance is that most of the ‘gypsy’-themed films given here continue to feature in festivals dedicated to Roma arts and culture, forming part of the unwritten canon of works accepted as genuine and inspired. As such, they still have a strong influence on the self-image of Roma, as well as on the work of contemporary filmmakers.

A prominent example from the first list of films is the Mosfilm production *Queen of the Gypsies* (1975, Dir. Emil Loteanu).⁶⁰ In the *His-*

60 In his unpublished Master’s thesis “Das Bild der Sinti und Roma in ausgesuchten Spielfilmen”, Martin Holler works out in detail the antigypsy clichés used in the portrayal of the film’s main figures, the horse-thief Zobar and the ‘gypsy’ *femme fatale* Rada. The German historian demonstrates the film’s indebtedness to European literature, tracing lines of influence to Maxim Gorky’s debut short story

torical Dictionary of Russian and Soviet Cinema, the film scholar Peter Rollberg reports that with his second 'gypsy'-themed film,⁶¹ the leading Moldovan director Loteanu landed one of the greatest box-office hits in Soviet cinema and made stars of its leads Svetlana Tomá and Grigore Grigoriu (453). In *Великие советские фильмы. 100 фильмов, ставших легендами* [Great Soviet Films. 100 Films That Became Legends], Ludmila Sokolova states that *Queen of the Gypsies* received nearly thirty international awards, among which San Sebastian's Golden Seashell⁶² (1976), as well as special prizes in Belgrade, Panama, Prague and Paris. In 1976, Svetlana Tomá, for whom the role of Rada became "the actress's business card", was declared the best actress of the year by the readers of *Soviet Screen* magazine, and later the Moldovan actress of the century (Sokolova 162–163). Fedor Razzakov provides further details of the phenomenal success of the 'gypsy' theme in Soviet cinema: in the first year of its release, *Queen of the Gypsies* brought in 64.9 million spectators; the film was Soviet cinema's response to the Mexican 'gypsy' melodrama *Yesenia* (1971, Dir. Alfredo Crevenna, Soviet release 1975), a production⁶³ that has attracted the highest audience for any Soviet

"Makar Chudra" (1892), Alexander Pushkin's Byronic poem *The Gypsies* (1824) and Prosper Mérimée's tale "Carmen" (1845). Holler discusses the ideological subtext of *Queen of the Gypsies* in the context of the Soviet policy of assimilation of the Roma minority; he also makes mention of another 'gypsy'-themed title *The Gypsy* (1967, Dir. E. Matveev), which puts forward the figure of "the new Soviet Rom" (56–66).

- 61 Emil Loteanu's first 'gypsy'-themed film is called *Fiddlers* (*Лаямары*, 1972). Rollberg describes it as "a broad canvas about gypsy life, displaying all of the director's strengths – panoramic landscape compositions, sensual music, and a slow narrative rhythm erupting in sudden acts of violence – but also characteristic weaknesses, most frustratingly a plot structure that falls apart due to Loteanu's overindulgence in beautiful imagery and sound" (416). According to the online database *Энциклопедия отечественного кино. СССР/СНГ* [Encyclopedia of Domestic Film. USSR/CIS], *Fiddlers* received the Grand Prix in Orvieto (1973), a special prize in Naples (1972), the Silver Seashell and two other awards in San Sebastian (1972), and the Silver Siren in Sorrento (1972).
- 62 In a filmed interview, Svetlana Tomá recounts the day of the awards ceremony in San Sebastian. She explains that neither the film's director Emil Loteanu, nor the other lead actor Grigore Grigoriu were permitted by the state authorities to leave the USSR, so she was on her own when receiving the Grand Prix. The film was sold to more than 120 countries, a success that was deemed incredible at the time. Tomá adds that she travelled the world with *Queen of the Gypsies*, visiting 47 countries on all the continents of the globe, where she held the premieres and represented Soviet cinema (DVD bonus material).
- 63 A disambiguation note is necessary here: there are two Mexican films from the 1970s called *Yesenia*. The first is a telenovela (1970, Dir. Fernando Wagner) based on a story by Yolanda Vargas Dulché, "one of the most widely read women writers in

or foreign film ever screened in the history of Soviet cinema, with a total of 91.4 million tickets sold. In the second half of the 1970s, Soviet filmmakers embraced the 'gypsy' topic:⁶⁴ the director Alexander Blank shot four episodes for a TV series called *Gypsy* in 1979. The series, based on the book by A. Kalinin, topped the record set by *Yesenia*, attracting almost 200 million viewers (1198; see also Rupprecht 86; Kudryavtsev).

This short account of the enormous popularity that has surrounded *Queen of the Gypsies* but also of the lasting impact that the 'gypsy' theme has had on Soviet cinema is not a whimsical digression, but aims at underscoring the success formula that almost invariably accompanies well-executed 'gypsy'-themed films, regardless of their country of provenance. It is notable, first of all, that these productions are, by and large, an extremely popular and commercially lucrative form of entertainment. There are more examples of cult titles to come, which suggests that the basis of the success of 'gypsy'-themed films is in their ability to attract unprecedented audiences on a national and/or international level, to confer and consolidate the star status of their filmmaker and lead cast, and, in some significant cases, to lay the foundations of the tradition of the 'gypsy' genre in the respective national cinema.

Mexico", and starring Fanny Cano (Luna 257). It is a story of "a gypsy woman who abducts a baby girl and is discovered when a suitor recognises the medallion of the girl as that of a rich landowner's daughter" (Beumers 181). The second *Yesenia* is an adaptation of Dulché's story to film (1971, Dir. Alfredo Crevenna) starring Jacqueline Andere. When citing *Yesenia* as the most successful film ever shown in Soviet cinemas, some film scholars mistakenly refer to Wagner's telenovela; however, it is Alfredo Crevenna's film that was shown in Soviet cinemas in 1975.

- 64 A panoramic view of 'gypsy'-themed films in the Russian language zone is to be found in Edouard Chiline's short but highly informative article "The Celluloid Drom: Romani Images in Russian Cinema". The author presents fifteen titles altogether, dividing them into two categories: one group of films that "almost entirely focus on Russian Gypsies" and a second smaller group of films with "strong Romani subplots or key characters" (35-36). The films then are introduced individually in a discussion that considers their historical context, so that in the end the article offers an enlightening overview to the topic from the silent film era until the late 1990s. Chiline is attentive to the issue of Roma self-representation and accentuates the work of the Roma director Dufunia Vishnevskii: *It's my fault* (*Я виноват*, 1993) and *The Sinful Apostles of Love* (*Грешные апостолы любви*, 1995), praising it as a "remarkable example" (40). Yet his overall film assessment stays at the level of plot synopsis and accepts the alterity argument as valid. With regard to *Queen of the Gypsies*, Chiline writes: "It is considered by many to be one of the finest films ever made about the Roma" (37), supporting, albeit implicitly, this appraisal by saying in the next line that both Loteanu's 'gypsy'-themed films "became sustained box office hits, both within the Soviet Union and internationally, mostly across the Eastern bloc where they were exported and stayed in circulation for years" (37).

Paradoxically, when scholars comment on the significance of these films, in aesthetic, cultural or other terms, they rarely stop to consider the import of the 'gypsy' theme.

Another film example of that order that comes from the second list is *The Vagabond's Waltz* (1941, Dir. Toivo Särkkä). In *Nordic National Cinemas*, the film scholar Tytti Soila describes this elaborate costume drama as "one of the most popular Finnish films ever and a grandiose spectacle" (55). According to Soila, *The Vagabond's Waltz* was the first Finnish film to be seen by over a million spectators, holding its premiere simultaneously at two cinemas in Helsinki. During the first three months of its release, the film was seen by every second inhabitant of the Finnish capital, an estimated 160,000 people. What is more, the film features the two most popular stars of that period; the lead characters are played by "the number one couple of Finnish cinema: Ansa Ikonen and Tauno Palo" (56). The *Historical Dictionary of Scandinavian Cinema* names Särkkä's work as "the second most popular Finnish film ever made" (Sundholm 209). The various entries in the said Dictionary speak not only of the lucrative popularity of the 'gypsy' theme in Finnish cinema but also of its masquerade nature:

Two indigenous minorities have played special part in Finnish cinema: the Romani and Sami people. Both have been used according to the double function of the "other", of being both dangerous and attractive at the same time, hence playing on both the fear and sexual desire that the representations have evoked. This double bind of ethnic representation was already used in Tulio and Vaala's early films, *Mustat silmaet* (*Dark Eyes*, 1929) and *Mustalaishurmaaja* (*The Gypsy Charmer*, 1929). The most legendary portrayal of Romani people in Finnish cinema is the box-office hit *Kulkurin valssi* (*The Vagabond's Waltz*, 1941), with the tall and dark Tauno Palo disguised as a gypsy. (139)

The topic of 'gypsies' was introduced to Finnish cinema by the directorial duo of Teuvo Tulio and Valentin Vaala. Valentin Vaala, deemed one of the most significant filmmakers in the history of Finnish cinema, made his directorial debut in 1929 with the film *Dark Eyes*, where both he and Teuvo Tulio play the leading male 'gypsy' roles. This first feature-length attempt was never widely distributed and reportedly Vaala himself considered it a disappointing failure. Nevertheless, later in the same year, together with Tulio, he partially remade the film as

The Gypsy Charmer for the Fennica-Filmi company and his second attempt not only became a box-office hit but also earned the starring Tulio the nickname “Finland’s Valentino”. Consequently, shortly afterwards, the ‘gypsy’ theme became a subgenre of its own, “enabling the eroticization of the male body and the performance of a masquerade, excessive male” (Sundholm 389).

After this short digression, which has presented for our consideration some concrete examples, we can now return to the description of the film corpus, and more specifically to the third and final group of fiction films that handle the ‘gypsy’ theme. This group of fiction films is the largest in actual number; it encompasses works that make use of ‘gypsy’ figures in minor roles, invoking the anti-world of ‘gypsies’ in relatively short sequences, without making it their central point of appeal. These films are marginal to my research and are, therefore, the least represented in the corpus.

- *Jánošík*. Czechoslovakia, 1935
- *Sissi: The Fateful Years of an Empress* [*Sissi – Schicksalsjahre einer Kaiserin*]. Austria | 1957
- *Touch of Evil*. USA, 1958
- “The Gypsy.” *At Each Kilometer* [“Циганката.” *На всеки километър*], Ep. 8. Bulgaria, 1969
- *Chocolat*. UK | USA, 2000
- *Snatch*. UK | USA, 2000
- *Daddy Daycare*. USA, 2003
- *Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan*. UK | USA, 2006

By way of disclaimer, it has to be said that the cinematic works listed in this chapter form a rather unwieldy collection of filmic texts that share a very broad and almost tautological definition: ‘gypsy’-themed films are films about imaginary ‘gypsy’ figures or, put another way, films in which the ‘gypsy’ mask is staged in truth-claiming modus. However, what makes this collection so unmanageable is the sheer variety of works. Clearly, the films stem from different national cultures as well as from different socio-historical periods. Viewed through the lens of conventional film genres, they happen to span the entire spectrum of genres from musicals, comedies, costume melodramas and dramas, through *noir* and horror films to fantasy and documentary-style fiction films. What is more, many of these films are auteur works, each of them

creating its own signature vision and symbolic 'gypsy' universe. Understandably, the undertaking to provide an interpretative coordinate system for such a big and disparate number of titles presents a formidable challenge in itself. The challenge arises in particular from the tension between the need to assess the films as autonomous works of art, ones that have originated from a specific socio-historical context, and at the same time remaining faithful to the focal goal of the research, and that is to extrapolate a set of salient characteristics, to identify one or more aesthetic tendencies at work that account – in good measure – for the titles in the film corpus. Inevitably, the resulting coordinate system is bound to appear schematic and will not always do full justice to the complexity of the material. That is to say, the films grouped in the three thematic categories align only to a certain extent with the racialising aesthetics of authentication thus described. As is the case with genre corpuses, there are films which reproduce this aesthetics more fully and faithfully and then there are, obviously, others that are more tangential. In the next chapters, taking a cue from Rick Altman's semantic/syntactic approach to film genre, I describe and catalogue the semantic elements that make up the typical 'gypsy'-themed film, outlining common motifs, personages, character traits and time-spaces, but also lighting set-ups, colour schemes, film sets, etc. At the same time, I consider the structures in which these building blocks are arranged, the meaning-bearing syntax of 'gypsy'-themed films. As a result, my approach should be meticulous enough to dissect the corpus of 'gypsy'-themed films and bring to light the features they share, and yet inclusive enough to acknowledge the unique in each and every artistic work.

4.2 Questioning 'Gypsy'-themed Films or the Racialising Aesthetics of Authentication Described as a Technology of Truth Production

The film titles included in my film corpus have been subjected to a series of questions⁶⁵ that target the strategies of authentication filmmakers

65 The analysis proposed here relays the ideas and perspectives developed by Ella Shohat and Robert Stam in their influential book *Unthinking Eurocentrism*. The authors emphasise the need for a nuanced and multi-level analysis of subaltern representations in film and discuss an impressive number of works featuring minority groups from all over the world (cf. 178–219). Yet, interestingly enough, there is not a single mention of 'gypsy'-themed films in their comprehensive

avail themselves of when staging the 'gypsy' mask before the camera. The questions crystallised during an intensive phase of film viewing, and as such provide the backbone of a comprehensive methodology for analysis and evaluation of 'gypsy'-themed films. The algorithm of questions highlights five key levels of analysis:

1. production set-up;
2. content of the 'gypsy' mask – character portrayal and plot;
3. form of the 'gypsy' mask – conventional use of visual tools and devices, such as lighting and camera work, colour themes, costumes and props, casting, music; cinematographic style;
4. claim to truth – film's visual aesthetics, genre, and self-presentation in paratexts;
5. functions of the 'gypsy' mask in the given socio-historical context.

4.2.1 Production Set-up

Questions on the production set-up: Who has power to define the 'truth' about 'gypsies' on the big screen? Who is in a position to decide what their appearance, behaviour, customs and way of life should be, what stories they should participate in, and what qualities they should display as human beings? Who is responsible for the film script? Is the script based on or influenced by other earlier texts or artworks? Who directs the film? Who is behind the camera? Who is in charge of costumes and film set? Who selects the actors? Who is cast in the leading roles? Who is cast as extras?

Summary of findings: The analysis of the production set-up throws light on the radical asymmetry of power between the dominant national culture and the Roma minority when it comes to self-definition and self-representations. In the production of a 'gypsy'-themed film, all decisions concerning script, direction, camerawork and editing, casting, costumes and props, music, etc. are taken by ethno-national ('white') professionals. (As an exception, when discussing the production set-up, I use the term 'white' to denote actual people who relay the perspective of the dominant (national) culture and who are perceived and self-perceive as 'white'.) The script is often based on a literary text (novel,

research, a symptomatic sign that the gypsy phantasm is a blind spot not only for European studies but also for postcolonial studies.

short story, theatrical play, poem, etc.) written by a 'white' writer. Often 'gypsy'-themed films are auteur works in which the film director takes charge of more than one aspect of the film work, such as script, editing, music, etc. The leading roles are often given to national or international/Hollywood 'white' celebrities, which makes these films akin to blackface minstrel shows. At the same time, 'gypsy'-themed films often make use of Roma extras, a very widespread authentication strategy, which makes them also akin to ethnological exhibitions or human zoos. In short, these films are produced by 'whites' for the entertainment of 'white' audiences featuring 'white' actors in the lead, frequently aided – for the sake of marketable authenticity – by Roma extras.

For a detailed discussion and film examples, see Chapter Five.

4.2.2 Content Analysis of the 'Gypsy' Mask: Character Portrayal and Plot

Questions on character portrayal: How is the 'gypsy' mask coded in the film, in terms of character traits? Is it explicitly or implicitly contrasted to the 'white' mask? What qualities are ascribed directly (through speech acts) or indirectly (through actions and emotional states) to it? What aspects of human existence do these qualities reflect (personal integrity, social and professional integration, parenthood, sexuality, religious belief, language mastery and education, diet, health, and personal hygiene, national affiliation etc.)? What kind of cluster do these qualities form? Is the 'gypsy' figure individualised? Does it have a name and how is it characterised through its name? How is it coded with regard to time (day vs. night/linear vs. circular) and space (light vs. shadow/city vs. forest)?

Questions on plot: What kind of plot is the 'gypsy' figure set in? Is the 'gypsy' figure the main hero in the story, and if so, is there an option for him/her to complete the hero's journey, to transcend his/her limited circumstances and achieve a higher level of individuation? If the plot negotiates the relationship between a 'gypsy' figure and a 'white' figure, a representative of the mainstream culture, does it allow for the possibility of coexistence (a love relationship or marriage)?

Summary of findings: Each of the films listed above constructs its own 'gypsy' world and manufactures its own 'gypsy' mask in explicit or implicit opposition to the 'white' mask. To preserve this element of artistic uniqueness, my analysis refrains from a taxonomic listing of

'gypsy' stereotypes,⁶⁶ but rather aims at abstracting the qualities and values ascribed to the 'gypsy' mask in two model films in the form of keywords (see Chapter Six). Thus, I demonstrate that the 'gypsy' mask has several layers of signification – mythic or symbolic, socio-cultural, religious, 'ethno-racial' – that mutually reinforce each other and are activated *en bloc*. This approach lays bare the plasticity and artificiality of the 'gypsy' mask, offering an explanation as to why almost anything deviant can be ascribed to it. At the same time, it demonstrates its universality, its simple grammar: 'gypsy' signifies either absence or insufficiency of a norm-setting value (e.g. the 'white' mask is coded with the value of 'cleanliness', which is absent in the 'gypsy' mask, the latter being coded with the value of 'dirtiness') or its misapplication (e.g. the 'white' mask is coded with the value 'proper use of language/good command of one's language', while the 'gypsy' mask is coded with 'improper use of language/substandard command of one's language'). To put it another way, the juxtaposition of the 'white' mask against the 'gypsy' mask foregrounds the question of self-mastery, highlighting the grave consequences of failure, that is, if one fails to have control over oneself in certain areas of life. Put in abstract terms, the 'gypsy' mask is used to stage a cluster of heterogeneous attributes that stand in direct opposition, signifying absence or misapplication, to a set of heterogeneous values associated with the norm-setting 'white' mask.

Set in motion, the 'gypsy' mask enacts the myth⁶⁷ of human self-destruction. It represents the anti-hero who is unable to complete the hero's journey and who, by failing to take control of his/her own nature, dooms him/herself to perdition. As such, the 'gypsy' mask is auxiliary to the individualised figure of the 'white' hero; its purpose is to deliver a cautionary message, thereby staging the spectacle of failure and/or

66 For a detailed study of 'gypsy' motifs in literature, see Brittnacher, *Leben*; as to photography, see Reuter, *Bann*.

67 Here, I use the term 'myth' in the sense elaborated by Lotman: it is a text-engendering mechanism organised according to cyclical time whose function is to create "a picture of the world". Mythological texts recount of events that are "out of time, endlessly repeated, and in this sense, unchangeable" and, thus, provide information about the laws immanent to the world (*Universe* 152). In terms of their structure, myths can be reduced to the following basic series of events: "entry into a closed space – exit from it" (158). Lotman's schematic rendition of myth-plots corresponds to Joseph Campbell's description of the monomyth, in which the hero's journey is broken down into six stages but is organised around the same two-step movement: entry into a closed, dark space and return to an open, lit-up space (*Universe* 28–29).

punishment. When placed in a leading role, which is what happens in 'gypsy'-themed films, the 'gypsy' mask is at loggerheads with its conventional use. To overcome this contradiction in terms, filmmakers tend to de-individualise and thus to de-centre the lead 'gypsy' character by delineating him/her as a generic figure that epitomises the entire group. The 'gypsy' hero is deprived of elaborate individuality on the level of both character portrayal and plot development. Just as in film *noirs*, this anti-hero is unable to transcend his/her nature/'blood', lifestyle or environment and, in an oneiric state, condemns him/herself to moral defeat and a foreseeable, non-tragic death. Films about the relationship between a 'white' and a 'gypsy' character proclaim such bonds to be impossible, demeaning or even lethal; they often serve as a warning story, for it is the 'gypsy' character who is shown to be the source of (lethal) danger.

For a detailed discussion and film examples, see Chapter Six.

4.2.3 Formal Analysis of the 'Gypsy' Mask

Questions on cinematic conventions and devices: How is the 'gypsy' mask visually characterised in terms of lighting, framing, colour schemes, make-up, hair-grooming, costumes and props? What qualities are ascribed to it? Is it crafted in juxtaposition to the 'white' mask and how? Who is privileged by the use of facial lighting, close-ups and white colour schemes? Who is de-individualised and how? Is the film explicitly intent on constructing social and/or 'ethno-racial' alterity? What aesthetic strategies does it pursue to achieve this goal? How is the 'gypsy' mask coded using editorial and cinematographic style?

Summary of findings: The general tendency is to portray 'gypsy' characters as metaphorically or literally 'non-white'/'black' in a realist style, which often alludes to and borrows from the authority of the ethnographic documentary film genre, reducing the central 'gypsy' heroes to representative figures instead of endowing them with an elaborate individuality. The cinematic tools and devices here are so numerous and diverse that it only makes sense to study their combined use and meaning-generating functions in the context of individual films.

For a detailed discussion and film examples, see Chapter Seven.

4.2.4 Claim to Truth and Authentication Strategies

Questions on genre and self-promotion: How does the film present itself and its relation to the socio-historical world? Does it lay claim to

authenticity? If so, what aesthetic strategies does the film use to attest to its alleged truthfulness? What elements are deployed to produce an effect of authenticity? How does the effect of authenticity come to bear upon the film's storyworld, on the delineation of its 'gypsy' characters and on its bottom-line message? What paratexts are circulated in support of the film's truth claims?

Summary of findings: The advertised aim of the 'gypsy'-themed films is to reveal the 'truth' about 'gypsies' in general, corroborating the cultural expectation that this European minority is intrinsically, radically and irrevocably different. These fiction films turn 'gypsy' ways and lifestyle into their central point of appeal, creating a much-lauded and just as lucrative authenticity effect through strategic deployment of Roma extras, Romani folklore/Gypsy music, Romani language, costumes, props and setting, etc. Visually, 'gypsy'-themed films are invested in realism as a style,⁶⁸ according additional authority to their truth claims by borrowing themes, motifs, stylistic devices and aesthetic techniques from the ethnographic documentary genre. The claim that these films are in a position to reveal the otherwise inaccessible 'truth' about 'gypsies' is also promoted through various paratexts: from DVD blurbs and advertisement posters to making-of films and interviews with the filmmakers.

For a detailed discussion and film examples, see Chapter Eight.

68 The concept of realism is a famously vague, hard-to-pin-down one, associated with a broad spectrum of theoretical definitions, some of which are mutually exclusive, so a disambiguation note is required here. In *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, Shohat and Stam provide an illuminating discussion of the question of realism in filmic representations of subaltern groups, pointing out that the aesthetics of verisimilitude implicitly makes claims to socio-historic truths and is decoded as doing so (cf. 178). In reference to Brecht, the authors are careful to distinguish between realism as a style or a set of conventions used to produce "an illusionistic 'reality effect'" and realism as a goal, also called "progressive realism", the aim of which is to lay bare social hierarchies and hegemonic representations (180). Clearly, in my critique of 'gypsy'-themed films, I have in mind the first notion of realism. In their *Film Theory*, Thomas Elsaesser and Malte Hagener consider the 'classical' cinematic style through the conceptual metaphors of window and frame, pointing out the paradox that a maximum of technique and technology is required to create "the effect of an unmediated view (window)" (19, cf. 14–38). In *Hollywood Lighting*, Patrick Keating details the technical means and codified rules that define classical cinema, further distinguishing between realism of roundedness, of presence, of mood and of realist detail (cf. 5). The psychological "appetite for illusion", another important aspect of pseudo-realism in plastic arts, is addressed in André Bazin's book *What is Cinema?* (11).

4.2.5 Functional Analysis of the 'Gypsy' Mask

Questions on socio-historical context and reception: What is the unstated purpose of staging the 'gypsy' mask in the film? What unspoken needs of the dominant culture are met through the story, what socio-political anxieties are alleviated, and what kind of identity crises are stabilised? What is the reception of the film? Who is praised and who profits directly from its success and who is excluded from the success?

Summary of findings: The staging of the 'gypsy' mask fulfils an array of disparate functions, similar to the ones identified in relation to blackface minstrel shows; we can distinguish between the following five main categories: the aesthetic, disciplining, carnival, subversive and socially integrative functions. The 'gypsy' mask is ubiquitous in film narratives and therefore it can endow figures and stories with a high level of visibility (aesthetic function). The enactment of the 'gypsy' mask, in turn, may be used in a way that stabilises the norm-setting 'white' mask by way of ostracising and punishing deviance (disciplining function); it may be used in a way that enables filmmakers to give vent to pent-up emotions and broach taboo topics (carnival/expressive function); or it may enable them to voice a critical view of the 'white' mask and put forward alternative models of social cohesion (subversive function). The subversive potential of the 'gypsy' figure may also add a measure of self-reflexivity and/or true originality to the film, two aspects of great cultural significance. Just as in blackface minstrel shows, the performance in 'gypsy' mask may have a strong uplifting effect on the professional career of the non-Roma filmmaking crew, elevating the film director and the lead actors – and sometimes even the national cinema they represent – to the first ranks of the international film scene (socially integrative function).

For a brief concluding discussion and film examples, see Chapter Nine.

The panoramic overview of 'gypsy'-themed films provides enough evidence in support of the claim that they represent highly complex artworks with a specific internal structure that sets them apart from other film forms and with a specific role in the dynamics of national cultures. Drawing on the summary description of 'gypsy'-themed films, I can also offer the reader some irony-loaded guidelines to pinpoint once again and in a condensed form the racialising essentialism that lurks behind this aesthetic phenomenon. (Here, the reader should be

reminded that in the context of the production set-up (Step No. 1), the term 'white' is used to denote actual people who relay the perspective of the dominant (national) culture and who are perceived and self-perceive as 'white'.)

4.2.6 How to Produce a 'Gypsy'-themed Film in Five Steps

Step No. 1: Get a team of 'white' filmmaking professionals to script, stage, shoot and produce a film about 'gypsies'. Invite 'white' celebrity actors for the lead roles and, if need be, typecast a crowd of Roma extras.

Step No. 2: Shoot an entertaining and simultaneously instructive story that revolves around the demise and punishment of a 'gypsy' hero. Refrain from portraying this anti-hero in a tragic light; make clear instead that 'gypsy' 'blood' and way of life are to blame for his/her undoing. Associate him/her with the oneiric and with the obverse mythic world (night-time, shadow, cyclical time, and forest) to achieve the effect of radical Otherness. If a 'white' character is unwise enough to socialise with the 'gypsy' hero, show their joint downfall. Individualise the 'gypsy' hero only partially; emphasise rather that he/she is a representative figure.

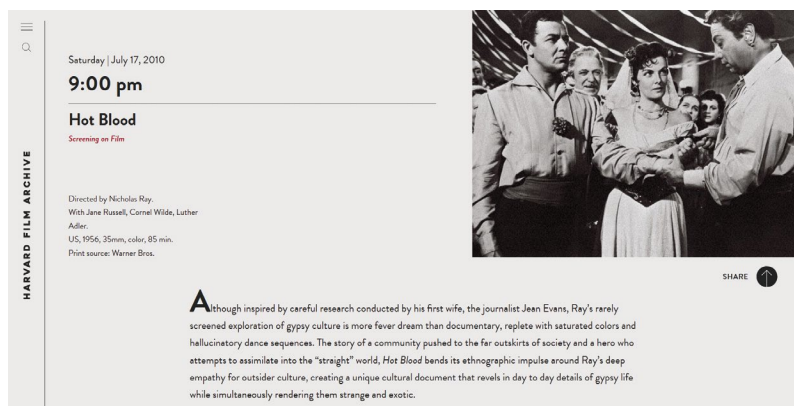
Step No. 3: Visualise the 'gypsy' mask as an embodiment of darkness (= absence of light). Cement this archetypal perception by bringing the 'gypsy' figure into connection with shadow, night, vivid and/or black (costume) colours and 'non-white'/'black' skin colour.

Step No. 4: Stick to the conventions of realist film, mobilising in aid of your truth claims lighting, make-up, costumes, props, Roma extras, and Romani folk music and language. No matter the film genre, include sequences shot as if you were an ethnographer documenting life-cycle rituals (baptism, marriage, funeral) and details from daily life. Make your film's carefully crafted authenticity its main selling point.

Step No. 5: Finally, don't forget that you are using the 'gypsy' mask as a projection surface to address important (political, aesthetic, ethical, etc.) questions that are relevant to the national majority but cannot be raised in public. All art requires courage and so does filmmaking!

Described in an ironically distanced way, the formula outlining the conception, production and self-presentation of 'gypsy'-themed films may elicit laughter, but this formula – which is intrinsically antigypsy – constitutes the norm in filmmaking and is extolled by scholars and experts in all earnestness. I want to conclude my overview of 'gypsy'-themed

The Phenomenon of 'Gypsy'-themed Films



Harvard Film Archive

Saturday | July 17, 2010
9:00 pm
Hot Blood
Screening on Film

Directed by Nicholas Ray.
With Jane Russell, Cornel Wilde, Luther Adler.
US, 1956, 35mm, color, 85 min.
Print source: Warner Bros.

Although inspired by careful research conducted by his first wife, the journalist Jean Evans, Ray's rarely screened exploration of gypsy culture is more fever dream than documentary, replete with saturated colors and hallucinatory dance sequences. The story of a community pushed to the far outskirts of society and a hero who attempts to assimilate into the "straight" world, *Hot Blood* bends its ethnographic impulse around Ray's deep empathy for outsider culture, creating a unique cultural document that revels in day to day details of gypsy life while simultaneously rendering them strange and exotic.

SHARE

Fig. 17. Screenshot from the website of the Harvard Film Archive. Film Series/Events. *Nicholas Ray: Hollywood's Last Romantic*. Short announcement of his film *Hot Blood* (1956). Web. 24 Apr 2020.

films with one highly illustrative example taken from the website of the Harvard Film Archive that bespeaks the normality of antigypsy representations on the big screen. In 2010, a retrospective of Nicholas Ray's work organised by the Harvard Film Archive had the following film announcement in its official programme (**Fig. 17**):

Hot Blood

Directed by Nicholas Ray.

With Jane Russell, Cornel Wilde, Luther Adler.

US, 1956, 35mm, color, 85 min.

Print source: Warner Bros.

Although inspired by careful research conducted by his first wife, the journalist Jean Evans, Ray's rarely screened exploration of gypsy culture is more fever dream than documentary, replete with saturated colors and hallucinatory dance sequences. The story of a community pushed to the far outskirts of society and a hero who attempts to assimilate into the "straight" world, *Hot Blood* bends its ethnographic impulse around Ray's deep empathy for outsider culture, creating a unique cultural document that revels in day to day details of gypsy life while simultaneously rendering them strange and exotic.

The synopsis of *Hot Blood* may be just a few lines long, but it reiterates in adulation most of the typical and highly problematic characteristics that I have identified in my multi-level description of 'gypsy'-themed films. I will refrain from a close textual analysis and leave the reader the pleasure of working out the antigypsy formula in the quoted synopsis. However, I want to draw attention to the normality of antigypsyism; here, it is reinforced not only by the film's inclusion in the Harvard celebratory retrospective as one of "Ray's iconic and deeply influential films of the Fifties", but also by Ray's canonisation "as one of post-war American cinema's supremely gifted and ultimately tragic filmmakers." The authors of the retrospective add that Nicholas Ray was "embraced as a cult director, crowned as auteur and celebrated for the searing romanticism, eccentric visual style and single-mindedness which would force him into one conflict too many with the Hollywood establishment." In other words, the appraisal of the film *Hot Blood* is embedded in and augmented by the appraisal of the director's lifetime achievement where the judgement of artistic value is authored and authorised by none other than the Harvard Film Archive. The reputation of Harvard as an academic institution inexorably comes to play a part in the process of normalising antigypsy attitudes. After all, one of the world's most renowned universities provides the institutional context in which Ray's film is publicly hailed as worthy of emulation. In the light of this, I can define the aim of my research as the uneasy task of questioning the overwhelmingly ubiquitous normalcy of screen antigypsyism. Moreover, I do so by comparing it to racist artworks produced in other space-times to achieve the effect of de-familiarisation, by exposing it for the highly complex cultural construct that it is as well as by furnishing evidence that antigypsyism constitutes one of the mythic pillars of European cultural consciousness, whose purpose is to maintain our shared sense of reality (normality).

5

Production Set-up

'Gypsy'-themed Films Paralleled to Blackface Minstrelsy Shows

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To gain a better understanding of the masquerade nature of 'gypsy'-themed films and to develop a certain distance from their emotional allure, it is necessary to pull down 'the fourth wall' and make the filmmaking apparatus visible, examining, as a first step, the production set-up of individual films. The filmmaking process itself represents a specific dialogic situation and when approached as such, it lays bare the asymmetry of power underpinning the positions and roles that are open to the partners in dialogue. Significantly, the production phase mirrors larger social processes, and it leaves its imprint on the final product, so I have regarded it as the first key level of film analysis. The questions brought up at this starting level examine the specific positions allocated to Roma and non-Roma within the filmmaking apparatus; in short, the focus is on the conditions for dialogue and the politics of production.

The critical analysis of 'gypsy'-themed films and their production set-up highlights the following main questions: Who has power to define the 'truth' about 'gypsies' on the silver screen? Who is in a position to decide what their appearance, behaviour, customs and lifestyle should be, what stories they should participate in, and what qualities they should display as human beings? Who is responsible for the film script? Is the script based on or influenced by other earlier texts or artworks? Who directs the film? Who is behind the camera? Who is in charge of costumes and film set? Who selects the actors? Who is cast in the leading roles? Who is cast as extras? The rest of this section will

attempt to provide an answer to these questions, by referring to the dozens of prototypical 'gypsy'-themed films listed in the film corpus. Evidence is often presented in the form of long, somewhat cumbersome lists of names, but, as in the earlier sections, the aim is to expose both the inherent asymmetry in the power relations and the one-directional dialogic exchange between the dominant national culture and the Roma minority at the stage of film production in their pan-European and US American dimensions.

To further increase the distance from the overly popular entertainment that 'gypsy'-themed films cater for, I want to draw a parallel between them and blackface minstrel shows and to consider the positions that these two art forms keep open for members of the minority and the majority in the production phase. Even though the history of African Americans in the USA and the history of Roma in Europe are worlds apart, there are certain formal similarities between blackface minstrelsy shows and 'gypsy'-themed films that arise from the specific dialogic situation in which the two minorities find themselves. The parallel to blackface minstrelsy is also meant to furnish the reader with an estranged perspective on 'gypsy'-themed films and their compelling visual appeal.

Greg Palmer's documentary *Vaudeville* (1997) makes a good starting point for a discussion about the politics of production that determines the artistic outcome in blackface minstrel shows. Palmer's film looks at the history of vaudeville, which includes blackface minstrelsy, featuring interviews with performers of the period and a number of rare film clips. One of the film quotes in *Vaudeville*, a sequence from an old black-and-white film,⁶⁹ puts on view the production set-up of blackface minstrelsy from an off-stage perspective. During the 1840s, blackface minstrel shows became "the most popular form of public entertainment in the United States" (Saxton 3–4) and the sequence in question re-creates the story of their "birth". The scene opens with a blond boy, who shouts out jubilantly at the top of his voice, apparently addressing a friend out of frame: "Hey, Skinny, the minstrel show is coming to town!" Next, we are made to witness a chance encounter between a 'white' gentleman and a 'black' man, namely one forced into slavery (**Fig. 18**). The gentleman has a markedly elegant outfit that includes a top hat, a long, dark coat over a snow-white shirt with frilled cuffs, a white bowtie and a fashionable

69 The sequence comes from a Vitaphone musical featurette called *Minstrel Days* (1941, Dir. Bobby Connolly).



Fig. 18. Assembled screenshots from the documentary film *Vaudeville* (1997, Dir. Greg Palmer), a film quote from *Minstrel Days* (1941, Dir. Bobby Connolly) recreating the ‘birth’ of blackface minstrel shows as a dialogic situation.

walking stick, while the slave is hatless, wearing a shabby, crumpled, dirty-looking whitish jacket over his dark shirt. The gentleman tells the slave that he has an idea and invites him to come half an hour before the show. The slave, overjoyed in a sheepishly subservient manner, asks with disbelief: “You mean, you wanna let me watch up close?”, to which the gentleman replies: “Jim Crow, you’ll practically be right on the stage.” The slave exclaims with excitement and leaves the frame jumping and singing: “Wheel about an’ turn about...” The next scene takes up the same song: “Wheel about, an’ turn about, an’ do jis so,/An’ every time I wheel about I jump Jim Crow”. This time, however, the song is performed by the gentleman who is on the stage, parodying the slave’s song and dance, his face covered in black grease, with grossly exaggerated lips painted in white and with white circles around his eyes. The camera cuts to a close-up of the actual Jim Crow, who is shivering alone in a dark corner by the stage, not in the audience, wrapped in a blanket, mournfully pleading: “Give me back my clothes, please!”

Allegedly, this film sequence recounts the story of Thomas Dartmouth Rice, known as “Daddy” Rice, a ‘white’ American performer

who developed the persona of Jim Crow, based on a folk trickster of the same name, and popularised a traditional slave song called “Jump Jim Crow”. The song-and-dance routine brought “Daddy” Rice instant success and let to him being dubbed as the “father of American minstrelsy” (Langman 190). I will not delve into the history⁷⁰ of blackface minstrelsy here. My intention is rather to consider it as a specific and very prolific matrix that has been used for the production of cultural artworks, and so I regard it not only as an art form with specific content, conventions and function, but also as a dialogic exchange in time that implicates its participants socially, economically, politically and psychologically. I have chosen this particular sequence because it represents, in the words of Eric Lott, “a master text of the racial economy encoded in blackface performance” (“Love and Theft” 24–25).

The off-stage perspective (even though it is fictionally recreated in the quoted film) allows me to identify and examine a number of similarities shared by blackface minstrel shows and ‘gypsy’-themed films in terms of production set-up and intended audience, which in turn opens up a new dimension for the critical assessment of ‘gypsy’-themed films. The dialogic exchange between “Daddy” Rice and Jim Crow, two individuals who stand for two social/‘ethno-racial’ groups, is characterised by a complete asymmetry of power and a total lack of dialogue; their asymmetrical non-dialogic relationship can be further elaborated in terms of voice, agency, authorship, subjectivity and ‘racial’ ideology. The individual who is perceived as ‘white’ has the active role, dominating public space with his worldview, while the individual who is perceived as ‘black’ is shunned from public space, stripped of his cultural acquisitions and utterly silenced. It is “Daddy” Rice who runs the show and by extension public life. He has the power to decide who can participate in it and who has to stay out, how to present himself on the stage, and how to fashion Jim Crow for the audience, wielding his monopoly over the power of definition to serve his professional, social, economic and political interests. A crucial and somewhat paradoxical

70 Paying close attention to the first three decades of minstrelsy (ca. 1845 to 1875), Alexander Saxton examines the ideological significance of blackface minstrelsy shows, calling them an important element of the “American experience” (4). His focus is on the ideological product that results from the infusion of specific social content (the city, the frontier, the Old South) into the dehumanising form of blackface. By propagating the plantation myth – that was brought to perfection in defence of slavery – and idealising the South, blackface minstrelsy reinforced the politics of Jacksonian and neo-Jacksonian democracy and its three cornerstone values: nationalism, egalitarianism and white supremacy.

element is that he can appropriate Jim Crow's skin colour, clothes and cultural products (song, dance, etc.) and exploit them for his own self-expression and career advancement.⁷¹ This dehumanising allocation of roles is compellingly summarised by Alexander Saxton:

Blackface performers were like puppets operated by a white puppet-master. Their physical appearance proclaimed their non-humanity; yet they could be manipulated not only to mock themselves, but also to act like human beings. They expressed human emotions such as joy and grief, love, fear, longing. The white audience then identified with the emotions, admired the skill of the puppeteer, even sympathized laughingly with the hopeless aspiration of the puppets to become human, and at the same time feasted on the assurance that they could not do so. Blackface minstrelsy's dominance of popular entertainment amounted to half a century of inurement to the uses of white supremacy. (27)

The quoted film sequence also shows that the power asymmetry in this non-dialogic exchange is perceived not only in social terms (class) and represented in the film on the level of clothes, but also in biological terms ('race') and marked on the level of skin colour. The coding of skin colour in artworks, such as vaudeville or film, is hardly an innocent act that, say, aims at an accurate rendition of skin pigmentation, but rather a visual cue, a representational shortcut that attributes the 'white' or the 'black' position to bodies caught in this power asymmetry. In the context of 'gypsy'-themed films, skin-colour coding also has crucial and far-reaching implications: although Roma are phenotypically as diverse as most European ethnicities and often practically indistinguishable from representatives of the dominant national culture, they are, notably, the only European minority nowadays that is persistently and unfailingly represented in European and North American literature, photography,

71 In "Love and Theft: The Racial Unconscious of Blackface Minstrelsy", Eric Lott opens up the discussion by quoting a similar hypothetical narrative of the minstrelsy's origins, namely the 1867 *Atlantic Monthly* article about T.D. Rice's first blackface performance in Pittsburgh, around 1830. Claiming that this account is "a master text of the racial economy encoded in blackface performance", Lott proceeds to analyse blackface minstrelsy along the lines of property and sexuality (24-25). In his view, this nineteenth-century art form expressed the 'white' fascination with commodified 'black' bodies and was aimed at constructing, staging and policing the boundary between 'white' and 'black' American cultures.

painting and film as ‘black’/‘non-white’, which is the quickest way – in visual terms – to disavow their national belonging and to de-Europeanise them. Both blackface minstrel shows and ‘gypsy’-themed films are among the key instruments used for constructing, (re)defining and authenticating national (= ‘white’) identity within the European and North American cultural realm, where the component ‘whiteness’ is the lowest common denominator that ensures social cohesion.

5.1 Film Directors of ‘Gypsy’-themed Films

Coming back to the leading questions in this section, it is worth comparing the production set-up of minstrelsy shows with that of ‘gypsy’-themed films by noting how the positions of “Daddy” Rice and of Jim Crow are filled in the production framework of ‘gypsy’-themed films. A simple substitution exercise reveals that the role of “Daddy” Rice, the show’s mastermind, is taken up not by one artist but by a group of different professionals: the film director, the scriptwriter and the lead actor(s), etc. The corpus filmography provides detailed information on the filmmaking crew of each film that is relevant here, but still, to lend concreteness to the discussion, I have listed in Annex III some of the more prominent film directors, artists like Lewin Fitzhamon, D.W. Griffith, Emir Kusturica, Emil Loteanu, Aleksandar Petrović and Nicholas Ray: all in all, thirty-four names.

It goes without saying that all of these film directors, who are also often in charge of the film script, are non-Roma, that is, they relay the respective dominant national culture in Europe or in the United States and as such are perceived and self-perceive as ‘white’. One conspicuous fact is that D.W. Griffith, the Father of Film, discovered his filmmaking talent with the ‘gypsy’ theme, as was mentioned above (see Section 3.1.1). Another notable occurrence is that ‘gypsy’-themed films often facilitate the debut or mark a high point of the directors’ and/or artists’ career graph, as the various examples demonstrate. It is also thought-provoking that a number of film directors who come from countries perceived as peripheral to the West have gained international acclaim through the ‘gypsy’ theme. The most remarkable career leaps have been made by the Serbian directors Aleksandar Petrović and Emir Kusturica, and by the Moldavian filmmaker Emil Loteanu.

At this point, we should be reminded of the all-powerful position of the film director and the fact that Roma lay actors and/or extras often

have to perform under duress. Rachel Morley's critical and meticulously researched analysis of the female figure of the 'gypsy' dancer in early Russian cinema provides an illuminating piece of evidence as to the manner in which filmmakers approached Roma non-professional actors:

Although some details of plot are clearly obscured in the extant print of the film, it is nevertheless obvious that *Drama in a Gypsy Camp Near Moscow* offers a highly stylised and conventional representation of the Gypsies and of gender relations among them. Indeed, the Gypsies' self-conscious awareness of the camera and their obvious discomfort at being filmed remind the viewer that although the people we see on the screen are ethnically real Gypsies, here they are nevertheless playing at being Gypsies; they are not enacting scenes from their everyday lives, but performing, for the benefit of the camera, stereotypical "Gypsy" roles invented by the (non-Gypsy) scriptwriter. As Khanzhonkov recalled: "[t]he gypsies were terrorised by the camera. Siverson only had to turn the handle for the gypsies' face to 'freeze' with terror. [...] they squinted at the camera in horror". Moreover, the Gypsies chosen to "star" in the film were selected for their conformity to stereotype, as Khanzhonkov himself acknowledged. (114; see also Tsivian 48)

Vladimir Siverson shot *Drama in a Gypsy Camp Near Moscow* in 1908, and apparently not much has changed over the years, for almost a hundred years later, in an interview for *IndieWire*, Emir Kusturica gives a straightforward account of his coercive style of filmmaking. The director openly admits to using intimidation as a special tactic for working with his Roma non-professional cast:

iW: Were there any times in *Black Cat*, *White Cat* where you were losing that fight?

Kusturica: It's incredible, because if you want to do it like this, even if it doesn't look complicated, you have to engage the Gypsies with all possible means. From time to time, you have to do it like the way Madeleine Albright is doing all around the world. One day, I threaten the Gypsies, the other day, I was their best friend. To be a director of these things, it's not just necessary to be talented, it's more necessary to be enduring, and to make them – even if they are not ready – to make them do something

you want them to do. That is also the pattern of auteur cinema that does not exist anymore. In my case, because it's a territory that's out of sight of the studios, I can still finance and find the money to make these types of films which have an elegance of expression in what happens in front of the lens, and at the same time have a taste of underground films. (Kaufman)

Well aware of his all-powerful position as a film director, Kusturica aptly compares his role to that of Madeleine Albright, the US Secretary of State under President Bill Clinton, who stirred up many a controversy with statements condoning use of force. In his words, the filmmaker deems it justified to make use of his positional, symbolic and financial power to coerce the Roma extras to fit into roles that are imagined by him. At the same time, his film benefits from the fact that the mere presence of Roma cast is interpreted as evidence that asserts the truth conveyed by their screen images. In other words, the pro-filmic existence of Roma is 'hijacked', reduced to an artistic surface and forcefully shaped to meet the needs of the filmmaker's imagination.⁷² To get one thing straight, Kusturica's auteur style is not problematic in itself, but it poses a serious ethical problem when we take into account the fact that his 'gypsy'-themed films parade themselves and, for that matter, are generally decoded as truthful cinematic portrayals of the Roma minority.

The cultural silencing of the Roma minority becomes even more obvious, and disturbingly so, when we compare the number and the authority of European and North American filmmakers to that of Roma directors (that is to say, film directors who self-perceive and openly position themselves as Roma)⁷³ who have created representations of 'gypsy'/Roma lifestyle and have made use of 'gypsy' figures and motifs in their fiction films. To my knowledge, there are only a couple of Roma directors who have produced feature-length fiction films with a

72 The anthropologist Alaina Lemon gives a detailed description of a similar filmmaking practice. In the 1990s, she observed a Russian director who employed actors from the Romani Theatre Romen to shoot a film about 'gypsies'. Intent on staging the "paradox of modern Gypsies", the director made use of Romani practices but imposed his own meaning onto them, projecting conflict among 'gypsies' where differences among Roma did not exist (159–165).

73 A continuously updated list of Roma filmmakers and their works, predominantly documentaries, can be found at the websites *Roma Cinema Resource Center* (romacinema.org) and the Film Section of *RomArchive* (romarchive.eu).

'gypsy'/Roma theme, of whom only the French-Algerian director Tony Gatlif has established a worldwide reputation for his commitment to the topic. The other two directors have authored sporadic works; these are the British actor and director Bob Hoskins with *The Raggedy Rawney* (1988) (La Bas 123), and the Moscow Lovaro Dufunia Vishnevskii with his two privately produced films *It's My Fault* (1993) and *The Sinful Apostles of Love* (1995) (cf. Chiline 38). Their work is representative of the aesthetic tendency of exposing/re-writing the 'gypsy' mask. One remark is needed here with regard to Charlie Chaplin. It poses a problem to include him in the list of Roma directors for, though said to be of Roma origin (cf. Sweet), he never openly positioned himself as a Roma director. Nor did he question the antigypsy discourse in filmmaking, or empathically take up the Roma perspective in his 'gypsy'-themed films, of which there are two, namely *A Burlesque on Carmen* (1915) and *The Vagabond* (1916), the latter making blatant use of antigypsy stereotypes (see also Section 3.2).

5.2 Fiction Authors with a Contribution to 'Gypsy'-themed Films

The film scripts of 'gypsy'-themed films often borrow their stories, figures and motifs from literary works: novels, theatre plays, short stories, poems, etc. Needless to say, it is common practice for directors, no matter the topic of their film, to draw upon ready-made fictional material. In the context of 'gypsy'-themed films, however, this practice deserves special attention for three different reasons. Firstly, we see that – along with the 'white' film director, scriptwriter and actor(s) – there is one more (male) artist from the dominant culture who contributes to the fabrication of the 'gypsy' mask. And in the case of, say, Prosper Mérimée, Victor Hugo or Maxim Gorky, he attests to the worldview voiced in the text with all the weight of his social standing and literary authority. Here, Alaina Lemon's research provides us with an important insight from the Russian cultural context:

Since its publication, Pushkin's verse often has been taken as "true," vested as "ethnographic." If not taken as literally true, then it has been taken as uncovering deeper, more essential truths than are apparent in reality. By the late-Soviet period, such readings had been elevated to official discourse, as uttered for instance by the director of the Romani Theatre, Romani singer

Nikolaj Slichenko, in a piece directed to an international audience: “Pushkin’s rebellious Zemfira, Tolstoy’s voluptuous Masha the Gypsy, Leskov’s heroine Grushenka, the very incarnation of beauty, were not produced by their creators’ imaginative genius. These are real people, alive and warm, who came out of their tents and their caravans and strode directly into literature” (1984). (...) Before taking up pen to write *The Gypsies*, Pushkin had had only fleeting contact with Roma in Moldova (...). Pushkin’s poem nevertheless continues to be “true” because it narrates a hegemonic account of Russian national identity that many find emotionally compelling. (...) For decades, writing about Gypsies entailed citing the classics. (46–47, 48)

Secondly, the reliance on fictional texts points to the strong influence that European and North American literature has had on the perception of filmmakers; and to some extent explains why modern filmmaking technology is used *not* to forge a more enlightened perception of the minority, but rather to ‘modernise’, racialise and authenticate age-old myths. Thirdly, ‘gypsy’-themed films tend to play with the evidentiary aesthetics of documentary and ethnographic film, so it is essential to explore them as artworks situated on and profiting from the fuzzy boundary between literary fabrication and scientific documentation. Annex IV provides here a non-exhaustive list of the literary works that have served as a source material for ‘gypsy’-themed films and that are without exception written by members of the dominant culture. The list brings to the fore the obsessive repetitiveness with which fictional ‘gypsy’ stories are being told and re-told across media. Some of the entries are supplemented with references to perceptive articles and books as a way of underscoring the paradoxical centrality that ‘gypsy’ figures have in the construction of the dominant national narratives across Europe and the USA.

The overview of the literary sources of ‘gypsy’-themed films exposes them, once again, as ventriloquised cultural forms: none of these texts that centre on ‘gypsy’-mask enactments has been crafted by a Roma author. (An exception here are the three Roma film directors mentioned earlier, namely Tony Gatlif, Bob Hoskins and Dufunia Vishnevskii, who feature as screenplay writers or more often as co-scriptwriters.) The listed literary sources vary in genre and quality, but just as with blackface minstrel shows, many of these texts, commonly staged in accompaniment with Romani folklore/Gypsy music, appear to have

produced a localised entertainment craze that subsequently has been taken over, in one form or another, by the medium of film.⁷⁴ The entertainment crazes around 'gypsy'-themed artworks which take the public by storm in a given cultural space-time are scarcely documented and often scorned by contemporaneous critics, but if subjected to a "symptomatic" analysis,⁷⁵ they can undoubtedly offer a wealth of information for historical queries into the archaeology of the formation of European national identities.

One prominent example here is the repetitive ecranisation of the musical comedy *Morena Clara* by Antonio Quintero and Pascual Guillén. The play's first screen adaptation in 1936 marked the beginning of the so-called Golden Age of Spanish cinema and became, nationally and internationally, "the most successful Spanish film of the decade" (Jarvinen 144). The film, variously translated into English as *Dark*

74 The infatuation with 'gypsies' and their lifestyle is certainly not reserved for cinema only. Rather, the medium of film is one of the conduits of the 'gypsy' mania that has surged at intervals – following the whims of inspiration and the needs of national myths – through European arts and sciences (literature, painting, music, anthropology, linguistics, etc.) since the early seventeenth century when Cervantes published his singularly influential *novela* "La gitanilla". One account of a local wave of fascination is given in Brown's book *Gypsies and Other Bohemians*, in which the author discusses the popularity of the 'gypsy' theme among nineteenth-century French painters, from Daumier and Courbet to Manet, Renoir, Van Gogh and Henri Rousseau. Another account is given in Rachel Morley's book on early Russian cinema, where the scholar traces the singular Russian fascination with the 'gypsy' performer to the first private Gypsy choir in Moscow founded in 1774 by Count Orlov. Morley explains that by the start of the twentieth century, the mania for 'gypsy' music, dance and stage entertainment [*tsyganshchina*] had engulfed all strata of Russian urban culture and society, and early filmmakers readily tapped into it (cf. 110–119).

75 Lott, for example, claims that the nineteenth-century written response to blackface minstrelsy cries out for a reading through a "symptomatic" analysis; he says: "if the unconscious is visible only in slips, silences, and (in)admissions in conscious life, so the political unconscious of the public, though usually hidden by official representations that are made of it in the discourse of the critic, can erupt out of gaps in this discourse" ("Love and Theft" 37). In justifying his approach, Lott refers to the practice of the Marxist art historian T.J. Clark, who read mid-nineteenth-century French painting through a "symptomatic" analysis of its contemporaneous critics. Clark, in turn, draws an analogy with Freudian theory: "Like the analyst listening to his patient, what interests us, if we want to discover the [public], are the points at which the rational monotone of the critic breaks, fails, falters; we are interested in the phenomenon of obsessive repetition, repeated irrelevance, anger suddenly discharged – the points where the criticism is incomprehensible are the keys to its comprehension. The public, like the unconscious, is present only when it ceases; yet it determines the structure of private discourse; it is the key to what cannot be said, and no subject is more important" (qtd. in Lott, "Love and Theft" 37–38).

and *Bright* or *The Fair-Skinned Gypsy*, added to the fame of Imperio Argentina, who was already at the height of her international career, and asserted itself, within a few weeks of its release, “as an absolute blockbuster in its home country and shortly afterwards in Mexico and other South American countries” (Camporesi 25). In 1935, the director Florián Rey was asked in an interview what it takes to make a film of universal appeal, to which he gave the following answer: “We will achieve greater universality as much as our productions keep our racial values... If we want to export [films], we must constantly increase their Spanishness” (Jarvinen 144).

José María Pemán’s theatre play *Cuando las Cortés de Cádiz* (1934) is another example of a fictional text that has been repeatedly brought onto the screen. The play is marked by reactionary and anti-liberal sentiments characteristic of Pemán’s literary output during the Spanish Republican period (1931–1939). Its first cinematic adaptation, called *Lola, the Coalgirl*, premiered on 3 March 1952 and enjoyed considerable public success, attracting 121,814, viewers according to data provided by Filmoteca Española; its second ecranisation came out in 1969. González González argues that *Lola, the Coalgirl* (1951) is paradigmatic of the intention of Franco’s regime to create a national-popular culture that unites all the different social classes by means of popular music. The film has a hybrid form, combining elements of historic epic and musical, a genre that became dominant during Franco’s dictatorship (215–216).

Yet another rather intriguing example is the British film *Madonna of the Seven Moons* (1944), which testifies to the plasticity of the ‘gypsy’ mask and the wide range of uses it can be put to. In April 1946, the readers of the *Daily Mail* voted for the best British film of 1939–1945 in a national film award, choosing *Madonna of the Seven Moons* as their third-favourite picture and Phyllis Calvert, who performed in gypsyface, as their second favourite leading actress (“British Poll” 1946). Robert Murphey notes that the Gainsborough costume melodrama was maligned by the critics, but was “highly successful at the box office”, confirming Phyllis Calvert, together with several other actresses, “as genuinely glamorous British stars in the Hollywood mould” (39). Cook discusses the Europeanisation of British cinema, pointing out that *Madonna of the Seven Moons* demonstrates the European influence on British film not only in terms of production set-up, but also in terms of narrative content. The film’s special merit lies in widening the scope of Britishness to also include the European component, communicating the idea that “national identity could be dual identity” (61).

The broad variety of examples presented here suggests that the fabrication of the ‘gypsy’ mask results from the collaborative effort of national (‘white’) (script)writers and directors; as such, it plays an essential role in the formation and individualisation of European national narratives (‘white’ identities), and, significantly so, in narrowing down or broadening the boundaries of the respective imaginary collective.

5.3 Celebrity Actors in Gypsyface

Along with the film director and (script)writer, the lead actor is the next professional artist who has a significant contribution to the fabrication of the ‘gypsy’ mask. When it comes to the casting, with few exceptions, the leading roles in ‘gypsy’-themed films are performed by actors from the dominant national culture, i.e. professionals who are perceived and self-perceive as ‘white’. Some of these actors have turned the act of ‘gypsy’ impersonation into their signature role, like, for example, the Finnish filmmaker Teuvo Tulio, whose starring role in *The Gypsy Charmer* (1929) earned him the nickname “Finland’s Valentino”, the Spanish actress Lola Flores, nicknamed “La Faraona” (cf. Rogers 192), the Bulgarian actress Pepa Nikolova (cf. Baharova), and the Moldavian actress Svetlana Tomá.

When discussing the racial politics of casting in Hollywood cinema, Shohat and Stamm isolate the same law of unilateral privilege, albeit in relation to other minority groups:

European and Euro-Americans have played the dominant role, relegating non-Europeans to the supporting roles and the status of extras. Within Hollywood cinema, Euro-Americans have historically enjoyed the unilateral prerogative of acting in “blackface”, “redface”, “brownface”, and “yellowface”, while the reverse has rarely been the case. (189)

In the case of ‘gypsy’-themed films, it is worth noting that non-Roma actors also play the starring roles when the films lay claim to ethnographic truthfulness. Prime examples here are Bekim Fehmiu’s starring role in gypsyface in *I Even Met Happy Gypsies* (1967), Grigore Grigoriu’s and Svetlana Tomá’s starring roles in gypsyface in *Queen of the Gypsies* (1975), and Davor Dujmović’s starring role in *Time of the Gypsies* (1988). The list of non-Roma actors and actresses in gypsyface is rather long,

so I have included in Annex V the major (inter)national celebrities featuring in the films that are part of the film corpus, actors like Imperio Argentina, Johnny Depp, Melina Mercouri, Pola Negri, Asta Nielsen and Brad Pitt – all in all, forty-four names.

All these actors have the special charisma and stage presence to hold the attention of large (inter)national audiences. By performing in gypsyface, they are able to bring a new intensity and focus to the fictional ‘gypsy’ figure, lending it an aura and recognisability that no literary text has ever had the power to achieve. There is also a reverse effect to be observed: the ‘gypsy’ mask allows actors to significantly expand their expressive range and thus it has significant potential to raise artists out of obscurity to (international) celebrity status. The artistic freedom that ‘ethno-racial’ masquerade allows for is noted by John Russel:

Blackface minstrelsy involved more than simply ridicule and debasement of black people and their culture. It provided, somewhat paradoxically, an outlet for whites to re-imagine themselves as blacks, allowing them an emotional freedom and spontaneity they denied themselves as white. (Russel 58)

One film review from 1928 which exalts the performance of Dolores del Río in *The Loves of Carmen* (1927, Dir. Raoul Walsh) provides an elaborate description of the rich spectrum of conflicting qualities that can be profitably explored by female performers in gypsyface. The excerpt quoted here from the review, originally published in *Neue Berliner Zeitung* on 31 January 1928, appears as part of a one-page advertisement of Raoul Walsh’s film; bearing the title “All Berlin is crazy about Dolores del Río in *The Loves of Carmen*...” [Ganz Berlin ist verrückt über Dolores del Río in *Die Liebe vom Zigeuner stammt*...] the advertisement was placed in the influential German film magazine *Film-Kurier*.⁷⁶

Eine ausgezeichnete Leistung der hochbefähigten Darstellerin. Sie ist wundervoll gelöst in der Bewegung, von zauberhaftem Rhythmus der Geste und des Schreitens, einem tänzerischen Gliederspiel, geschmeidig-schlank, tierhaft, ganz Naturgeschöpf ohne raffiniertes, bewusstes Frauentum, lockend und sich versagend, bettelnd und stolz, zigeunerhaft-wild und weiblich zart,

76 I am thankful to Eva Orbanz for sending this valuable source.

ungekünstelt, frei von forciertem Kameratemperament, ursprünglich, überzeugend, bezwingend in ihrem Nuancenreichtum.

Der Dolores del Río wegen ist dieser Fox-Film in hohem Masse sehenswert... ihr gilt vor allem der herzliche Beifall. Olé!

An excellent performance by this highly capable actress. She is wonderfully relaxed in her movements, with a magical rhythm of gesture and stride, a dancing play of limbs, supple and slender, animal-like, a perfect creature of nature without refined, conscious womanhood, alluring and eluding, mendicant and proud, wild in a gypsy-like manner and femininely delicate, unaffected, free of the strained temperament induced by the camera, genuine, convincing, compelling with her rich palette of nuances.

It is above all Dolores del Río that makes this Fox film worth seeing... it is to her, above all, that the hearty applause goes. Olé!
[my translation, R.M.]

Whether iconic film stars lend their face to the 'gypsy' role or the 'gypsy' role aids and abets lesser-known actors in rising to stardom, one way or another, the mythic 'gypsy' acquires a new level of visibility on the big screen. Through 'gypsy' impersonations, actors are also able to contribute to the elaboration of the 'gypsy' mask in a very personal way, by tapping into their own imagination and knowledge in ways that go beyond the scripted role. There is hardly any written evidence of the internal creative process individual artists go through, of the influences and ideas they consider in preparation for their role. That is why Bill Miller's account of the making of *Golden Earrings* (1947), starring Marlene Dietrich and Ray Milland, is very valuable, as it makes clear how much room there is for interpretation. During the shooting, Dietrich and Milland argued over their share of "stardom" in the film and their personal hostilities reverberated in Dietrich's 'gypsy' impersonation:

On the set, Dietrich delighted in shocking Milland. For one scene by the campfire, she pulled a fish head out of her cauldron, popped it in her mouth, sucked out the eyes, then pulled the fish head back out. When Leisen called cut, she then stuck her finger down her throat so she could throw up the fish eyes. She did this in repeated takes, as Milland grew paler and paler under his gypsy makeup. In another scene, she reached under her skirt to scratch for lice, then offered Milland some bread with the same hand. (Miller)

Before moving on to the topic of Roma performers cast in ‘gypsy’-themed films, it is worth considering the borderline case of Rita Hayworth, which bespeaks the fluidity of ethno-national identity both on- and off-screen, offering a subversive counterpoint to our attempted classification of artists along ethno-national markers. On the one hand, this idolised Hollywood star has been claimed by the Roma community. In his book *We are the Romani people*, Ian Hancock states that Rita Hayworth, born Margarita Carmen Cansino in 1918, is the granddaughter of Antonio Cansino, a Spanish Roma who created Spanish dance as it is known today, and the daughter of Eduardo Cansino, a professional dance teacher who opened a dancing school in Hollywood in 1926 (cf. 130–131). There are many conjectures surrounding the actress’s ancestry, a topic Nericcio grapples with in his book *Tex[t]-Mex: Seductive Hallucinations of the “Mexican” in America*, focusing, among other things, on Hayworth’s Mexican looks, “her apparent Mexicanicity” mentioned by all her critics and biographers (96). And then, on the other hand, there are film scholars like Peter Evans, who describes Hayworth as the child of an Irish/English American mother and a father of Spanish background complicated by “Jewish, Arab, Gypsy as well as European Iberian heritage” (107–109). In addition to that, Evans considers the physical restyling of the actress in relation to conformity and resistance to mainstream ethnic norms – the ambivalent effect of her physical transformation “from the raven-haired, low-forehead, Latin-looking ‘B’ actress into the auburn-haired, electrolysis-improved hairline American beauty with a *souçon* of exoticism” (108). Clearly, the case of Rita Hayworth⁷⁷ collapses ethno-national labels as well as all the terminological ploys that scholars have coined to make a conceptual distinction between real and imaginary personae and thus serves as a good reminder of the limitations that are inherent in identity markers and analytical terms. Another interesting case here is Iva Bittová, a trained actress and nowadays a well-known musician, whose name appears in the next section. As a young girl, Bittová plays the lead ‘gypsy’ role in Hanák’s film *Pink Dreams* and is herself of mixed background: her mother is Jewish, while her father is Roma. From a traditional Jewish perspective, this makes her Jewish, yet she does to some extent stylise herself as Roma in her stage performances, while

77 Rita Hayworth herself was member of the Sleepy Lagoon Defense Committee, “one of the most intense organised antiracist initiatives” in her day (Lott, *Whiteness* 561).

at other times she assumes a Jewish persona.⁷⁸ Here is a good place to say that the references to “Roma filmmakers” or to “Roma actors and actresses” in the study are an expedient way to direct attention to people who self-perceive and self-define as Roma and to highlight the power dynamics at play. Thus, Roma identity is not treated as an ‘ethno-racial’ quality, but as a construct that the minority itself is engaged in creating in its collective effort to resist, revise and transcend the stigma of the imposed ‘gypsy’ mask.

5.4 Roma Cast in 'Gypsy'-themed Films

Considering the virtual absence of Roma among the filmmakers and (script)writers involved in the production of fictional ‘gypsy’-themed films, the number of starring Roma actors appears slightly higher. Here are some of the Roma actors and actresses playing the lead or a large supporting role; their names are arranged in an alphabetical order:

- Ljubica Adžović as Granny Hatidža in *Time of the Gypsies* (1988, Dir. Emir Kusturica) and as Sujka in *White Cat, Black Cat* (1998, Dir. Emir Kusturica)
- Senada Alimanović as Senada in *An Episode in the Life of an Iron Picker* (2013, Dir. Danis Tanović)
- Pio Amato as Pio in *A Ciambra/Pio* (2017, Dir. Jonas Carpignano)
- Iva Bittová as Jolanka in *Pink Dreams* (1976, Dir. Dušan Hanák)
- Marcel Costea as Hokus in *Nelly's Adventure* (2016, Dir. Dominik Wessely)
- Angelo Evans as himself in *Angelo, My Love* (1983, Dir. Robert Duvall)
- Husnija Hasimović as Uncle Merdžan in *Time of the Gypsies*
- Gordana Jovanović as Tisa in *I Even Met Happy Gypsies* (1967, Dir. Aleksandar Petrović)
- Nadezhda Kiseleva, known as Lala Chernaya/Lyalya Chyornaya or Lala Black, as the daughter Alta in *The Last Camp* (1935, Dir. Moisei Goldblat and Yevgeni Schneider) and as old Gypsy woman in *Queen of the Gypsies* (1975, Dir. Emil Loteanu)
- Hagi Lăcătuș as Tibi in *Nelly's Adventure*

78 I am thankful to Bettina Kaibach for drawing my attention to the performative approach that Iva Bittová has adopted towards her own identity.

Production Set-up

- Marko Marković as Romeo in *Gucha – Distant Trumpet* (2006, Dir. Dušan Milić)
- Raisa Mihai as Roxana in *Nelly's Adventure*
- Nazif Mujić as Nazif in *An Episode in the Life of an Iron Picker*
- Elvira Sali as the sister Danira in *Time of the Gypsies*
- Bajram Severdžan as Matko Destanov in *White Cat, Black Cat* as himself in the documentary *The Shutka Book of Records* (2005, Dir. Aleksandar Manić) and as a Gypsy musician in *To the Hilt* (2014, Dir. Stole Popov)

Except for Iva Bittová, Lala Chernaya and Marcel Costea, none of these Roma performers, however, are trained actors, nor would their one-time appearance on the big screen lead to a long-term acting career. Bajram Severdžan is an exception here, too, but one can see from his acting portfolio on IMDb that he has been firmly anchored to role of the 'gypsy'. Thus, for the most part, the involvement of Roma non-professional actors has been motivated by the filmmakers' desire to lend an air of authenticity to their fictional story. The visual emphasis on authenticity is especially conspicuous in the cases of casting Roma as extras. What is more, in three of the above-listed fiction films, Roma lay actors were invited to play themselves, a set-up that is not only celebrated but also marketed in the filmmaking industry as a particularly original idea. To my knowledge, there are no studies about the process of negotiating the actors' portrayal on the big screen or about the manner in which the Roma actors and the non-Roma filmmakers were involved in that process. So, once again, Alaina Lemon's observations from the field of theatre provide an insightful point of reference; she has discerned one important premise that is relevant for cinema as well, and it concerns the presumed identity between the stage/screen role (the 'dance' of the 'gypsy' mask) and the actor's off-stage/off-screen daily life (the Roma subject):

The problem of authenticity was thus complicated for Romani performers, more so than for actors in mainstream Russian theatres. If audiences and actors usually make a "basic conceptual distinction" between a fictive character and a real performer (Goffman 1986:128), at least when the actor is "offstage," such expectations about role separation did not apply to Romani performers – Gypsies were to play themselves, as Gypsies, and to continue to do so after curtain fall. A Gypsy character was

to be played by a Gypsy person, and the more real the actor's origins (if he could claim he was "born in a Gypsy camp" [Slichenko 1984]), the more authentic his characters. Senior actors at the Theatre indeed insisted to me that "all the Gypsy parts are played by Roma; we have only a few Russians in the company," Romani performers thus were held to a dramatic unity of character both on- and offstage that ordinary actors, not expected to play themselves, were not. It was as though the proscenium at the Romani Theatre should not have bordered an ordinary stage, but a window penetrating into "real Gypsy life" – and since it was judged not to do so, it came to be seen as mere "kitsch." The final twist, for actual performers, was that the conventions of the stage, its daily practices, supposedly adulterated and degraded performer's cultural authenticity; it was as if they had become ersatz Gypsies in real life. (125)

Irrespective of the artistic medium, it seems that the 'truth' about the 'gypsies' is by necessity construed as an alloy between the universally recognisable imaginary personae and a really existing body.

5.4.1 The Devastating Effect of Filmmaking Interventions

One note is in order here concerning Danis Tanović's film *An Episode in the Life of an Iron Picker*,⁷⁹ a socially critical work that sheds light on the institutional antigypsyism in Bosnian society. The film does not entertain antigypsy attitudes – quite the contrary. Yet I have included it in this section to make one important point: during the casting, Danis Tanović was apparently swayed by the thirst for authenticity that surrounds the 'gypsy'/Roma topic. This kind of authenticity might be of great cinematographic and marketing value, but in this case it had fatal consequences for the film's lay lead actor. In the film, the Bosnian Roma Nazif Mujić (1970–2018), together with his wife and children, re-enacts an episode of their life before Tanović's camera; to his and everybody's surprise, Mujić was awarded the Silver Bear for Best Actor at the 63rd Berlin International Film Festival in 2013, notably for playing the character of himself. After this undreamt-of success, the new star

79 Danis Tanović's film won the Jury Grand Prix and the Silver Bear for Best Actor at the 63rd Berlin International Film Festival and was selected as the Bosnian entry for the Best Foreign Language Film at the 86th Academy Awards.

had to face a hard truth, the fact that his performance as Nazif Mujić on the big screen was worth a Silver Bear at the Berlinale, whereas his performance as Nazif Mujić on a day-to-day basis in his life had no value whatsoever. The man, also a veteran of the Yugoslav Wars, could not embark on an acting career, nor was he able to extricate himself and his family from bitter poverty in Bosnia.

Nazif Mujić's precarious stardom is well captured in the title of Mirsad Čamdžić and Zoran Arbutina's article for *Deutsche Welle*, "Einmal roter Teppich und zurück" [Once red carpet and back, my translation R.M.] (Čamdžić). In her incisive article for *Berliner Zeitung*, Susanne Lenz addresses the psychologically wounding contradiction between Mujić's red-carpet treatment at Berlinale and his impoverished life back in Bosnia. Lenz describes the home of Mujić's family, which also served as the film set

Wenn man in das Zimmer tritt, in dem die Mujics jetzt leben, ist es, als trete man ein in diesen Film. Die Frau, Senada Alimanović, liegt auf dem Sofa aus braunem Kunstleder, neben ihr sitzt Nazif Mujić mit angespanntem Gesicht, die Töchter Semska und Sandra klettern auf den Polstern herum. Und draußen liegt Schnee, wie damals bei den Dreharbeiten im bosnischen Winter. Nur den kleinen Danis, benannt nach dem Regisseur, gab es damals noch nicht. Und in Wahrheit ist es ja auch umgekehrt. Nicht wir sind Teil einer Filmszene geworden, der Film ist in unsere Wirklichkeit eingedrungen.

When you enter the room where the Mujics live now, it is as if you are entering the film. The wife, Senada Alimanović, lies on the brown sofa of artificial leather; next to her sits Nazif Mujić with a tense face; the daughters Semska and Sandra climb around on the cushions. And there is snow outside, just like during the film shooting in the Bosnian winter. Only little Danis, named after the director, did not exist at the time. But in truth, it is the other way round. We have not become part of a film scene; the film has penetrated our reality. [my translation, R.M.]

The devastating effect that filmmaking interventions have on the self-image and the private lives of Roma lay actors has never been an issue before, but I have reasons to believe that this is the type of experience that most Roma lay actors have to deal with after the filming is over,

a deep hurt that remains ignored and undocumented. The extremely tragic story of Nazif Mujić's has revealed for all to see what harmful impact short-lived stardom can have, especially on people forced to live in the extreme margins of society; Mujić's rise to unprecedented fame is also the reason why his affliction has received such widespread media coverage. But otherwise, as a rule, Roma lay actors disappear from public life without a trace. I can provide here one more indirect hint of a similarly tragic story. In my view, traces of it are to be detected in the black-and-white documentary film *Valentina* (2016, Dir. Maximilian Feldmann), shot in the famous Macedonian quarter of Shutka, where Kusturica recruited his 'gypsy' cast and where young filmmakers go for fashionable slumming. The director Maximilian Feldmann could afford to make his debut film only with the poorest of the poor in Shutka, as we can gather from his note published on his film's official website (valentina-film.com):

“Poverty is a great shine from within”, this quote by Rilke has been haunting me for years now. We as a team – director, cinematographer and sound mixer started searching for evidence in Šutka, a place full of contrasts. (...) But for five weeks we are not able to find a potential protagonist.

“Who is benefiting from your film anyways?” the inhabitants ask charging us high fees and it seems like we don't have enough money to shoot here. But then we meet a little girl who talks us into buying her a hamburger. Her father once played in an Emir Kusturica film. We agree on a contract including representation allowance and catering for the whole family and start our project: a family portrait. (Feldmann)

The reaction of Shutka residents, as described in the director's note, suggests that the people there have learned to protect themselves against filmmaking intrusions into their private life. But we also learn that among the very poorest in this neighbourhood and therefore least capable of self-protection happens to be the photogenic offspring of a man who has acted in Kusturica's film *White Cat, Black Cat*. His case, just like the case of Nazif Mujić, points to the need for follow-up studies that examine the impact of film projects in which Roma are recruited as lay actors and their homes and neighbourhoods are used as the film set. It is important to see how such filmmaking projects, some of which espouse an antigypsy agenda, affect the lives of Roma-turned-actors

Production Set-up

and that of their neighbourhoods. The North America-based scholar Jasmina Tumbas, for instance, calls attention to the fact that the Roma village Glod in Romania was manipulated into participating in Sasha Baron Cohen's mockumentary *Borat* (2006), a film heavily indebted to Kusturica's *Time of the Gypsies* (1988). The villagers of Glod filed a lawsuit against the filmmaker for being represented in a denigrating manner, but their complaint was not taken seriously by the US court and the case was dismissed (cf. 115–117).⁸⁰

5.4.2 Typecasting Based on Skin Tone and Conformity to Stereotype

Another notable aspect of typecasting for 'gypsy'-themed films is that directors tend to select darker types in unison with the signification of the 'gypsy' mask, that is to say dark-haired, dark-eyed and dark-complexioned individuals, less often individuals with an unmarked ('normal') skin tone and never light-skinned and blond-haired individuals. The film scholar Tommy Gustafsson makes a pertinent point with his analysis of *tattare* figures in Swedish film.⁸¹ In his article "Travellers as a Threat in Swedish Film in the 1920s", Gustafsson discusses, among other things, the production set-up of *The Counts of Svansta* (1924). There is a scene in the film featuring a 'gypsy' camp, in which *tattare* dance and play exotic music, while their chief engages in a knife fight in the shadowy light thrown by the campfire. Gustafsson recounts how the scene was created by quoting from the memoirs of the film director Sigurd Wallén:

Despite ardent inquiries it was impossible to lay our hands on any wash-proof [sic!] gypsies. However, at Maria Prästgård Street and on Glasbruck Street there were other swarthy people living who could pass as members of 'the travelling people'.

80 See also Silverman (289–291) and the *BBC News* article "Village 'Humiliated' by Borat Satire" from 26 Oct 2008.

81 The terms *tattare* and gypsies were used synonymously in Sweden in the 1920s. Travellers/Romani were perceived as a separate 'race' in the 1920s, while in the 1950s, they were viewed as a socio-economic category of the same background as stigmatised executioners and soldiers. In the 1970s, *tattare* became an umbrella term for all Swedes situated at the bottom of society. Nowadays, Travellers/Romani are recognised as a Romani-speaking national ethnic minority in Sweden (cf. Gustafsson 93; see also Hazell 7–10, 45–64).

The wild chief himself was played with unrestrained realism by actor Harry Roeck Hansen, a characteristic that no one previously really had credited him with. (99; see also Wallén 122–123)

The Swedish film scholar proceeds with a perceptive comment:

Wallén's belief that gypsies should be swarthy is an excellent example of how a filmmaker works so that the film matches the audience's horizon of expectations. This example also highlights the existence of a conspicuous paradox, i.e. the filmmaker's failure to find any 'real' gypsies who can be used in order to produce the illusion of a threatening horde. In relation to this, a third fact should be observed, namely that practically all *tattare* in Swedish film in the 1920s were played by ethnic Swedes. What we have here, then, is a variation of the American use of blackface, where white Americans imitated African-American culture in a degrading manner. Hence, Swedish filmmakers imitated an imagined traveller culture in an equivalent manner, and this even worked to enhance the 'truth' about travellers since the stereotypical image created in these films did not deviate much from the common notions. (99)

Gustafsson's conclusion supports the contention that the production of 'gypsy'-themed films adheres to an established pattern which is to be observed in all national cinemas across Europe and in the USA. His case study of Swedish silent films from the 1920s is particularly valuable, because it lends evidence to another important observation: the obsessive popularity of 'gypsy'-themed films in national cinemas has little to do with the pro-filmic presence of Roma groups. Gustafsson reports that the 1920s saw eleven films featuring *tattare* figures in their plot, while the threat of miscegenation was dramatised in seven of them (cf. 92). The silent film *The Counts of Svansta* was the fourth *tattare* film released in 1924 alone, provoking one reviewer to exclaim: "This year it appears to be impossible to avoid *tattare* in Swedish film. Wherever you turn you seem to stumble on them" (98). At the same time, the actual number of *tattare* in Sweden was miniscule. According to the parish registrar's office in Sweden, in 1922, there were around 2,500 *tattare* and gypsies; according to the police records of that year, their number was 1,800 (cf. 94; see also Hazell 75–79).

As to the industry's demand for swarthy types, another interesting case in point is the German TV production *Frau Roggenschaubs Reise* (2015, Dir. Kai Wessel). This well-intended fiction film does not conceal its didactic aim, yet still it succeeds in exposing – in a humorously self-reflexive way – the antigypsy attitudes that pervade contemporary German society. The comedy derives from the aptly staged conflict between a Sinto family, the Mandels, and an unabashedly racist elderly German lady going by the name of Rosemarie Roggenschaub. Sasha Mandel, the Sinto family's artistic son, is the main character, who has to bear the brunt of Frau Roggenschaub's racist attitudes and petty schemes. The film producers take public pride in the fact that Romana and Fernando Weiss and their children, a real Sinto family, perform the roles of the Sinto family in the film. Indeed, the casting accounts partly for the film's success, firstly by establishing a sense of 'authenticity', and secondly by adding a marketable element that boosts the film's publicity. Now, in terms of complexion and appearance, Romana Weiss (who plays the character of Gina Mandel, Sasha's mother) is not markedly different from Hannelore Hoger (a well-known German actress who plays the character of Frau Roggenschaub); the two women often appear juxtaposed in the same frame, and, on the whole, there is no contrasting dissimilarity between the Sinti and the German cast. However, the role of the main character Sasha Mandel, the Sinto whose face receives the greatest exposure during the film and who inevitably comes to be associated with the minority, is given to the actor Rahul Chakraborty. As his surname betrays, Chakraborty is not one of the publicly celebrated Sinti amateurs featuring in the film but happens to be a professional Berlin-based actor. His official actor's profile published on the online casting networks *filmmakers.de* and *castforward.de* describes his appearance in the following terms: dark brown hair, brown eyes, Asian/Far Eastern ethnic type.⁸² The description tells us that Rahul Chakraborty, the actor in the leading role, has a recognisably non-European appearance. By choosing him for the lead, the film casting achieves two visual effects that are at loggerheads with its anti-racist message. It de-Europeanises the minority by opting for a lead actor of an "Asian ethnic type", while at the same time it cleverly

82 In the meantime, the description of the 'ethnic' types that Rahul Chakraborty presents in his portfolio has been widened to "Arabisch, Asia/Fernost, Balkan, Gemischte Herkunft, Indisch, Latino, Maghrébin, mittel-/südamerikanischer Raum, Orientalisch, Romani" (*castforward.de*, Web. 20 Feb 2019).

vouches for the 'reality' of the storyworld it constructs by ensuring the presence of an actual Sinto family.

'Gypsy'-themed films seldom make use of theatrical make-up to create a caricature of their 'gypsy' characters, and on this point they differ markedly from blackface minstrel shows; in these films, there are no exaggeratedly painted faces, lips, eyes, etc. When skin colour is an issue, filmmakers treat it as a decisive 'ethno-racial' marker in a realist style, thereby producing, consciously or not, a colour line of demarcation between the ethno-national majority and the minority. What often turns into a target of ridicule and is a direct outcome of the casting process are Roma – in supporting roles or in crowd scenes – chosen for their arresting appearance. Emil Loteanu makes positive use of this widespread authentication technique, opting for attractive, charismatic, albeit swarthy faces.⁸³ The same urge to create a gallery of memorable, allegedly authentic faces is evident in the highly influential works of Aleksandar Petrović, Dušan Hanák, Robert Duvall, Stole Popov, and Emir Kusturica. Unlike Loteanu, these filmmakers show a predilection for individuals distinguished by some physical abnormality, be it a body that is scarred, tattooed, or deformed by age or by a crippling illness, or be it a face that arrests because of its 'unnaturalness' (females with masculine features, for example), its unsightliness or a smile that reveals a mouth full of bad or missing teeth.

Finally, the documentary genre brings one more aspect to the issue of skin colour and its screen representations which needs to be considered here. If in 'gypsy'-themed films, the Roma cast are limited almost exclusively to dark types, in documentaries, fair-haired Roma are unabashedly exploited as sensational anomalies. A case in point is the Bulgarian documentary *Bread and TV (A Story about the Drive for Life)* (2013), directed by Georgi Stoev. As the title suggests, the film is conceived very much like a human show and it does reduce the portrait of the Roma community in the town of Kyustendil to a collection of human curiosities. The braggadocio filmmakers walk around the neighbourhood 'catching' stories on the street, without even considering it necessary to introduce their interviewees by name – a young man who was given up for adoption in the USA; an ex-convict whose hobby is

83 In an interview, Svetlana Tomá mentions the extraordinary effort invested in the selection of the Roma extras for *Queen of the Gypsies* (1975): "All the rest, that is the extras for the crowd scenes, were picked by Emil Vladimirovich from around the Soviet Union. He looked for charisma in every... future... not even character but simply face on the screen, for it to be remembered" (*Queen* DVD).

breeding pigeons; a drug addict who converted to Christianity; a trans-vestite prostitute; two small girls abandoned by their parents; a man who went to work in Holland and set up his own business by buying a paving machine, etc. One of the filmmakers' 'finds' is a blonde and blue-eyed young woman whose appearance is not only framed as one of the human anomalies in the film, but is also taken up by Bulgarian media and turned into a sensationalist newspaper headline: "A Blonde Roma Acts as a Reporter in *Bread and TV*" (cf. Slavova). By contrast, the Spanish campaign video *Yo no soy trapacero* (2015, Dir. Sebastián Ántico), an instance of Roma self-representation, offers a radical counterpoint to the widespread view that Roma individuals can belong only to the 'non-white' spectrum of human skin colours. The film features ten children, girls and boys, who are introduced with their names and personal interests and whose appearance runs the gamut from blue-eyed blonds to swarthy brunets. To my knowledge, this campaign video and its sequel *Telebasura no es realidad* (2016) are the only films of documentary value that make a conscious effort to show the broad diversity of individuals within the Roma minority in a normal mode. Both films are part of a campaign initiated by the Spanish State Council of the Roma People and are aimed at changing the discriminatory definition of the word "gitano" in the Spanish dictionary (cf. Melchor).

5.5 The Power Added by Digital Technology

If we return now to the encounter between Jim Crow and "Daddy" Rice, we can also consider the psychological aspect of the dialogic exchange that remains out of sight. The scene is indicative of the emotional experience of the 'non-white' subject, one that remains out of public view: Jim Crow's eagerness to participate as a spectator or an actor, followed by his frustration at being shut out, divested of his clothes and cultural possessions, and left alone in the shadow of the stage. To add insult to injury, the psychological pain of ostracism is coupled with physical violence, as the narrator in Greg Palmer's documentary *Vaudeville* (1997) explains:

Blacks had little power to protest their characterizations although many tried. Whites could parody them but they could parody no one but themselves. At the same time, African-Americans were being lynched by the hundreds and shunned by mainstream

society. They were the subjects of the most popular music of the time, so called Coon songs, that minstrel shows depicted black life as free and non-threatening to anyone.

The situation of the African-American minority in the United States is in many ways different to that of Roma in Europe and yet, all differences aside, it is not difficult to see that both groups are at the receiving end of the same schizophrenic attitude: a widespread fascination with their music and vaudeville/screen presence coupled with brutality towards the actual people. In Europe, violence against perceived 'gypsies' has a centuries-old history and specific subtler forms. Nowadays, there are growing mountains of scientific studies and journalistic investigations that report on it.

However, since the focus here is on screen images, I consider in conclusion one case of brutality, in which the camera is a crucial partner in crime. (With this example, we are leaving the realm of artistic depictions of 'gypsy' figures.) The short self-made film documents a violent encounter between two Bulgarian adolescents – Angel Kaleev, 24, who belongs to the national majority, and 17-year-old Mitko Yonkov, who belongs to the Roma minority; the place of encounter is Ovchepoltsi, a village near the southern town of Pazardzhik (cf. "Gospodari"). The dialogic exchange between the two youngsters deserves detailed scrutiny here as it exposes in a new light the brutal violence (psychological, physical and symbolic) that underpins the relations between the national majority and the minority. In the background of the encounter is Mitko's statement that he is Angel's equal. Angel interprets these words as an insult and decides to take action to remedy this, whereby he confronts Mitko with his phone camera and films a miniature spectacle of humiliation. Angel conceives, directs and documents a routine of subjugation, in which he is both the bully and the filmmaker. The young man stays anonymous – his face remains off-screen – but the viewer is exposed to his point of view, which coincides with that of the camera, and to his hostile voice showering Mitko with (rhetorical) questions, commands, curses and threats. In an attempt to reinstate the social hierarchy that Mitko's utterance has disavowed, Angel sets up a short spectacle of notable complexity. Structurally it is modelled on a perverse military drill, in which Angel commands Mitko to lie down on the ground and then to stand up, while punching the boy when he is upright and kicking him in the face and stomach when he is down on the ground. The routine is

repeated twice. There is also one question that Angel incessantly shouts out and which is apparently the crux of the matter for him: “What did you say, that I am your equal? Am I a Gypsy?” Only when Mitko manages to formulate the desired answer, namely that Angel is not a Gypsy, is the situation rectified and the filming stops. The footage, which lasts a mere 2’38 minutes, was uploaded in April 2016 by its creator and gathered more than 100,000 views in less than 36 hours (“Bulgarian”). As such, Angel’s video represents a rare and surprising instance of crude honesty: it is as if the perpetrator⁸⁴ has unwittingly directed the spotlight onto the public unconscious, according to whose sadistic imagination European national identity is asserted through a ritual subjugation, denigration and negation of the ‘gypsy’ Other. The concentration of power in Angel’s position allows him to create an artefact of alarming quality, in which the on-stage and off-stage perspectives on the spectacle of ‘white’ supremacy are merged. Racist violence is no longer only a symbolic act (a representation) which relies on the mediation of art for its expression, as in blackface minstrelsy or in ‘gypsy’-themed films. But it also unfolds as a bloody act in real life; this act is simultaneously objectified and commodified by the camera, and exponentially multiplied via digital technology, re-enacted with each and every online replaying of the film.

5.6 Conclusion

To wrap up the findings in this chapter, the analysis of the production set-up lays bare the asymmetry of power in matters of filmic representation and the lack of dialogue that characterise the production phase of ‘gypsy’-themed films. All decisions concerning script, direction, camerawork, costuming and props, editing, and music are taken by

84 The European Roma Rights Centre reports that on 11 July 2016 the District Court of Pazardzhik found Angel Kaleev guilty of using ethnically motivated violence against a person (Article 162. para. 2, Criminal Code), and of inflicting minor bodily harm with xenophobic and ‘hooligan’ motives (Article 131. para 1, p. 12, CC). According to the ERRC, this is the first time a criminal court has made a decision that acknowledges a racially motivated attack against an ethnic minority in Bulgaria. The court, after an agreement between the prosecution and the defence, sentenced Angel Kaleev to only eleven months of imprisonment, which was deferred to a probationary period of three years with four months of community service (ERRC).

ethno-national ('white') professionals.⁸⁵ The script is often based on a literary text (novel, short story, theatrical play, poem, etc.) written by an author from the dominant culture. Often 'gypsy'-themed films are auteur works, in which the film director takes charge of more than one aspect of the work on the film, such as script, editing, music, etc. The leading roles are often given to national or international/Hollywood 'white' celebrities, which makes these films akin to blackface minstrel shows. At the same time, 'gypsy'-themed films often make use of Roma extras, a very widespread authentication strategy, which makes them akin to ethnological expositions or human zoos. In a nutshell, these films are produced by 'whites' for the entertainment of 'white' audiences, featuring 'white' actors in the lead, frequently aided – for the sake of marketable authenticity – by Roma extras.

85 By exception when discussing the production set-up, I use the term 'white' to denote actual people who relay the perspective of the dominant (ethno-national) culture and who are perceived and self-perceive as 'white'.

6

Content Analysis of the ‘gypsy’ Mask or the ‘Gypsy’ Mask as a Cluster of Attributes

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This chapter focuses exclusively on the content of the ‘gypsy’ mask. Broadly speaking, the content of the ‘gypsy’ mask refers to the characterisation of the imaginary ‘gypsy’ figure: its distinctive qualities, personality traits, inner values and other notable attributes that are ascribed to it over the length of a given film. Cinematically, these qualities and values are communicated in various ways: directly, in dialogues or through voiceover, and indirectly, by means of speech acts, actions and gestures, as well as via visual portrayal (costuming and colour schemes) and choice of temporal and spatial setting. Besides naming each and every attribute ascribed to the ‘gypsy’ mask throughout a given film, it is also necessary to view these attributes in their totality as a specific cluster, a kind of content grid. Abstracting and visualising the constellation of ‘gypsy’ attributes elicited in each concrete film is particularly helpful, because it allows us to study the content matrix of the ‘gypsy’ mask in its idiosyncratic variations. It is also crucial to articulate the constellation of attributes ascribed to the ‘gypsy’ mask in individual films – the specific content grid they form – because this content matrix is the main technique of generating knowledge about ‘gypsies’ and is therefore central to the strategy of radical Othering.

In the next pages, the focus falls on the following questions: How is the ‘gypsy’ mask coded in the film in terms of character traits and values? Is it explicitly or implicitly contrasted with the ‘white’ mask? What qualities are ascribed directly (through speech acts) or indirectly (through actions and emotional states) to it? What aspects of human

existence do these qualities reflect: personal integrity, social and professional integration, parenthood, sexuality, religious belief, language mastery and education, diet, health, and personal hygiene, national affiliation etc.? What kind of cluster do these qualities form? Is the 'gypsy' figure individualised? Does it have a name and how is it characterised through its name? How is it coded with regard to time (day vs. night and linear vs. circular) and space (light vs. shadow and city vs. forest)?

It has to be said here that the content of the 'gypsy' mask remains, by and large, overlooked in critical analyses of films. When discussing 'gypsy'-themed films, media scholars tend to limit their attention to the plot and to the portrayal of the main characters, largely ignoring the import of the numerous codifying sequences and scenes. This approach to film assessment that takes into consideration only the story structure and the characterisation of the main figures is better suited to the so-called cinema of narrative integration. Applied to 'gypsy'-themed films, however, it proves inadequate, as it fails to account for scenes and sequences that expand on the content matrix of the 'gypsy' mask without having any relevance to the story's dénouement. An assessment of films that is alert to the overall impact of codifying scenes and sequences scattered throughout a film is called for, because, structurally, gypsy'-themed films bear strong resemblance to what the film scholar Tom Gunning has defined as "the cinema of attractions"⁸⁶ (*Cinema* 384).

86 In his paradigm-shifting article "The Cinema of Attraction(s): Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-garde", Tom Gunning directs scholarly attention to one until then disregarded quality of the medium – cinema's singular ability to *make images seen*, its primal power to *show*, which is celebrated with full brio in early silent films, and especially in Lumière's actuality films and Méliès' trick films. Gunning argues for a new conception of cinema which he calls "the cinema of attractions", pointing out that history and theory of film have been written "under the hegemony of narrative films" (381). In his view, the cinema of attractions, as a historical period, lasts until about 1906–1907 and is then followed by another period, from 1907 to 1913, during which the narrativisation of the film form takes place, with the feature film as its culmination. In his article, first published in 1986, Gunning claims that after 1907 the attractions go "underground", leaving room for narrative to dominate and emerging only occasionally in avant-garde works and films of certain genres, such as the musical. Later, he refines his initial conception, proposing that the cinema of attractions and the cinema of narrative integration represent the two dialectical poles of modernity: "The new systematic organisation through narrative dominance does not eliminate the anarchic energy of cinema of attractions and modernity; rather it sublates this energy, using and transforming it" (*Modernity* 312). On the trends towards narrative integration, industrialisation and aestheticisation in early cinema, see also Keating's article "The Silent Screen, 1894–1927" (11–17).

Similar to early silent films, the majority of these films place greater emphasis on 'spectacle' than on narrative, a feature they share with blackface minstrel shows, too.⁸⁷ For the most part, they have loose plots interspersed with numerous self-contained 'acts' which also accounts for the films' remarkable genre hybridity. The stories they tell are often just a frame onto which a series of incoherent, unmotivated incidents are strung, edited together in an energetic and visually striking form. The central aim of these often disconnected scenes and sequences is to put on show the Otherness of 'gypsy' lifestyle in its various aspects, such as daily occurrences, habits and life-cycle rituals (baptism, marriage, burial) or musical numbers, and by doing so to entertain, shock, surprise or instruct the audience.⁸⁸ Thus, as far as genre is concerned, 'gypsy'-themed films tend to display radical hybridity and may contain – in a different measure – elements of musical, vaudeville, costume (melo)drama, film *noir*, picaresque, road movie or Western, horror, erotic

87 Looking at the form of early minstrelsy (from 1843 to the 1860s), Lott highlights the non-narrative structure of these performances. The first minstrelsy shows featured "Negro Concerts" strung together with burlesque skits while the standard minstrel procedure evolved over time to contain ensemble songs interspersed with solo banjo songs and Negro impersonations, such as witticisms, ripostes, shouts, and puns. The main purpose of blackface performance was to pander to 'white' fascination with commodified 'black' male bodies by displaying the latter in comic set pieces, repartee and physical burlesque. Lott adds: "Black figures were there to be looked at, shaped to the demands of desire; they were screens on which audience fantasy could rest, securing white spectators' position as superior, controlling, not to say owning, figures" ("Love and Theft" 28).

88 Concrete evidence in support of this claim comes from Peiró's "regionally prompted", "parametered" analysis of Spanish folkloric musical comedies from the silent era to the 1950s; her analysis is set against a panoramic and highly detailed backdrop of the films' material and intellectual histories (xi). Pejoratively called *españoladas*, Spanish musicals have been dismissed by critics as a reactionary, escapist fare which is also culpable of reducing the image of Spain to flamenco and bullfighting (cf. 2). Yet, the author claims, these films should be included in the discussion of nation building, because they "profoundly and subliminally shaped the Spanish national imaginary" (41). Taking the silent film *La gitana blanca* (1923, Dir. Ricardo de Baños) as her paradigmatic example (hence the title of her book *White Gypsies: Race and Stardom in Spanish Musicals*), Peiró shows that digressions are the film's most salient structural feature. It contains military digressions (war scenes, military footage, ethnographic film situated in Africa) coupled with racialised performance digressions (a customs-and-manners portrait of a 'gypsy' camp). These plot deviations to time-spaces of Otherness respond to the same internal logic that informs the cinema of attractions, the author argues, pointing that elements of spectacle, i.e. residues of the cinema of attractions, such as *zerzuelas* (operetta), circus acts, short theatrical skits, and song and dance numbers, are integral to *españoladas* of the 1930s onwards (47–51).

film, socialist (magic) realism or Italian neo-realism, as well as ethnographic documentation. There is hardly a 'gypsy'-themed film without a scene showing a song and dance number. Displays of nudity (stark-naked children, women with bare breasts or breast-feeding, naked-to-the-waist men), violence (knife fights, wife-beating) and wretched poverty are also a regular feature, but one of the main attractions in these films – which is hardly a topic of scholarly investigation – comes from exhibiting human depravity.

To isolate the content of the 'gypsy' mask, I consider two sample films by segmenting them into meaningful units (scenes and sequences), and then provide a detailed description of those sequences that contribute to the characterisation of the 'gypsy' role and sum up the import of each sequence in the form of key words or phrases. The suggested keywords are not established terms with a fixed meaning but rather interpretative shortcuts to the 'gypsy' attribute(s) communicated in the described sequence. For instance, if we have a sequence in which a 'gypsy' male by the name of Devilshoof jumps over a castle's wall after sunset and, hiding in a dark corner, eavesdrops on a conversation between the castle's inhabitants, it is veracious to say that, in this portion of the film, the 'gypsy' figure is coded with the following attributes: 'creature of the night', 'trespasser', 'evildoer'. The choice of keywords does not make claims of exclusiveness – that is to say, other formulations could be just as valid – but rather to a fair degree of interpretive accuracy. By applying the analytical approach proposed here, I am able to accomplish several goals: to visualise the content grid of the 'gypsy' mask within a given film, to point to the cumulative effect of quality-attributing sequences over the length of a film, to regard the 'gypsy' mask as an abstract entity – a specific constellation of values, qualities and traits – and finally to compare its transformations across film productions that are removed from each other in time and space.

The sample films that are subjected to content analysis in the current chapter are two US productions with a 42-year interval in between, namely *The Bohemian Girl* (1936) and *King of the Gypsies* (1978). Choosing to examine and compare two films from the same national culture allows me to highlight the functionality of the 'gypsy' mask and its subordination to the 'white' mask, as well as the continuities and discontinuities – even arbitrariness! – in its fabrication. In my content analysis, the focus is on the 'gypsy' mask as an element of European and US American cultural grammar, positing that it represents a stable meaning-generating pattern that is decipherable across national cultures in

a pan-European and US American context. Since 'gypsy'-themed films are circulated far beyond their country of origin, many of the local and historical particularities they convey are lost on distant audiences, but their core message about 'gypsies' is invariably imparted.

6.1 The Content Matrix of the 'Gypsy' Mask in *The Bohemian Girl* (1936): Sequence-by-Sequence Description

The Bohemian Girl (1936) is a feature-length Viennese-style operetta directed by James W. Horne and Charley Rogers starring Stan Laurel, Oliver Hardy and Thelma Todd. The tradition behind this Hollywood film production is a good illustration of the stability (universality) of the 'gypsy' mask and its translatability across historical periods, cultures and genres. It has an earlier version, a British period drama of the same name from 1922, directed by Harley Knoles and starring Gladys Cooper, Ivor Novello and C. Aubrey Smith (BFI). Both films take inspiration from the ballad opera *The Bohemian Girl* (1843), "the most popular of all nineteenth-century operas in England", composed by the Irish prodigy Michael William Balfe who, in turn, based his popular work on the Spanish *novela* "The Gypsy Girl" ("La gitanilla") by Miguel de Cervantes, written in 1613 (Charnon-Deutsch 54). When reading the analytical description that follows here, the reader should also bear in mind that upon its release, the film had great success in France, but was censored in Japan, Norway, Sweden, Hungary, Latvia and Malaysia and was banned altogether in Nazi Germany⁸⁹ on account of being subversive with its 'gypsy' theme (cf. Louvish 340, 356; Stafford).

The story in *The Bohemian Girl* is set in seventeenth-century Bohemia.

89 In the censorship decision, we read that the Film Inspection Agency

„bei der Verlogenheit des Films, der in wesentlichen ein falsches Bild eines abzulehnenden Zigeunerlebens in kitschiger Form gibt, weit davon entfernt ist, ein Kunstwerk in ihm zu sehen“; „[d]er Film erschöpft sich in einer Darstellung, die, wie die Filmprüfstelle zutreffend ausführt, vom Beschauer nicht als Parodie gewertet wird und die ihrer inneren Gesamthaltung nach [im dritten Reich] keinen Platz hat“ (Dick).

“given the phoniness of the film, which essentially gives a false picture of an objectionable gypsy life in a kitschy form, is far from seeing a work of art in it”; “the film amounts to nothing more than a representation which, as the Film Inspection Agency correctly explains, is not regarded as a parody by the viewer and which, with its implied overall stance, has no place [in the third Reich]” [my translation, R.M.].

Content Analysis of the 'Gypsy' Mask

Sequence 1 [0'53:1'24] The film opens with a long, low-angle shot of a wooden bridge as a 'gypsy' caravan is just crossing it over. A single file of horse-drawn wagons, led and escorted by horse riders, passes by. It is a sunny summer day. The camera cuts to medium shots showing details of the wagons: one of them is steered by a 'gypsy' couple, behind them, another 'gypsy' couple is standing together with their child, all of them singing [nomadic].

Sequence 2 [1'25:2'12] A high-angle shot shows the 'gypsy' camp set up in a forest clearing, while in the background towers the majestic silhouette of a castle [close to nature]. The wagons are arranged in a circle and the space in the middle is buzzing with activity: adults milling around, animals in the way, a campfire, children dancing. Then, the crowd is introduced through group portraits, each group set against the entrance of a wagon: four 'gypsy' women hanging around; two wives – one cooking, the other sewing – with two little girls and a baby in a rocking cradle – one of the girls is tending the baby, the other is stroking a pitch-black cat; a group of men and women playing cards; a group of musicians playing different instruments; a woman wringing out her washing, and next to her a couple courting, the girl's naked legs on display; a group of older men drinking and raising a toast with their glasses. All activities take place outside, in the open, and all the while, the 'gypsies' are singing in chorus:

Gypsy vagabonds are we
As free as anyone can be
Wandering on without a care today
We are so free! Without a care
Anywhere that we may roam
Is where we make our home
Be it on the road or sky
On high! In the sky!

The men and women are dressed in elaborate folkloric costumes characterised by various patterns, such as stripes, dots, floral ornaments. The 'gypsy' males stand out with their longish dark hair, sideburns and thick moustaches, earrings and pirate-like head cloths or feather-decorated hats. The 'gypsy' females are defined by their big ornate earrings; some of them have long dark plaits [nomadic, backward, musical, free, merry-making, dark (hairy) types: their main occupations are singing and

dancing, playing cards, drinking alcohol, making love and parenting]. The sequence aims at a collective portrait of 'gypsies'; the gaze of the camera imitates that of a scientist providing an ethnographic tableau of everyday life in the 'gypsy' camp.



Fig. 19. Screenshot from *The Bohemian Girl* (1936, Dir. James W. Horne and Charley Rogers): the 'gypsy' queen (Zeffie Tilbury) giving her orders to Salinas (Mitchell Lewis), the leader of the 'gypsy' rogues.

Sequence 3 [2'12:2'42] Against the background of the 'gypsy' camp, the camera frames an elderly white-haired woman (Zeffie Tilbury) with a younger man who bows to her, addressing her like royalty (**Fig. 19**):

- S: Good morning, my queen.
Q: What news, Salinas?
S: Do you realise where we are?
Q: Perfectly well.

The two enter the queen's tent and continue their conversation inside, with a scheming tone:

- Q: So once more, we are encamped on the domain of the good Count Arnheim.
S: Count Arnheim! Pah! (He spits.)
Q: What we pick up here we must pick up quickly. For he'll never allow us to stay here long.

S: One of these days, I'll... (He makes threatening gestures.)

[trespassers, thieves, in open conflict with aristocracy/authority]. This sequence introduces the central conflict in the story: 'gypsies' vs. aristocrats.

Sequence 4 [2'43:3'40] The camera takes us to Count Arnheim's castle, first showing a regiment of armed soldiers in uniforms, singing and marching in a formation and then, framed in a gate, the count himself, clad in lavish clothes, jewels, a black triangle hat rimmed with white down feathers and a jewel-studded cane. The count is just entering the castle garden where he greets his small daughter Arline (Darla Hood), a blonde girl in a white dress playing with a white dog. At this point, the captain of the guard comes to report:

C: Count Arnheim, there is a band of gypsies in the woods below the castle.

A: Gypsies, eh? See that they are gone by high noon tomorrow. If they are caught on my estate, have them flogged within an inch of their lives.

[trespassers, punishable].

Sequence 5 [3'41:5'56] Back in the tent of the old 'gypsy' queen, we see her laying cards on a small round table [fortune-tellers, sorcerers]. The queen hears a singer performing what she calls the "true song of the gypsies" and urges Salinas to go outside and "listen how she sings of life and love". In the next shot, we see a beautiful young woman (Thelma Todd) with big elaborate earrings, wearing a glittering two-piece dress that reveals some of her skin:

When love calls the heart of a gypsy
It calls to the heart that is free
The will of a gypsy caresses her
Only to die with the dawn
Oh, the road that a gypsy must travel
Is planned by the fortunes of time
So, it's one hour of bliss and a passionate kiss
Then farewell to gypsy romance and melody (...)

The singer is surrounded by courting couples who pick up her song in chorus, while some perform individual and group dances [amorous, free, passionate, nomadic, musical]. In this sequence, 'gypsies' are portrayed in a Romantic mode. Interestingly enough, their dance performances are reminiscent of the Russian folk dance kazachok.

Sequence 6 [5'57:11'19] The camera cuts to a mid-shot of Ollie and Stan sitting in front of their wagon, wastefully peeling vegetables and throwing them in a pot that is simmering on an open fire in front of them. In the background, there is a line of washing drying; on the one side, a horse is eating hay, while on the other side, various animals appear in the frame: a goose, hens, a small dog [close to animals and nature]. Inside the wagon, we see Ollie's wife (Mae Busch), who receives a visit from a handsome man (Antonio Moreno) knocking at her window. On her way out, she responds to Ollie's affectionate address "Hello, honey!" with unwarranted hostility: "Don't honey me, you, big bag of suet! I told you five minutes ago not to talk to me. And an hour ago! And a week ago!" What ensues is a loud quarrel Mrs. Hardy picks up with Ollie and then also with Stan, during which she comes across as both verbally and physically abusive [loud-mouthed and abusive (the females)]. Then, she goes to the man who awaits her behind the wagon and undergoes a change of personality, pledging her devotion to him: "Oh, my love! I am so content and happy when I'm with you. Just like a nestling dove. You're so big and strong and brave..." Stan warns Ollie of his wife's infidelity: "I'm not gonna say anything until I get positive proof but I saw Devilshoof kissing your wife." Ollie confronts the couple but is not disturbed by their flagrant courting: "There was nothing to it. They were just having a little innocent fun. Don't you understand that a man to be married nowadays must be broad-minded?" The lovers say goodbye to each other, flaunting their affair, exchanging flowers and kisses in broad daylight, while Ollie and Stan watch them, busy discussing what is permissible and what not [adulterous, devil's sidekicks, promiscuous]. The humour in the sketch derives from Ollie's inability to discern his wife's abusiveness and barefaced adultery.

Sequence 7 [11'20:12'36] 'Gypsy' couples move along singing, all gather around an open campfire and some start dancing in the middle [merymaking].

Sequence 8 [12'37:13'04] Inside her tent, the 'gypsy' queen is in the company of a beautiful young woman. Salinas enters and reports to the queen: "The moon is very good to us tonight. The village will be in darkness and the pickings will be easy." The old woman claps her hands contentedly and gives her orders: "Off with the rogues, that they may fill their purses and replenish our coffers!" She rubs her hands, laughing wickedly, the face of the beautiful girl behind her breaking, too, into a mirthful smile. The camera cuts to a close-up of the old woman's face, lit up by a candle and resembling that of a witch: "What wouldn't I give to go with them," she laments [creatures of the night, organised thieves, witches].

Sequence 9 [13'05:13'28] The camera takes us back to the singing crowd of 'gypsies' who begin to disperse with the falling darkness, singing: "So black as we work and believe we'll be finding darkness shortly." Ollie and Stan appear in the foreground, making a shushing sign and performing a pantomime of pickpocketing. The next shot shows a young mother with her two young children instructing them to not make a sound [creatures of the night, thieves (young and old)].

At this point, it is worth taking a look at the succession of sequences and the internal logic according to which they are edited together. During the first nine sequences, which last less than fifteen minutes and set the context for the story, the image of 'gypsies' undergoes several transformations that require closer scrutiny. In Sequence 1, 'gypsies' are introduced as an itinerant group consisting mainly of joyful young couples and families. In Sequence 2, their caravan transforms into a hustling and bustling camp in a forest clearing. Sequence 3 introduces the queen of the 'gypsies', while Sequence 4 establishes the conflict between her people and the local count. Sequences 5 and 7 elaborate on the atmosphere and the activities in the 'gypsy' camp during the day: the place overflows with vivacious revelry and eroticism, a song by a notably beautiful and scantily-clad 'gypsy' female forming the centrepiece. Sequence 6 acquaints us with Ollie and Stan in gypsyface. In Sequence 8, the queen of the 'gypsies' is framed together with a beautiful young woman, both of whom rejoice at the prospect of robbing the villagers: the beauty of the young 'gypsy' female, her face in full view and well-lit, is thus discredited and exposed as a deceptive appearance, a temporary disguise for her witch-like nature that is going to reveal itself with time (**Fig. 19**). And finally, Sequence 9 shows the crucial metamorphosis: with the arrival



Fig. 20. Screenshot from *The Bohemian Girl* (1936, Dir. James W. Horne and Charley Rogers): a 'gypsy' mother telling her children to keep quiet.

of the night, the festive group of amiable 'gypsies' transfigures into a band of plundering rogues. As the light diminishes, the inhabitants of the 'gypsy' camp get busy preparing for their night-time activities, admonishing each other to keep quiet. The camera frames a mother making a shushing sign to her two small children, indirectly incriminating them as thieves, too (**Fig. 20**). So, if we play these sequences in fast-forward, we can see how the 'gypsy' caravan transforms into a 'gypsy' camp dominated by a boisterous celebration of musicians and dancers during the day who, after sunset, change into a band of rouses where young beautiful women, mothers and even young children are implicated in its criminal activities. In a matter of seconds, the positive image of the 'gypsy' celebrated in the Romantic period for its carefree and amorous lifestyle flips into its opposite; during the night 'gypsies' show their true nature [with deceptive appearance]. Clearly, this moment of revelation contains an archetypal layer of meaning: day is ousted by night, light withdraws to make room for darkness and so does the conscious Self, leaving the stage free for its unconscious alter-ego, an oxymoronic duality signified by the 'gypsy' mask. It is no surprise then that 'gypsies' are portrayed as an anonymous group; except for Salinas who has an individual name, all other characters remain anonymous and mutually interchangeable. The queen of the 'gypsies' and Devilshoof have generic appellations that point to their role in the story. Not even Ollie's wife is granted a personal name, appearing in the film credits as Mrs. Hardy

[lacking individuality]. This also means that the qualities ascribed to one or another 'gypsy' figure are not treated and are not meant to be perceived as individual traits but rather as characteristic of 'gypsies' in general. The figures are manifestations of the various aspects and inflections, by age, gender and social status, of the same 'gypsy' mask.

The main purpose of the 'gypsy' crowd scenes, replete with wagons and campfire festivities, is to establish the setting for Stan and Ollie's slapstick comedy, supplying it with an air of 'gypsy' authenticity. As Simon Louvish notes, "the story provided an opportunity to tweak their familiar characters in an unfamiliar setting", where the new setting is substantiated with an ensemble of musical 'gypsies' who are "costumed to the gills" (340). The comic gags that follow thrive on the tension between the seeming and the real (a tension also central to film *noir*) established in the beginning, the notorious discrepancy between outer appearance and inner nature associated with the 'gypsy' role. The non-identity of signified and signifier is dramatised by Ollie and Stan in a series of pickpocketing routines that centre on the keenness of sight, creating an opposition between that which is plainly visible to the eyes and that which is visible to the enlightened mind.

Sequence 9 also highlights Laurel and Hardy's liminal position, their two-fold presence as popular Hollywood comedians (who appear in this fiction film with their real first names) and as 'gypsy' impersonations. The two are framed in the foreground, their much bigger and clearly outlined bodies are dissociated from the blurry 'gypsy' camp in the background (**Fig. 21**). Visually, they are situated in a 'gypsy' context but are not part of it; this is also signalled by the choice of costumes, the use of musical devices and their special role in the story. Ollie and Stan are comic buffoons in pauper garments; their theatrical costumes clearly distinguish them from the rest of the 'gypsies' stylised in traditional folk attire. Nominally 'gypsies', the two are excluded from the 'gypsy' community through the musical organisation of the film, too. As the film historian Rob King observes:

the opening sequences use the "society of voices" device to organise and divide the different groups within the film's narrative: first, an extended sequence of gypsies singing and dancing ("Gypsy vagabonds are we/As free as anyone can be," etc.); next, a brief marching song as soldiers arrive at Count Arnheim's estate. Yet Stan and Ollie's place within this divided social world, and thus their relation to song, is again an ambivalent one, in which



Fig. 21. Screenshot from *The Bohemian Girl* (1936, Dir. James W. Horne and Charley Rogers): Stan and Ollie in gypsyface gesturing to the spectators to keep quiet.

they serve primarily as intermediaries between the social poles of the narrative, fully belonging to neither. (148)

I would instead argue here that Ollie and Stan mediate – just like black-face performers – between the mainstream audience in the cinema hall and the world of the ‘gypsy’ Others: what they offer is a comic spectacle of ‘gypsy’ Otherness that claims to draw on an ethnographic (to wit scientifically validated) truth. In the last shot (**Fig. 21**), the two clowns seem to acknowledge both the camera and the audience watching them on-screen. In a momentary rupture of the film’s self-enclosed fictional world, they solicit the spectators’ attention, trying to entice their curiosity with a pantomime of thieving, as if extending an invitation to a guided tour into the clandestine universe of ‘gypsies’.

In the sequences that follow, Stan and Ollie make a farcical demonstration of ‘gypsy’ pickpocketing tricks, offering, as we shall see, an aesthetic experience that remains with the audience as a lesson. In a mode that invigorates the idea of deceptive appearance, the two introduce themselves to various villagers with the irony-loaded line: “We are a couple of gypsies and we are trying to make an honest living by telling fortunes.” Then, with a notable ruthlessness, they empty the pockets of five men who belong to different social strata and who are all openly well disposed towards ‘gypsies’.

Sequence 10 [13'29:15'20] Stan and Ollie appear at the entrance of the village, already enveloped in darkness, ducking to hide from a passing guard. A watchman is striking his bell and announcing the evening hour: it is nine o'clock. Stan and Ollie stop him to ask about the time and while he obligingly answers, they steal his purse and the clapper of his bell [creatures of the night, thieves].

Sequence 11 [15'21:16'44] Devilshoof sneaks around the count's castle, climbs over the wall and, hiding in a dark corner, overhears a conversation between the count and his daughter, who are sitting inside in a well-lit room. Arline wants to wear her father's medallion, and the count agrees to give her the precious jewel, explaining that it belonged to her great-great-grandfather who was also the founder of the House of Arnheim. Outside, before he is able to fulfil his illicit plans, Devilshoof is caught by the guards [creatures of the night, trespassers, evildoers].

Sequence 12 [16'45:19'32] Stan and Ollie continue with their pickpocketing: they meet a respectable man who wants to have his fortune told and who is ready to pay them well. Stan performs a trick, asking the man to close his eyes and robbing him in the meanwhile of his purse. The next victim is a shop owner of liberal views who abides by the motto: "Live and let live!" This time, it is Ollie's turn to do the eye-trick, but he botches it up and the man fights back. Stan demonstrates the trick to Ollie and, while doing it, takes Ollie's purse [fortune-tellers, use fortune-telling as smokescreen for stealing, ruthless, pickpockets, steal from each other].

Sequence 13 [19'33:19'43] Devilshoof, stripped naked to the waist, is tied to a post and subjected to public flogging. A close-up shows the frightfully savage face of his executor. The 'gypsy' is encircled by units of uniformed soldiers who are marching and singing in chorus [criminals, punishable].

Sequence 14 [19'44:22'59] Ollie and Stan approach a foppish aristocrat and offer to tell his fortune. The man, wearing a hat just like Count Arnheim's, answers that he is delighted by the offer, adding: "You know, those of us who are more fortunate should help those in distress, don't you think?" Ollie waves off the man's benevolent remarks with a perplexing: "Yes, madam." Then, he uses his clumsy eye-trick on the aristocrat and, thinking the man has his eyes shut, starts telling him the

tale of Little Red Riding Hood while emptying his numerous pockets and passing the valuables to Stan. In the meantime, the nobleman has taken his lorgnette out and is carefully observing the two 'gypsies'. When they are done, he points his pistol at them and claims his possessions back. Ollie is slow to restore the stolen goods, rummaging in his pockets, while Stan disappears, returning shortly afterwards with a gendarme. The officer, seeing the aristocrat holding Ollie at gunpoint, orders that the former should return all the stolen valuables to the latter. The nobleman attempts to explain the misunderstanding, but the gendarme dismisses his words with: "I saw the whole thing with my own eyes." So, in addition to all that has already been stolen, Ollie – dressed in rags – claims the nobleman's watch, his diamond-studded case, medal, rings, lorgnette, and cane. The aristocrat is divested of all his valuable accoutrements and taken into custody by the gendarme, shouting in protest that he has never been so embarrassed in his life. Ollie rewards the gendarme with "a small stipend". Finally, to cap off his arrogance, the portly 'gypsy' claims the nobleman's pistol, too [swindlers, ruthless, thieves]. As in Sequence 6, the humour in Ollie and Stan's sketch revolves around the (in)ability to see the obvious, the implicit message being that people of lower stations, gendarmes included, are easily fooled by 'gypsies', while enlightened aristocrats, who also happen to suffer the most at the hands of 'gypsies', are the ones with clear sight.

Another digression is warranted here to briefly comment on a subtext added by the film editing in Sequences 10 to 14. In this section of the film, Ollie and Stan's comically exaggerated pickpocketing gags are intertwined through cross-cutting with Devilshoof's arrest and punishment, which are shot in a distinctly earnest, realist style. Cutting from one scene to the other, the camera establishes a temporal relation between the two actions, suggesting their simultaneity, but it also creates a causal link as a way of explaining the one line of events with the other. Here is what I mean: Devilshoof is publicly flogged without a court's sentence for an act that – at least on the surface of it – hardly constitutes a serious offence, but when placed in the context of Ollie and Stan's callous thievery and with a view to his tell-tale name, his illicit presence on Count Arnheim's grounds after sunset deserves the harshest of measures, or at any rate this is the surmise that the parallel editing drives at. As a representative of the enlightened aristocracy, the count can see – unlike those beneath him – through 'gypsies' and recognise the threat they pose to his county. So, his order to have Devilshoof

lashed in public is nothing less than an act of discerning foresight. In addition, the count's portrayal is subject to an ironic reversal, one of the many in the film: what appears unjustly cruel on his part is, in fact, a well-informed concern for his subjects.

Sequence 15 [23'00:27'16] Stan and Ollie go to a pub to celebrate the winnings of the day. At the entrance, Stan bumps into an ordinary man, gets reprimanded by Ollie but vindicates himself by showing that he has stolen the man's chain watch [compulsive pickpockets]. The two discover that the aristocrat's cane they have stolen is full of gold coins and spend the evening gambling with their spoils, trying to outsmart and steal from each other. At the same time, they strike a gentleman's agreement with a handshake [tricksters, steal from each other, ungentlemanly].

Sequence 16 [27'17:27'33] Devilshoof is thrown out of the castle [despicable].

Sequence 17 [27'34:27'55] The 'gypsy' camp is packing up in a flurry of activity. A regiment of soldiers marches in and the commander issues a warning to the 'gypsy' queen.

Sequence 18 [27'57:29'33] Dressed in white, Arline is playing with a white rabbit in the castle garden. Her governess is inattentive, flirting with one of the guards. The white rabbit runs off and Arline follows her pet, leaving the castle grounds. At that same moment, the 'gypsy' caravan is passing by: in one of the carts, Mrs. Hardy is tending to Devilshoof's wounds, putting a curse upon the count: "Curse you, Count Arnheim! For every whip-stroke you have bestowed upon my beloved, may you suffer a year of woe" [vengeful, with evil supernatural powers]. This is when Mrs. Hardy casts her eyes on small Arline. Devilshoof explains that the girl is the count's only child, whereupon Mrs. Hardy snatches Arline, wrapping her in a shawl [child snatchers].

Sequence 19 [29'34:31'04] The 'gypsies' set up camp on a new site. Ollie and Stan are busy scrubbing down their horse while playing pranks on each other [nomadic].

Sequence 20 [31'05:33'56] Mrs. Hardy lets Arline go outside the wagon, assuring Devilshoof that she has dressed the girl as a 'gypsy', so that

no one would be able to recognise her [con artists]. Devilshoof warns his paramour and accomplice that they should keep Arline's identity secret. Arline lives with the Hardies, and to make sure her identity is protected, Mrs. Hardy fools Ollie into thinking the girl is their daughter. Ollie is overjoyed and, holding Arline in his arms, announces to Stan that he has just become a father. Stan congratulates him and, to celebrate the happy occasion, offers some cigars to Ollie and to a 'gypsy' couple passing by. Then, the two friends go to the camp to spread the glad tidings. No one from the 'gypsies' is disturbed by the fact that Arline is a grown-up child or, for that matter, questions Ollie's fatherhood [child-abduction is a norm].

Sequence 21 [33'57:43'02] Devilshoof tells Mrs. Hardy that he plans to go and leave her behind: "Since I was a boy, I've had no other roof but the stars. I've been free to come and free to go. And I give my love to whom I fancy" [unreliable as lovers]. Mrs. Hardy wants to follow Devilshoof, but he dismisses her wish as impossible. The man explains that he possesses nothing except his horse and the clothes he stands in and would only take Mrs. Hardy along if she can provide some money or jewels [mercenary as lovers]. Mrs. Hardy asks Stan to hand her Ollie's money bag and Stan agrees to do this for her, saying: "I could gyp that gypsy anytime!" While the two 'gypsy' clowns try to outsmart each other, Mrs. Hardy takes their stash of stolen jewels and elopes with Devilshoof, to whom she is blindly loyal [dissemblers, gypers, steal among themselves, devil's servants]. She abandons not only her husband Ollie but also Arline [irresponsible as adults/parents]. The two 'gypsy' clowns realise they have been tricked by Mrs. Hardy, and Ollie reprimands Stan: "Aren't you ashamed of yourself? After all I've done for you! I took you out of the gutter and gave you a career, made a first-class pickpocket out of you and this is your gratitude! It hurts, Stanley, I tell you, it hurts!" [without personal integrity, first-class pickpockets]. Ollie laughs at the events, then he gets serious, grabbing Stan by the throat; the final shot shows their caravan rocking [physically violent].

Sequence 22 [43'03:43'29] At the castle, the count receives news that the search for his daughter has been futile.

Sequence 23 [43'30:47'58] Ollie is getting Arline ready for bed. She has no nightie, so he takes a pair of long johns with buttons, cuts the legs

shorter and dresses the girl in the resulting cloth [wretched]. Before going to bed, small Arline insists on saying her prayers: "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep." At this point, she falters with the words and asks Ollie and Stan for help, but neither of them knows the text, so Ollie makes up a new, profane version of the prayer. Instead of saying: "If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take", he comes up with the following line: "If at first you don't succeed, try, try... try again" [heathens, pseudo-Christians].

Sequence 24 [47'59:48'08] An intertitle informs us that after twelve years the 'gypsies' encamp again the woods of Count Arnheim.

Sequence 25 [48'08:56'00] In a bird's-eye shot, the camera shows us the 'gypsy' camp in winter; everything is white with snow. Then, the camera cuts to grown-up Arline (Jacqueline Wells), setting up a breakfast table inside the wagon. She calls for Ollie and Stan, who are sleeping outside in an open cart in the company of a dog and under a layer of snow [close to nature, insensitive to the extremities of nature]. The family gathers for breakfast and Arline recounts a dream she has had during the night. While she sings, Stan devours all the food at the table leaving nothing for Ollie [greedy, no sense of solidarity]. The character of Arline provides a contrasting counterpoint to the loud-mouthed, abusive and spectacularly unfaithful brunette that Mrs. Hardy has showed herself to be. In opposition to her, Arline is an attractive blonde with gentle manners and a strong sense for home and family that manifests itself in her respectful and caring attitude towards her adoptive father and his friend; it is Arline who patches up the broken family left behind by Mrs. Hardy.

Sequence 26 [56'01:1'00'10] A comedy routine of Stan, in which he tries to siphon a barrel of homemade wine into bottles, getting completely inebriated in the process [drunkards].

Sequence 27 [1'00'11:1'03'46] Standing in front of Count Arnheim's castle, Arline overhears the count singing about his lost child. Enchanted by the music, she enters the castle grounds. The guards capture her and throw her into the dungeon, the captain of the guard telling her: "I'll show you what we do with thieving gypsies here." He reports to the count, who orders that – a woman or not – the 'gypsy' should be lashed and that she should remain in the dungeon until he finds time

to observe the lashing [thieving, punishable]. Ollie witnesses the arrest of Arline and calls Stan for help.

Sequence 28 [1'03'46:1'08'09] Ollie and drunken Stan enter the castle grounds and try to free Arline. Disguised in Arline's overcoat, Stan manages to fool the captain of the guard and causes chaos for a while among the soldiers [impersonators]. Eventually, Arline is undressed and tied to the post for the lashing. The executor tears off her medallion and throws it away, so that the jewel lands at the count's feet. The latter recognises the medallion as well as Arline's family birthmark, realising that the young blonde 'gypsy' on the post is his lost child. Father and daughter fall into each other's arms.

Sequence 29 [1'08'08:1'10'27] Ollie and Stan are brought to the castle's chamber and placed in medieval torture machines. Before Arline can intervene, Ollie is stretched on a rack into a giant, while Stan is squeezed in a press into a dwarf with stunted legs [punishable]. After this grotesque gag on retribution, the film ends with a low-angle shot of the count's castle. The social order is restored.

The attributes, values and character traits abstracted in the brackets form a heterogeneous constellation that connects together different and disparate dimensions of human existence. Grouping the keywords in thematic clusters, we can see that the characterisation of the 'gypsy' modus of being in *The Bohemian Girl* focuses on four major areas of human life which are at the core of social cohesion: land ownership, livelihood, religion, and long-term social bonds. In all these areas of life, the 'gypsy' role is shown to score negatively, displaying a deficiency, an inability or a lack of required virtue. When it comes to human bonding, the film suggests that the relationships 'gypsies' form as spouses, lovers and friends are abusive, short-lived and unreliable, motivated primarily by cold monetary interests and/or by unrestrained sexuality. Negatively formulated, their unions with others – be it a family, an amorous partnership or a friendship – are marked by a lack of love and its associated values: mutual respect, charity and camaraderie. The failure to form stable bonds with other humans is explained by a lack of personal integrity, an absence of a unified Self that can keep in check the baser bodily instincts and impulses, such as greed, aggression, jealousy or desire for revenge, all of them catalogued by Christianity as carnal sins. This is directly connected to the religious aspect of 'gypsy'

life, upon which the film only touches, but the demeanour and the look of the 'gypsy' queen, the setting in her tent and the scene of Arline saying her bed-time prayer clearly signal that 'gypsies' are perceived as heathens who practice witchcraft and sorcery. Even small Arline knows more about praying than grown-up 'gypsy' males. Otherwise stated, it is implied that 'gypsies' are not proper Christians and make profane use of Christian rites and sacraments. When it comes to work, the film claims that the main source of livelihood for 'gypsies' is thievery in an organised form, which involves men and women, young and old; being talented at music, dance and other performance arts, 'gypsies' use their entertainment skills as a cover-up for their criminal undertakings. Put negatively, according to the film, 'gypsies' do not have proper occupations and do not earn their living by means of skilled work. As the establishing shot in the film announces, the 'gypsies' lead a nomadic way of life. In other words, they are not a sedentary people and as such do not belong to social structures organised around land ownership and heritage lines. In terms of mythic space, they are situated on two main locations: the road and the forest (not a settlement), while in terms of mythic time, they are assigned to the darkness of the night (not the day), the moon and candle-light being their allies (not the sun). As Kyp Harness pertinently observes: "*The Bohemian Girl* is dark, grim, somewhat unpleasant – as one might assume a film featuring infidelity, kidnapping, whipping and torture as its backdrop might well be. The photography itself seems dark" (187). Last but not least, the physical appearance of 'gypsies' is colour coded: they are dark-haired types sporting costumes with various black-and-white patterns, which is to say that they are not 'white', socially and 'ethno-racially'. In short, the para-ethnographic portrayal of 'gypsies' is furnished with a mythic layer of signification and is also racialised.

The anti-norm that underwrites the 'gypsy' modus of being becomes more intelligible when considered in relation to the norm in power; the latter is made explicit in the film through the portrayal of Count Arnheim. The body of the aristocrat is invested with the most power, visualised and symbolised by his castle, clothes and accoutrements as well by his armed troops, while the body of the 'gypsy', divested of all power, is punished. Count Arnheim is the physical embodiment of the social norm that promises successful integration for the members of the dominant culture, placing value on the rule of aristocracy with its feudal system of property ownership and wealth accumulation (which is another way of defining sedentary lifestyle in the context of the

story), family life centred on love and affection, honest work, Christianity, advancement of the sciences and the arts, and control of oneself, including in sexual matters. It is in relation to this norm that the 'gypsy' anti-norm acquires its content that is marked with a negative sign; the anti-norm is residual and derivative of the norm. The two – norm and anti-norm, 'white' mask and 'gypsy' mask – mutually define and complement each other in the film,⁹⁰ one asserting its power by castigating the other.

The humour in the film resides in Oliver and Stan's slapstick comedy that exploits the principle of ironic reversal and exaggeration. By turning the 'gypsy' mask into an object of ridicule, magnifying and dramatising its qualities into comedy routines, and treating it positively in a tongue-in-cheek manner, Laurel and Hardy raise the entertainment value of their film, but they also endow it with a disciplining effect, akin to blackface minstrel shows, offering a lesson that is to remain with the audience. John V. Brennan rates *The Bohemian Girl* as the funniest of their operettas, adding that "with Laurel and Hardy getting the lion's share of the film footage, it just may be the best of the three, at least for those who watch Laurel and Hardy to laugh." He highlights two comedy routines as deserving "a hallowed spot in the Laurel and Hardy Hall of Fame", namely "the pickpocket routine" and Stan's solo scene with the wine bottles. Just like all experts on Laurel and Hardy's comedy art, Brennan pours lavish attention on the puckish pickpockets but has little to say about the 'gypsy' scenes in the story, discarding them as brief, hence insignificant:

As for the plot scenes that most critics find extremely dull: yes, they are, but they go by quickly, leaving all the more room for Laurel and Hardy. The film starts out unpromisingly, with a few songs and some exposition about the mutual hatred between Count Arnheim and the Gypsies, but once the camera finds Laurel and Hardy, they become the focus of the film and are never too long out of sight. Instead of getting brief moments of comedy in between the story, we get brief moments of story instead.

90 There is also a very practical reason for this juxtaposition from an artist's point of view: since it is difficult to produce a compelling image of, say, temperance or honesty and assert it convincingly as a value of significance for the whole society, one effective alternative is to create a contrastive image of inebriation or thievery, definitely rich in drama, and negate it through public ridicule or exemplary punishment.

For example, we learn of Devilshoof's capture and subsequent flogging by Count Arnheim's men only in short cutaways during The Boys' extended pickpocketing routine.

I propose to reverse the optics on *The Bohemian Girl* and bring to the fore the 'gypsy' child-theft story that supplies Laurel and Hardy's highly lauded comedy with three important elements: a narrative framework that integrates the self-contained routines into one coherent piece; a new setting for the comic duo that is widely recognisable for its exotic Otherness and therefore cheap to stage and easy to exploit; and an inexhaustible source of widely familiar negative clichés.

At this point, it is worthwhile to subject the juxtaposition of aristocrats and 'gypsies' to an analysis that resorts to the devices of political anatomy, as proposed by Foucault and set out in his insightful book *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Foucault posits there that knowledge (or the truth) is not external to power and thus an instrument in its aid but rather that knowledge (or the truth) is a function of power; and here he argues that "power and knowledge directly imply one other; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (27). In this line of thought, the knowledge (or the truth) about 'gypsies' that the film exposes us to is a function of the cultural norm in power; this knowledge is constituted by the Count Arnheim's normative worldview and is also adopted by the film's narrative and reproduced through the gaze of the camera. Count Arnheim is the source of the truth about 'gypsies' that the film offers us as an authoritative perspective; and his truth-power is displayed for all to see by the spectacle of public flogging performed on his orders, in illustration of Foucault's claim that "the truth-power relations remain at the heart of all mechanism of punishment" (55). Foucault notes also that "with feudalism, (...) we find a sudden increase in the corporal punishments – the body being in most cases the only property accessible" (25).

Borrowing Foucault's terms to describe the apposition of aristocrats and 'gypsies' in *The Bohemian Girl*, a recurrent motif in 'gypsy'-themed films, we can say that the 'gypsy' represents the symmetrical, inverted figure of the aristocrat, and by the same token that "the condemned man represents the symmetrical, inverted figure of the king", being its opposite pole in the symbolic scheme of power relations (29). The film constructs the 'gypsy' figure as punishable by

default;⁹¹ the mere presence of the 'gypsy' constitutes a grave offence to the nobleman, which in abstract terms reflects the two-way dynamics between the norm and its residual anti-norm: the norm has the power to chastise its anti-norm but – conversely – the anti-norm has the power to subvert the norm. The threat of subversion is at the crux of the matter in the film. It is play-acted in two pivotal scenes: once in the gag where Ollie and Stan rob and humiliate a random aristocrat whose attire rhymes with that of Count Arnheim, and a second time when Mrs. Hardy steals Arline, the count's offspring and – which is of immense political importance – his heiress (denoted also by the father's and daughter's alliterating names). Count Arnheim's line of heritage, symbolised by the family medallion – material proof of noble blood and entitlement – is the prime source of legitimacy of his rule, so the theft of Arline, as the bearer of the medallion, represents a direct attack on the familial lineage of aristocracy and the legitimacy of its dominion. The film skates over the issue of bloodline purity, but the latter lingers between the lines: the abduction of Arline by 'gypsies' inevitably poses the threat of miscegenation. Considering then the subversive danger associated with the 'gypsy' anti-norm, we can read the ceremonial flogging and expulsion of Devilshoof as a political ritual, in which the rule of the norm is manifested at its most spectacular. The ceremony of punishment, with the pillory surrounded by the count's marching troops, displays for all to see – and, here, the spectator in the cinema hall is actually the main addressee – the power relations that give force to the dominant political order. The public punishment asserts the dissymmetry between the aristocrat and the 'gypsy' figure; its function is to sustain the stability of the total imbalance of power between these two figures. The theme of retribution runs through the entire film and is an important organising force, as already discussed in Section 3.4.

In conclusion, it is necessary to consider one detail of far-reaching significance: in *The Bohemian Girl*, the apposition of aristocrats and 'gypsies' is colour coded; their difference is contrastively constructed on the level of costumes, hair and other associated objects, ascribing

91 Consider, for example, the fact that from the mid-sixteenth century up until the late eighteenth century, "a gypsy could legally be put to death in England simply for being a gypsy. No other crime need be committed; just by existing, gypsies were breaking the law" (Houghton-Walker 15). Adopted in 1562 by the English Parliament, the Egyptians Act, which regulated the legal position of gypsies as gypsies, was repealed in 1783.

'whiteness' to the dominant norm and 'non-whiteness' to the repudiated anti-norm (for example, Arline, blonde and dressed in white, plays with a snow-white rabbit, while a nameless 'gypsy' girl, dark-haired and in patterned clothes, plays with a pitch-black cat). The film reproduces an antigypsy narrative and a colour-coded, racialising mode of seeing that is a remnant of the age of feudalism and as such bears witness to the fact that the complex, multi-faceted phenomenon of antigypsyism is at the very roots of modern racism. Evidence in support of this claim comes also from Benedict Anderson's insightful observation:

The dreams of racism actually have their origin in ideologies of class, rather than in those of nation: above all in claims to divinity among rulers and to 'blue' or 'white' blood and 'breeding' among aristocrats. No surprise then that the putative sire of modern racism should be, not some petty-bourgeois nationalist, but Joseph Arthur, Comte de Gobineau.^[92] Nor that, on the whole, racism and anti-Semitism manifest themselves, not across national boundaries, but within them. In other words, they justify not so much foreign wars as domestic repression and domination. (149–150)

From the present-day standpoint, we can see that models of social cohesion (norms) change over time – aristocratic rule has long been toppled by other forms of governance, but one key mechanism of asserting the authority of the sovereign remains intact: public ridicule, denigration and expulsion of the 'gypsy' figure, a very rewarding ritual, because it is also the inverse technique of projecting 'whiteness' onto the norm that reaches for power. Or as Nelly Furman puts it: "notions of social hierarchies or hereditary privileges do not disappear but seem to have commuted into racial and ethnic rankings" (125). Foucault examines the political functions of corporal punishment in the age of feudalism, tracing the transformations of this public ceremonial to its virtual disappearance in the modern age, but he also points out that there is another development to be observed – the re-orientation of the economy of punishment from the body to its representation (cf. 94), a development of which the phenomenon of 'gypsy'-themed films is a relevant and undeservedly underrated case in point.

92 Eva Woods Peiró notes that the French thinker Arthur de Gobineau, who associated entire nations with 'racial' types, was a major influence on Prosper Mérimée, the writer who "established the fiery Gypsy Carmen as a Spanish icon" (19).

6.2 The Content Matrix of the 'Gypsy' Mask in *King of the Gypsies* (1978): Sequence-by-Sequence Description

Written and directed by Frank Pierson, the film *King of the Gypsies* (1978) is a very loose adaptation of Peter Maas' work of creative non-fiction by the same name, published in 1975. Peter Maas wrote his best-selling book using material provided by Steve Tene, a young Roma informant, and then combining it with biased newspaper clippings and police records. As Ronald Lee points out, it is hard to say "how much of the actual information contained in the book was true, exaggerated, or apocryphal", while the film disproportionately fictionalised the events (217).

The story is set in New York City and begins in the 1950s.

Sequence 1 [0'14:2'42] The film opens with a long shot of a man (Matt Glaser) dancing a gypsy jig on a sandy spot by a river bank. He is wearing an elegant, earth-coloured suit with a red carnation in his breast pocket and a white hat. The camera pans left showing more 'gypsies', three of them grooming a horse, and then zooms on a single young man with his horse; he is bringing the animal from the river bank to the camp. The camera follows the young man and, thus, gradually it introduces us to the space and its inhabitants, tilting by the end of the sequence to a high-angle shot – we can see women in motley dresses wringing out their washing in the open, children running around, men tending to their horses or striking a deal over a horse. All these activities take place in a spacious green field dotted with big military greenish tents, open fires and cars. It is an overcast day and the light paints a picture dominated by earthy colours. Our entry into the 'gypsy' camp is accompanied by the young man's monologue, added in a voiceover: "Maybe my life would have turned out quite different in the olden days, *before private property*. There was always a farm or land field to camp in. Gypsies were free to roam, they did not pay taxes, named with some damn computer I could not even find. It was better. Maybe I was born too late but who gets to pick when to be born or to pick the mother and the father. The biggest decision in your life and nobody gets to say anything about it. All the rest of your life you live with it, or you fight it." A procession of cars enters the 'gypsy' camp and comes to a halt at the central tent, passing by a pole with the US flag fluttering at its upper end [dancers, close to nature, horse-dealers, nomadic, averse to private property, delinquent citizens (do not pay taxes)].

Sequence 2 [2'43:4'13] A medium shot frames the face of an adolescent girl; her name is Rose. She is the mother of Dave, whose voiceover guides us retrospectively into his life story. Spiro Giorgio, the girl's father and the boss of the tribe, tells Rose to hide. The camp is visited by king Zharko Stepanowicz and queen Rachel, to whom Spiro Giorgio has promised his daughter and accepted a payment of four thousand five hundred dollars. Stepanowicz claims the girl, but the father reneges on his word, explaining that he was drunk when he promised Rose and that she is not ready to marry. Stepanowicz calls for a trial before the council of the elderly. While the two bosses talk (**Fig. 22a** and **Fig. 22b**), the camera offers more eye-catching details from the 'gypsy' camp: whole animals roasting on a spit; a dancing woman with numerous bangles and necklaces and in colourful clothes; another female smoking a pipe; massive gold medallions, various jewels and rings with gemstones, etc. [pre-modern: with a feudal clan structures, practice arranged marriages, drunkards, may not keep their word, dancers, women with masculine habits].



Fig. 22a and Fig. 22b. Screenshots from *King of the Gypsies* (1978, Dir. Frank Pierson): Spiro Giorgio (Michael Gazzo) and his wife Danitza (Antonia Rey) (left) receive a sudden visit by king Zharko Stepanowicz (Sterling Hayden) and queen Rachel (Shelley Winters) (right), who have come to ask for the hand of their daughter in marriage.

Sequence 3 [4'14:5'27] A 'gypsy' tent is laid out before the camera, resembling a stage, its back wall made up of colourful, patterned carpets. Against this background, a band of musicians are playing their instruments while a group of 'gypsies' are dancing. The men have elegant suits and hats; the women wear long skirts, each in a different colour, and have their long dark hair loose. The party takes place at dusk, the flames of an open fire flicking in the foreground of the shot [merrymaking, dancers, musicians, colourful, dark types].

Sequence 4 [5'28:8'42] The council of the elderly has gathered and the two bosses present their cases before it. Stepanowicz accuses Giorgio of violating a tradition that is two thousand years old. Giorgio offers to pay him two thousand five hundred dollars back, demanding that Stepanowicz stay out of New York and Eastern Pennsylvania. Stepanowicz accuses the father of wanting to sell his daughter again while she is still virgin. He adds that he has warned his son not to beat up the girl, noting, "You cannot ask better than that." It becomes clear that the marriage is part of Stepanowicz's plan to take over Giorgio's clan. A musical number is inserted. The party continues and we see Stepanowicz seated at a table, playing cards with other men. His son Groffo stands nearby, mind blown by the news that Rose hates him. Stepanowicz offers advice to his son and mocks him for talking like a gadjo,⁹³ that is, with respect for the law. "Life ain't like that," the father concludes authoritatively [involved in clan fights (mafia), tradition-bound, marriage-swindlers, sell their girls into marriage, prone to (domestic) violence, musicians, disrespectful to the law].

Sequence 5 [8'43:11'57] On the next morning, the elders gather again and pronounce themselves in favour of Giorgio and his daughter, telling Stepanowicz to stay out of Giorgio's territory and to stop calling himself "the king of all Gypsies". Giorgio shakes hands with the oldest man, thanking him; Stepanowicz claims he is a man of his word and believes in the old days, warning that putting the girl's feelings ahead of the law will cause a lot of trouble. On his way out, he snatches Rose, shoves her into his car and drives off, causing a great commotion in the camp [pre-modern, violent, untrustworthy].

Sequence 6 [11'58:13'37] A close-up of a naked baby being baptised informs us that Dave is born and Stepanowicz, now king of New York and Eastern Pennsylvania, throws a big party. "Gypsies celebrated anything. Any excuse for a party, dance, have a few laughs, get drunk...", Dave's voiceover muses. A long table is set with food, a whole roasted pig in its middle. Dave's drunk father, Groffo, in a reddish suit over a yellow shirt, starts dancing on the table, with the pig between his legs, then collapses on top of it and hugs it (**Fig. 26**) [party-makers, drunkards, on a par with pigs].

93 As defined in Encyclopedia Britannica, the Romani word 'gadje' refers to all non-Roma and can also be spelled 'gadze' or 'gaje'; it is a term with a pejorative connotation meaning 'bumpkin', 'yokel' or 'barbarian'.

Sequence 7 [13'38:15'28] The opening shot shows a dance performed by the elegant man in the earth-coloured suit (from the introductory scene). In the aftermath of the party, the drunk king is playing cards and continuing to drink. The camera zooms on the face of a small child sleeping in Queen Rachel's lap, and Dave's voice narrates the story of his sister's birth. "We kept moving, living an independent life like gypsies have had for a couple of thousand years, taking care of ourselves. We didn't need nobody else, we didn't need doctors, not for the simple things like the birth of a child. We just pull over and wait so you got no birth certificate which ain't bad when there is a war on 'cause you only got the gypsy to swear when he was born." Later he adds that 'gypsies' "like the girl kids. Girls are the money-makers" [nomadic, outsiders, averse to modern medicine, social outsiders, shirkers, mercenary as parents].

Sequence 8 [15'29:15'24] Dave's voice gives account of the clan's routes during the year: 'gypsies' visiting the spirits of their families in the cemeteries (the elegant dancer doing his gypsy jig in the background), making money with fortune-telling in the Midwest, traveling to Florida for the rainy season. He also explains that the times are changing: the welfare system is putting pressure on the settled 'gypsies' to send their kids to school, the police are cracking down on fortune-telling [nomads, fortune-tellers, in conflict with the modern state/the law].

Sequence 9 [16'24:20'17] Dave's voice tells us that his mother has decided to open up a fortune-telling business in New York, where people are ignorant and have more money. We can see Rose first unrolling and then hanging out a poster with the name "Madame Pauline" written on it; her studio is lavishly decorated with curtains in deep purple and gold, with drapes in flowered patterns, a dim lamp, many candles. Madame Pauline, wearing golden necklaces, bracelets and earrings, one scarf over her head and another one over her shoulders, consults a rich lady with a fox-fur hat and a matching collar. Madame tells the lady that a curse has been put on her ex-husband's money in the bank; she drives the lady's evil spirits away by breaking an egg and instructs her to bury the money in the graveyard, naked. The lady agrees to follow the instructions but begs Madame to do the money-burying for her. All the while, little Dave is watching from behind the curtains [scam artists, cheats, phony fortune-tellers, sorcerers].

Sequence 10 [20'17:25'51] The father, acting as a chauffeur, drives Rose and little Dave to a high-end jewellery store. Rose pretends to be an Argentinian aristocrat who wants to buy a present for her aunt, a real diamond. She wears a stylish black dress with fur lapels, a small black hat with a veil, smoking a cigarette and posing with her elongated holder. The shop owner discusses various stones with her; in the meantime, Dave gets restless and throws a tantrum. Rose uses the turmoil to steal a solitaire and unobtrusively slips it into Dave's mouth while offering him a glass of water. The police are called; soon the entire 'gypsy' family arrives, too, led by the king. Since the shop owner cannot prove that Rose has stolen the diamond, he has to let her go. When the man asks in a wailing voice about his diamond, the king laughs a sinister laugh, while the detective replies that its whereabouts is another 'gypsy' mystery [scam artists, swindlers, thieves (young and old)].

Sequence 11 [25'52:25'55] A close-up shows a child's bottom on a potty. While waiting for Dave to "deliver" the diamond, Rose tells him that he is special, like his grandfather. Then she relates him a story of the 'gypsy' who stole the big nail meant for the heart of good Jesus; out of gratitude Jesus promised the 'gypsies' that from that day on they could roam and steal. The next shot cuts to the slightly blurred image of Rose, reflected in a mirror, marvelling at the stone with satisfaction, a cigarette smoking in the corner of her mouth [itinerant thieves who raise their children as thieves, with faux biblical stories].

Sequence 12 [26'56:28'00] Half-naked Dave plays on the floor in the middle of a flurry of colourful female skirts. The women in the family dance around him in celebration; an elderly one sits nearby dragging at her pipe. His father takes him in his arms and exclaims: "Has he got the heart of a thief, yeah!" Then, taking pride in Dave's masculine attributes, he throws the bare-bottomed child into the arms of another male relative who passes him around in a circle until Dave starts crying. The king intervenes to protect his grandson, who calms down in his arms playing with his gold medallion [proud thieves, make their children steal].

Sequence 13 [28'00:31'50] A short interlude with the elegant dancer ushers us into the life of the family. Dave's voice admits loving his mother, who is unable, however, to stop their mad drunk father from knocking them all about. Dave and his younger sister work selling flowers on the street, but they also take interest in the nearby school. While

watching through the fence, the two are invited by a friendly coach to join a basketball game. The children withdraw apprehensively, bumping into their drunken father, who begins to shout invectives against the gadjo school. He promises to beat the hell out of Dave if he goes to the gadjo school, offering to teach him something useful instead. Groffo pushes his son into the driver's seat of his car and gives the boy his first driving lesson while cursing, denouncing the gadjo school and yelling at him, and all the while taking swigs at his flask of liquor. After several near misses, the boy collides with another car. The father blames him for not watching out, gets out and picks a fight with the other car's owner, vehemently kicking his vehicle. Dave's voice comments that his father had a bad name in the clan and was expected to bring disaster as king [prone to domestic violence, averse to schooling, drunkards, violent, abusive and incompetent as parents, with feudal clan structures].

Sequence 14 [31'51:35'38] Groffo is summoned before the traffic court judge for failing to pay more than a thousand parking tickets worth over six thousand dollars. He appears in court together with his family and the entire clan and pleads ignorance, saying he thought the papers were advertisements and also explaining that he cannot read or write. The judge threatens him with jail if he refuses to pay. The king intervenes, presenting himself as Groffo's father and offers a deal to the judge: he promises to make the several thousand licensed gypsies in New York pay their fines. The judge wonders how he could do that and the king brags that he can give orders to his people. The judge scolds him for having his hat on and reduces Groffo's fine by half. The king thanks the judge and insists on shaking hands with him in confirmation of the deal; the judge looks perplexed, while the king is triumphant and puts his hat back on. All the while, the clan interjects vociferously in the conversation with the judge, clapping and commenting like a chorus with a collective voice [delinquent car drivers, liars, illiterate, disrespectful to the court, alien to the legal system, a non-individualised group].

Sequence 15 [35'39:37'38] Walking down the stairs from the courtroom, the king and queen answer questions from the press, feigning authority. The queen protests at the cameras, saying that photographs are against the king's religion. The king takes twelve-year-old Dave aside for a talk. Standing in the middle of the majestic courthouse, the old man tells the boy he should think of getting married, of getting a money-maker. The boy refuses to listen and runs away and out of the

courthouse. Dave's voiceover narrates the rest of the story: he went to a priest to ask for advice, because he did not want to marry, but the priest told him to go home and be a good kid, apparently not listening [con men, practice child marriage].

Sequence 16 [37'39:40'16] An extremely low-angle shot of the elegant man dancing opens up the story of Dave's growing up alone on the streets of New York. We see the boy breaking into a car, then warming himself by an open fire in a barrel on the street (the flames moving in rhythm with the extra-diegetic music), then stealing apples from a grocery shop, then spending the winter in a cardboard box, then being chased by two police officers down a deserted railway road. The scenes are interposed with short numbers featuring the elegant dancer. Dave's voice elaborates: "I couldn't read, I couldn't write, I couldn't go to school, they'd send me home... I was sure as hell I was not going home. I was not even going to be a gypsy anymore." And also: "Without a birth certificate and not reading and writing, you can't get in the union. Without the union, you can't get a job and without a job you get fired from, you can't get unemployment. It's a god damned conspiracy. Insurance fraud was my survival tactics. At least, it wasn't stealing from the poor." His voice accompanies a scene in which he – now a grown-up young man – jumps in front of a taxi, rolls over its windscreen and falls prostrate on the street. Instead of stopping, the driver speeds away, the tyres squealing. Dave makes an obscene gesture in his wake, adding that the man must have been a gypsy [car thieves, street dwellers/social outcasts, petty thieves, illiterate, unemployed and unemployable, delinquent citizens, irresponsible and ruthless drivers].

Sequence 17 [40'17 :42'47] Young Dave is in a supermarket where he orchestrates an accident, slipping on a broken egg he has previously tossed on the floor. At the hospital, he is examined for spinal injuries and granted compensation. He comes out of the hospital being pushed in a wheelchair, only to suddenly spring to his feet and bolt [insurance fraudsters].

Sequence 18 [42'47:46'47] Young Dave relates that he earns his living also by attending parties where rich women take immediate interest in him, being a gypsy. "Easy life," he intones. After one such party, he is wrestled down by two men in brownish overcoats and shoved into the back seat of a car, where his grandfather awaits him. The king wants

Dave to come home and take care of the tribe. He shows Dave his hand, bragging that this is the hand of a man who's never done an honest day's work; that he lives like a millionaire. Dave questions the king's millionaireship and the old man explains that his strategy is to spread the money around, taking care of the friends and the family. Now and again taking a gulp from a bottle of wine, the old man advises Dave to share his strength with that of the tribe. Dave questions the supposed tribal strength, which in his words amounts to boho women, a bunch of corny fortune-tellers, insurance fraud specialists, pickpockets, card sharks and slum dwellers. He mentions he would like to be a surgeon and asks where the gypsy surgeons or the gypsy astronauts are. The king discloses that he is terminally ill and needs Dave home where his place is [into easy life, alien to honest work, boho women, phony fortune-tellers, insurance fraudsters, pickpockets, card sharks, slum dwellers].

Sequence 19 [46'48:50'53] Dave decides to return to his family because he loves the old man. "And I missed the gypsies, if you want the truth. And maybe things could be different," he adds. Back home, Dave announces that his homecoming means a change and an end to Groffo's violent outbursts. The son confronts the father; the tension between the two men quickly heats up and Dave pulls out a knife, threatening to kill Groffo. Groffo mocks Dave for thinking like a gadjo. Dave replies he wished to god he were a gadjo. Shocked, Groffo shouts back that Dave is no gypsy, that nothing matters to him, no rules, no nothing. Then, he asks him: "Are you my son?" Dave answers in the negative and in return Groffo suggests that Dave fucks his mother. He tears Rose's blouse off and pushes Dave's face into her bare breast. Dave threatens Groffo again with a knife, but Groffo finds a pistol, starts shooting and chases Dave away. Dave jumps through a window, noisily smashing the glass, and climbs down the building, which has a grim and desolate look with a car burning in its backyard; the space rings with the sound of a child crying and an approaching police siren. "The same thing all over. Always the same, for all times. Not for me," Dave concludes [physically and verbally brutal, fiery (hot-blooded), impulsive, excessive, murderous, monstrous (incestuous), not open to change, slum dwellers].

Sequence 20 [50'54:52'18] Dave finds himself a job as a waiter and a singer, which allows him to date blondes and red-heads. The scene ends up with a close-up of a pale blonde girl, her face lit up and in full view [musical, into 'white' girls].

Sequence 20 [52'19:54'05] The film cuts to a close-up of queen Rachel in a dimly lit profile: her head covered in a black scarf, a pipe in her mouth fuming (**Fig. 23a**). She is in the hospital room tending to the sick king: she has tied a bag with herbs around his neck and is giving him a drink from a bottle of liquor (**Fig. 23b**). A nurse, dressed in white, arrives and orders all relatives out [superstitious, alien to modern medicine].



Fig. 23a and Fig. 23b. Screenshots from *King of the Gypsies* (1978, Dir. Frank Pierson): with a black scarf on her head and a pipe in her mouth, queen Rachel (Shelley Winters) visits the bed-ridden king (Sterling Hayden) in the hospital.

Sequence 20 [54'06:55'23] Blonde-haired Sharon has taken Dave on an ice-skating date. The two are alone at a beautiful, large frozen lake; the entire landscape is white with snow. Sharon is in a white sports outfit that emphasises her slim, nimble figure, while Dave – with a cigarette in the corner of his mouth – is clad in a long black leather coat that, in turn, accentuates his stooping posture and stiff movements (**Fig. 24a**). Dave can hardly balance on the ice, while Sharon freely circles around him, showing great elegance and skill, and then finishing with a perfect pirouette. She urges Dave to start moving and he lands on the ground



Fig. 24a and Fig. 24b. Screenshots from *King of the Gypsies* (1978, Dir. Frank Pierson): blonde-haired Sharon in a white sports outfit moving nimbly around Dave, whose stooping posture and stiff movements are in turn accentuated by a long black leather coat.

with a spectacular fall (**Fig. 24b**) [black, clumsy due to lack of skills that require self-control, doomed to fall/fail].

Sequence 21 [55'23:55'48] On his deathbed, the king asks for Dave.

Sequence 22 [55'49:1'02'14] Dave and Sharon drive back to Dave's apartment, but their sexual interlude is put to an abrupt end by Rose. She has come to ask for Dave's help, because his father wants to marry off Tita against her will; the girl ran away twice and was twice beaten up. "Nothing ever changes with you people, does it?" Dave angrily asks. Groffo has received a payment of six thousand dollars, which he has then blown at the races; according to Rose, calling the police won't help; everybody will lie and the girl will get beaten up again. Tita and Rose start bickering, and Dave flips out, smashing the coffee cups they have just been served against the wall. Rose also informs him that the king plans to pass the ring and the medallion on to him, and Dave, almost in tears, kneeling in front of Rose, says: "Mom, you have to understand – we live in a democracy, there are no kings" [with pre-modern marriage customs, abusive, averse to change, into gambling, liars, quick-tempered, quarrelsome, alien to democracy].

Sequence 23 [1'02'14:1'03'59] Dave and Sharon talk about their parents.

Sequence 24 [1'04'00:1'04'40] A high-angle shot shows a full parking lot. 'Gypsies' from all over the country have come to pay respect to the dying king; Groffo canvasses for support.

Sequence 25 [1'04'41:1'11'24] Dave enters the hospital. The building is crammed with 'gypsies'. Walking down the corridor, he meets his mother, with a cigarette in her mouth, his sister and another female relative, Persa, also smoking, who comments flirtatiously on his good looks and invites him later to her place. On his deathbed, the king passes his ring on to Dave and tells him he should take care of the future. "Private property, too much private property. Once, I used to be able to camp anywhere," the king laments. He also instructs Dave to take care of the girls, to make sure they do not reject the family and all follow the old ways. Dave replies that he'd be a king only to lead the gypsies into the twentieth century. The king passes away [promiscuous, averse to private property, pre-modern, tradition-bound].

Sequence 26 [1'11'24:1'13'32] A shrill women's wail fills up the parking lot; led by Groffo, all the men stream towards the hospital. At the entrance, they bump into Dave, who shares the sad news and shows the ring and the medallion that he was given, saying he does not want to have them, nor does he want to be a 'gypsy'. His words fall on deaf ears.

Sequence 27 [1'13'33:1'16'35] Dave goes to Persa's fortune-telling studio in what looks like a red-light district. Persa has spread out a set of tarot cards and offers to tell Dave what they say. Dave dismisses card-reading as bullshit, Persa admits, too, of not believing in cards. Rose arrives and tells Dave that no matter what he does with the king's medallion, the fact is it has been given to him. She raises the topic of Tita's marriage; Dave replies she should call the police and not bother him, exploding: "You act like you live in the Middle Ages!" [fortune-tellers, impostors, alien to the police system, medieval].

Sequence 28 [1'16'36:1'19'08] Dave goes back to his flat. While unlocking his door, he is attacked from behind by two thugs, who wound him and chase him through the neighbourhood.

Sequence 29 [1'19'09:1'21'09] With his face covered in blood, Dave goes back to his flat. Sharon is there and is shocked by his appearance. "My father hired a couple of guys who tried to kill me," Dave explains. He assures Sharon that this is only temporary [prone to extreme forms of domestic violence, criminal, vengeful].

Sequence 30 [1'21'10:1'24'53] Still with a blood-smearred face, Dave goes to Persa's flat. She shoos her two children away and tends to his wounds. Dave removes his bloody clothes and as he is standing half-naked, Persa puts the gold medallion on his neck. The two make love [impulsive, promiscuous, unfaithful].

Sequence 31 [1'24'54:1'32'48] At the king's funeral, men in suits discuss business with Groffo. One exclaims: "It's against the law," to which Groffo replies: "Just don't think about it. It's our way, that's all." The flag of the USSR stands in one corner of the hall; the funeral home director complains about having a communist flag. Groffo snubs him saying that this was his father's wish since the family comes from Russia. Spiro Giorgio arrives and a brawl ensues; then Dave arrives and all quieten down. Dave confronts Groffo about Tita's marriage, saying he will take

care of the money. Groffo refuses the offer and Dave makes off with Tita, stealing a getaway car from the street [criminal, foreign (of Russian/communist background), cantankerous, car thieves].

Sequence 32 [1'32'50:1'38'37] Dave and Tita are in the car making plans to go to California. Dave tells Tita she does not have to take shit all her life, that she can do what she wants to do. Tita confronts him, asking if he himself wanted to be out at night stealing cars, breaking up 'gypsy' funerals and driving around. Dave says he did this for her, that he had no choice. In a cross-cut shot, we see that Groffo is after his children in another car. He tells his partner that he plans to kill his son. His partner proclaims him crazy. Brother and sister dream up their life in California. Soon, Groffo catches up with them and starts hitting their car from the side, causing them to crash. Then, he gets away, not even stopping. A passer-by rouses Dave, then goes to call the police. Tita is dead; Dave bids good-bye to her and limps away [crazy, monstrous, ruthless drivers, vengeful, abusive as parents].

Sequence 33 [1'38'38:1'44'32] Groffo is playing cards with the family he sold Tita to. He gives his word that he will find his daughter. Dave arrives with a rifle, shoots the door lock and chases Groffo around the flat, which – to his inconvenience – is swarming with children and adults. Groffo escapes upstairs, where Dave manages to track him down and shoot him just as his father is about to escape through a window, with the result that his body flies through the air, landing on the roof of a car. The whole family pours out into the street. The police arrive and Rose tells them the shooter was black; another voice adds that gypsies don't do things like this. The police ask the onlookers to disperse, and slowly Dave walks away from the scene of his crime [heartless, untrustworthy, vengeful, criminal, distrustful of and obstructing state institutions].

Sequence 34 [1'44'33:1'49'00] In a large graveyard, a band of brass musicians leads a big funeral procession; above the people, all dressed in black, the big, bright flags of the USA and the USSR stick out. The 'gypsies' say goodbye to Groffo, casting banknotes into his grave; a man wants to cast in a cheque and a quarrel erupts. Dave, with a scar on his brow and a gold cross on his neck, comes forward, too, and throws the ring and the medallion into the grave. Then he walks away and the entire procession follows him, with his mother and Persa in the first row.

We hear his voice: "Maybe I can lead them into the twentieth century, but I don't know if anybody could make them do anything except what they damn all wanna do. They'll go on, the gypsies." In the background, the man in the elegant suit appears again and starts dancing among the gravestones. The camera focuses on his figure, which then freezes into a posture and appears as a cut-out next to the film credits [foreign (of Russian/communist background), quarrelsome, with a medieval mentality, backward (not of the twentieth century), impossible to control/ of untameable nature/unwilling to change].

The values, qualities and personality traits abstracted in the brackets form a heterogeneous constellation that brings together different and disparate aspects of human life. Organising these keywords in thematic clusters, we can see that the characterisation of the 'gypsy' modus of being in *King of the Gypsies* encompasses a number of areas that are crucial for the social integration of the individual in a modern state: marriage, livelihood, religion, health care, public education, car driving, law enforcement, military service and state governance. Not surprisingly, in all these areas of human life, the 'gypsy' role is defined in the negative, displaying a deficiency, a deviance or a lack of a required virtue. In terms of socio-political organisation, 'gypsies' are portrayed as incorrigible remnants of feudalism, forming clan or tribe structures around faux (self-proclaimed) kings and heritage lines. Conversely, 'gypsies' are shown to be alien to the political system of democracy and the core value of private property it upholds. In a bizarre way and in line with the Cold War rhetoric, this quality is attributed to the great ideological foe of the US: the Soviet Union. With regard to the legal system, the film maintains that 'gypsies' adhere to their own tribal rules and traditions and follow, albeit irregularly, the orders of the elderly and their clan leaders. Conversely, 'gypsies' refuse to acknowledge the rule of law and avoid or obstruct/disrespect the state's law enforcement bodies, and especially the police force and the court system. When it comes to public education, the film is quite explicit about the hostility they harbour towards mainstream schools. It shows how 'gypsy' children grow up on the street, picking up the lessons life is willing to teach them there; their command of the English language is shown to be limited and often compensated for with clamorousness. Their relation to the system of public health care is not very different: even though 'gypsies' occasionally reach for the knowledge of modern medical science, they still prefer to give birth on the road, the film maintains,

thus depriving their children of birth certificates, while in hospitals they do nothing but obstruct the medical staff, swarming in big, noisy congregations, smoking cigarettes and pipes (the women especially), putting their trust in herb amulets, offering alcohol and cigarettes to the patients. The lack of birth certificates, in turn, preordains 'gypsies' to be permanent outsiders to various social bodies, such as the unions, and reduces them to unreliable conscripts. When it comes to livelihood, we are informed that 'gypsies' earn their living by a whole array of dishonest practices that include but are not limited to scams, divination and insurance fraud – which is another way of saying that they are opposed to honest (skilled, productive) work. The film does not delve much into the question of religion, but it shows that 'gypsies' perform faux divination and sorcery, indirectly asserting that they are alien to Christianity. To assist the spectators with their orientation, the story offers visual clues, small but significant details, as to where Christian values lie: the traffic court judge whom 'gypsies' try to trick, for example, is seated under a big sign with embossed golden letters saying "In God we trust"; Dave who rebels against 'gypsy' ways but finally agrees to take the 'gypsies' into the twentieth century wears in the final scene a small gold cross on his neck instead of his grandfather's medallion. And finally, we come to the question of marriage. The practice of arranged marriages causes the greatest contention in the film – at the start, we have a clan argument over an arranged marriage against Rose's will and, at the end, the story's circular structure comes to a close with a clan argument over an arranged marriage against Rose's daughter's will; the generations may change, but the practice stays the same. By directing the focus on to marriage, the film is in position to assert that 'gypsies' form family unions driven by monetary interests, which – decoded in reverse – means to say that 'gypsies' do not form familial bonds based on love. This practice also reflects the inferior position of women: according to the film, 'gypsy' females are treated as goods for sale, with little or no consideration for their will and feelings, while within the marriage they are exploited as the chief money-makers.

There is one 'gypsy' attribute in *King of the Gypsies* that requires a separate paragraph. This attribute draws attention to itself because it appears as a defining 'gypsy' quality only in this particular film – and in no other film from the entire corpus – and it refers to car-driving behaviour: 'gypsies', supposedly, do not follow driving etiquette and do not respect the rules and regulations of the road. In the film, not only do they break into cars, steal cars or intentionally cause car

crashes, but they also teach their children to drive while in a state of drunkenness and drive off after running somebody over. The fact that undesirable car-driving behaviour is marked as a 'gypsy' attribute in the film points to the socially disciplining function of the 'gypsy' mask; the road traffic system can only function if all participating individuals internalise its rules and regulations and conscientiously apply them. Attributing deviant behaviour to 'gypsies' then does not convey relevant knowledge about the actual people but instead lays bare the mechanism of cultural coding at work: normatively sanctioned and socially rewarded qualities are ascribed to the 'white' mask, while their opposites are communicated by means of the 'gypsy' mask. Both masks can then be viewed as historical accretions of normative values and their deviations that have fused into legible face-signs, one coded positively, the other negatively. Thus, our attempt to segment the two masks into their constitutive elements and spell out their heterogeneous content is no less than a form of cultural archaeology. By the same token, it is worth analysing 'gypsy'-themed films as mirror-inverted reflections of concrete historical norms. Instead of indexing the 'gypsy' stereotypes in them, it is much more informative to subject these films to a backwards reading, reversing the focus from the 'gypsy' mask to the dominant perspective that generates this 'gypsy' mask, examining the normative values, identity narratives and social taboos that are (re-) negotiated in the films by implication. Such an approach to complex, time-bound artworks like films brings to the fore the need for historical contextualisation, designating it as its indispensable research method.

Back to the description of the 'gypsy' mask in *King of the Gypsies*, I continue my analysis by considering its coding with regard to space, time and colour, and then in relation to the 'white' mask. In terms of mythic space, the establishing sequence situates 'gypsies' in nature and on the road, but since the main story unfolds in the city of New York, the mythic quality of space is diminished in their portrayal. It is indicated instead that 'gypsies' populate the city's peripheral zones, such as the streets and red-light districts or slums; they are also shown in a number of mainstream city spaces behaving as impostors or as pre-modern outsiders, such as the jewellery shop, the supermarket, the court, and the hospital. In terms of time, the film attempts to situate 'gypsies' in a historical line of events, taking stock of the changes and developments over the course of three generations: horses are replaced by cars, caravans are swapped for apartments in New York, and new and more sophisticated scams are devised in the place of the old ones.



Fig. 25a and Fig. 25b. Screenshots from *King of the Gypsies* (1978, Dir. Frank Pierson): classic two-shots of the handsome 'gypsy' Dave (Eric Roberts) and the girl of his dreams, the pale-skinned, blonde Sharon (Annette O'Toole).

But the sense of cyclical, mythic time is nonetheless co-present: with its circular structure, the film suggests that 'gypsies' are stuck in the same loop of time, explicitly labelling them as medieval, tradition-bound and resistant to change.

In terms of colour, the film makes a conscious use of black-and-white contrast, but still this contrast is not the main organising force behind its visual aesthetics, since the focus is on the 'gypsy' world, with 'white' protagonists having only a brief, episodic presence. The black-and-white contrast operates on the level of hair colour and costumes; on the level of skin tone, though, 'gypsies' are *not* marked as different (**Fig. 25a** and **Fig. 25b**). The ice-skating scene (**Fig. 24a** and **Fig. 24b**) sums up the symbolism of the colour coding: handsome brown-haired Dave (Eric Roberts), the future king of the 'gypsies', is dating the girl of his dreams, the pale-skinned, blond Sharon (Annette O'Toole), a typical WASP. The two go ice-skating, all alone in a white, snow-covered landscape. Sharon is wearing a white sports outfit, moving with grace and self-confidence on the white surface of the frozen lake, almost blending with it, while Dave, wrapped in his awkward black leather long coat, stumbles like a beginner, needs help and eventually falls down. Their relationship soon falls apart, too, unable to bear the ups and downs of 'gypsy' life; and in the last film scene Dave is coupled with curly, black-haired Persa who, unlike Sharon, is able to envision him as the new king of the 'gypsies'.

By describing the 'gypsy' mask and its various components, my aim is to shed light on the inner logic that governs its manufacture. But to present the 'gypsy' modus of being as a constellation of attributes requires a certain degree of abstraction, which is inevitably exercised at the expense of many details, nuances and inherent ambiguities. The point here is that if a film were to construct the 'gypsy' mask only in negative terms following the above-described pattern, it would be

unwatchable. That is why filmmakers opt for different compensatory strategies adding – on one level or another – positive aspects that give balance to their story and warrant the box-office performance of the final product. In the case of *King of the Gypsies*, what makes Pierson's film appealing – in addition to its faux 'gypsy' spectacle – is the musical score composed by the mandolin virtuoso David Grisman and performed by the legendary jazz violinist Stéphane Grappelli, both of whom appear on-screen as 'gypsy' musicians; the superb cinematography created by Sven Nykvist, whose delicate colour palette adds a mythic quality to the family drama; the physical attractiveness of the lead cast, among whom are Eric Roberts, Susan Sarandon, Brooke Shields, Annie Potts, and Annette O'Toole; the straightforward allusions to *The Godfather* and, on the level of the story, the occasional tokens of strong human bonds: Spiro Giorgio stands up for his daughter, Zharko Stepanowicz protects his grandson, Dave tries to rescue his sister, etc.

In conclusion, it can be said that the 'gypsy' mask is not simply a list of clichéd (negative) stereotypes but stands for a world order that negates the normative reality in its entirety; it is an obverse mirror image of the established world order, an anti-norm. In *King of the Gypsies*, the anti-world signified by the 'gypsy' mask is not juxtaposed to an explicit normative reality, unlike in *The Bohemian Girl*, where 'gypsies' are opposed to aristocrats, thereby marking the two poles of symbolic power. Still, it is not difficult to deduce the norm underwriting the worldview in *King of the Gypsies*, since it provides the parameters for the 'gypsy' anti-norm and is actually rather banal in itself. Implicitly, the film affirms as normal (i.e. desired, socially commendable) the 'white' hero who is integrated into modern society through the systems of marriage based on individual choice and love, public health care, education, employment, the army, the police and the courts, as well as capitalist democracy, with the latter clearly set in opposition to the political system of communism, which upholds public property as one of its core values.

At this point, it is very illuminating to compare the coding of the 'gypsy' mask in *King of the Gypsies* (1978, USA) with that in *I Even Met Happy Gypsies*⁹⁴ (1967, Yugoslavia): the two films originate from countries that embraced two ideologically opposed systems during the Cold

94 For a detailed analysis of the film's plot structure, character delineation and visual aesthetics, see Mladenova's article "The Figure of the Imaginary Gypsy in Film: *I Even Met Happy Gypsies* (1967)."

War, namely Western capitalism and Eastern communism. The gap of eleven years between the release dates of the two films is negligible in the context of our discussion, so we can say the 'gypsy' masks in both works were produced more or less at the same time. While the American film portrays 'gypsies' as swindlers (of Russian/communist background) who have never done an honest day's work and are incompatible with the capitalist system organised around private property, the Yugoslavian film portrays them as entrepreneurial businessmen incompatible with the communist system organised around collective (state) property. It is noteworthy that both films use the respective normative notion of work to designate 'gypsies' as deviating outsiders. The coding of the 'gypsy' figure as alien to the ruling working class in communist Yugoslavia takes place in the following scene, which lasts a mere 30 seconds:

[10'34:11'04] Three Serbians visit the antique dealer Djerdj at this house. The first man addresses him with "Hey, gypsy!" and asks about old lamps. Then, a woman wrapped in a tan trench coat comes in, asking about antique desks. The third man, in a dark suit with a white shirt and a tie, greets Djerdj with "Hey you crook, when are you going to join the working class?" Djerdj replies, "Hey, mister comrade, a crooked gypsy or a crooked worker, what's the difference?" [harbingers of the past (antique dealers), alien to the working class].

Sudar comments at length this short scene, explaining the significance of the address "mister comrade" and the way it encapsulates Aleksandar Petrović's critique of Yugoslav society that strived towards classlessness:

[Djerdj] addresses the person with "Mister Comrade" which sets the picture immediately, as post war communist Yugoslavia agreed to use the term "comrade" for men and women as the formal style of address, (...) a reminder of everyone's equality. Titles such as "Sir", "Mister" or "Miss", were disqualified as bourgeois and discriminatory. Djerdj, by addressing his customer as "Mister Comrade" uses what may appear to be an oxymoron, although Petrović's use of it here is highly caustic. The arrival of socialism challenged the class system in name (everyone was to address each other with the same title), but did not change the position of Gypsies, who were again left on the margins. (...) In such circumstances, people who can be addressed as "Comrades" are lucky, as they are part of the new system. Gypsies, though, can only see them as privileged, thus their title "Comrade" can be

“honoured” with the prefix “Mister”. (...) After such an address, which hides irony and resentment equally, Djerdj proceeds to say that “wheeling and dealing” anywhere is the same for the ones who have to do it. (...) Therefore, less than 15 minutes into the film, Petrović manages to create a critical picture of Yugoslav society, depicting the specifically awkward position of one of its minorities. In this instance, the minority is also a social class in itself – the class “below” the proletariat. (131)

Petrović's strategy of character delineation reproduces another recurrent pattern in the construction of the 'gypsy' mask, which can be interpreted in a light that is less flattering for the filmmaker: the 'gypsy' figure is often conceived as an antiquated version of the normative national Self. If we take up the perspective of communism, we can say that Djerdj sticks to an old-fashioned form of address and, being a private tradesman, he also leads an outdated and despised form of economic life. Even the nature of his business codes him as a remnant of the past. In the same manner, the characters in *King of the Gypsies* are depicted as bearers of the past. The 'gypsies' there mourn their earlier mode of life that preceded private property and is explicitly labelled as medieval; they appear unable to adjust as citizens to the institutions and practices of the modern democratic state. The main heroes – Zharko, Groffo and Dave – belong to a hereditary lineage of self-proclaimed kings that is symbolised by a gold medallion; and even though Dave dismisses, scoffs at and even throws the jewel away, its symbolic power has an irrevocable impact on his life and that of the entire 'clan'. Exactly the same symbolic object, a gold medallion, is used in *The Bohemian Girl* (a film whose plotline originates from and unfolds in medieval times) to code aristocrats, albeit positively, as the rightful rulers in a long hereditary lineage, as well as being enlightened minds and champions of science, human progress and high culture. All these examples testify to the plasticity of the 'gypsy' mask, its imaginary nature and various cultural functions, and most importantly, its subordination to the 'white' mask.

6.2.1 Plot Structure and Genre

Structurally, *King of the Gypsies* displays the characteristics typical of 'gypsy'-themed films that bring them closer to the cinema of attractions. The film's plot is loose and of secondary importance, which has

provoked Paul Mavis, for example, to remark that “[t]he plotting is rather chaotic and haphazard”. The protagonists are partially individualised; they are conceived rather as generic figures who represent the entire community. As to character delineation, Brendan Foley makes the following pertinent observation:

The problem is that Dave is such a blank space as a character, it's never entirely clear why he is so adamant about rejecting the gypsy lifestyle, or what sort of dreams or goals the character might have instead. He makes occasional mention of being an actor or being a singer, but that never actually resonates as something he would rip his family apart over. The same goes for Judd Hirsch as Groffo, Dave's piece of shit father. Hirsch is one of the best character actors out there, but Groffo is such a belligerent, monotonous garbage-dump of a human being that there's nothing interesting about watching his conflict with Dave. There's a way to write/play this sort of character that allows them to be actually empathetic (...) but Hirsch never gets there. When the film boils down to a confrontation between father and son, there's no charge, no tragic kick.

The film's main appeal lies in the 'gypsy' spectacle set out in a series of self-contained scenes which put on show the various and highly disparate aspects of the 'gypsy' modus of being; in this case, the film offers a remarkably exhaustive list: clan strife and celebrations; marriage traditions; internal rules and forms of self-governance; council of the elderly; itinerant life; giving birth; baptism; family reunions; reunions with the deceased ancestors; fortune-telling and sorcery; car driving; substance abuse; relationship to the police, courts, public education system and modern medicine; love affairs; family feuds; funerals; scams, etc. As to the spectacle nature of the film, Foley notes:

[T]he early sections maintain a novelistic feel, bouncing through time for what amounts to loosely connected vignettes detailing the kind of living that comes with being a child in a gypsy clan, examining the habits and culture of a nomadic group. So you've got big party scenes, marriages being brokered, you have trouble with the law and the detailing of the various scams and superstitions that the gypsies run.

The loosely connected incidents in *King of the Gypsies* are pieced together with recurrent short cutaway shots featuring elegant 'gypsy' dancers and musicians. This conspicuous montage technique provides a visual rhythm to the work, in addition to its musical organisation and the broad framework furnished by the plot. Inevitably, the film stands out with its genre hybridity: besides the para-ethnographic 'gypsy' exotica, the autonomous musical and dance numbers inserted between the film sequences, Pierson's work "plays like a sorry retread of disparate *Godfather* themes" (Mavis), while Sean Sweeney comments that "*King of the Gypsies* switches tones from family melodrama to the vibe of an ugly '70s [New York] vigilante revenge flick."

Film reviewers offer pertinent critique of the minority's cinematic representation. Vincent Canby, for example, appears genuinely outraged in his 1978 review for *The New York Times*:

The gypsies should sue. True, it would be something of a con job, since "King of the Gypsies" isn't the worst film of the year. Yet I think the ancient, Romany-speaking tribes could whomp up a good case for their having been maligned by a movie that presents them as an endangered species without once making their plight emotionally arresting or anthropologically important. They've been ripped off. The gypsies themselves would call it a boojo (...) Frank Pierson has written and directed a melodrama about three generations of gypsies that is all color and no substance (...) [T]he film fails so utterly to make these people's problems at all moving or urgent. Because we don't feel for them, they become minor freaks of time.

Thirty years later, Paul Mavis also expresses strong disappointment with the film's unfulfilled promise to present an examination of Roma culture, describing Pierson's work as "a fairly worthless exercise in faux-exotica" and "an unconvincing immersion into this little-explored culture, a clichéd, scattershot script, and some curious (to say the least) performances." His critique targets especially the one-dimensional delineation of the characters:

But *King of the Gypsies* is all surface show when it comes to exploring the gypsy lifestyle – and not even all that well executed surface show, at that. Who are these people? Are we to admire them? Fear them? Dismiss them? Pity them? The film

refuses to help us come to any answers because what it shows is filtered through the same fake crap that has marked Hollywood depictions of other “exotic” cultures through the decades. In *King of the Gypsies*, the gypsies are always dancing. Or singing. Or scamming. Or fighting. But we never get a real sense of who and what they are as a people, as a culture. The only insightful “fact” about the gypsies that’s imparted to the audience, over and over again, from *King of the Gypsies* is that gypsies will always lie, no matter what.

All these critics are right in observing that the screen ‘gypsies’ in Pierson’s work are only surface appearances devoid of substance, psychological depth and individuality. However, their criticism – and this has to be really stressed – rests on the fallacious assumption that a complex, genuine and deeply felt representation of ‘gypsy’ figures is at all possible. What these critics fail to account for is that the ‘gypsy’ mask is an artefact, a phenomenon of artistic surfaces. No matter whether it is produced in literature, opera, theatre, photography or film, the ‘gypsy’ mask is and remains an auxiliary (one-dimensional) device whose primary purpose is to provide a contrastive background adding salience and reality to the ‘white’ hero; the illusion of three-dimensionality (realism) of the ‘white’ mask is rendered through the interplay of light and shadow, literally and metaphorically, where the ‘gypsy’ mask is the signifier for shadow, and the ‘white’ mask has the privilege of being identified with light. In other words, if a Roma character is cast in a psychologically truthful light as a complex individual, s/he will be no longer visible and recognisable as a ‘gypsy’, though certainly an intelligent and caring filmmaker could present a Roma character by using elements of the ‘gypsy’ mask in a way that questions this representational tradition.

6.2.2 Elements of Film *Noir* and the Message of the Plot

The film contains also one noiresque element that makes up the essence of the ‘gypsy’ role. This element has been partially captured in Christopher Forsley’s review, written on the occasion of the film’s Blu-ray edition:

[T]his ensemble of characters explores how the seeds of tradition, family, and culture, once planted inside a[n] individual’s

subconscious, often develop roots so deep that they are impossible to escape from. Even if you sever whatever these seeds produce on the surface, their roots never stop growing and it's only a matter of time before they again break through the soil of reality and make demands. *King of the Gypsies* is about a young man who must face these demands, even though it's the last thing he wants to do.

The reviewer has picked a vegetation metaphor to account for Dave's inner conflict and for his failure to resolve this conflict in a non-criminal way; the explanatory framework provided by the image of seeds of tradition (i.e. family and culture striking deep, inextricable roots into the hero's subconscious) conveniently skates over the brazenly racist portrayal of the minority where tradition is shown to be medieval, family is depicted as disturbingly dysfunctional and culture amounts to a diverse array of fraud and scams. If Forsley's commentary endorses, subconsciously or not, the views of cultural racism, the film is quite straightforward in positing the blood(line) argument with its attempted generational portrait of the 'gypsy' Other.

The story of Dave, elucidated by his first-person voiceover, is the story of a man who rejects his 'gypsy' identity, lifestyle and milieu, doing all in his power – or at least this is what Dave strives to convince us of – to extricate and elevate himself from it, but eventually falling back and down into his old 'gypsy' ways. Typologically, this narrative belongs to the repertoire of black stories⁹⁵ employed in *noir* films that Norbert Grob describes so well. Stressing that “*noir*” should be understood as a structure, the German film scholar provides a narrative typology of the genre outlining seven central storylines (38–49). The first two – which he calls “the victim of destiny” and “the fetters of the past” – bear an eerily close correspondence with Dave's story. The victim of destiny is the anti-hero who wanders homeless in the big world, trying to find a way out for himself, but eventually gets lost. This is the tragic *noir*-destiny *par excellence*, Grob explains, where contrasts are put together, the everyday and the criminal, without forcing them into a straight-line story. Grob mentions that these weak, melancholic males serve as a counter-image to the eternal winners in cinema (cf. 39–40). In accordance with this narrative type, the 'gypsy' hero Dave depicts

95 Grob speaks of “schwarze Geschichten” (black stories) and “schwarze Formen” (black forms) in his theoretical introduction to *Filmgenres: Film Noir* (14).

himself as a victim of 'gypsy' lineage: his destiny is predetermined by his parents, we hear him already lament in the first sequence. Unable to reconcile with his 'gypsy' identity, he runs away from his family and clan, renouncing their traditions and lifestyle, roaming the streets of New York homeless, until one day when he is forced to go back. The film also suggests that Dave is unable to sustain a long-term relationship with a 'white' girl and, having killed his own father, he has no other choice but to withdraw from the 'normal' world he aspires to and resume his place in the 'gypsy' world.

Another prevalent anti-hero in *noir* films is the insecure, unstable type who is unable to forget or escape his past. Here Grob refers to the American film director and critic Paul Schrader (his "Notes on *Film Noir*" is considered the most influential short piece on the *noir* form) who writes: "this *noir* hero dreads to look ahead but instead tries to survive by the day; and if unsuccessful at that, he retreats to the past." Thus, the critic adds, the techniques and stylistic devices of the film *noir* emphasise "loss, nostalgia, lack of clear priorities, insecurity and instability" (Schrader 58). The same atmosphere of loss and doom is present in Pierson's film, too. Dave's melancholy musings deplore the irretrievably lost past, depicted as an idyllic time when 'gypsies' were free to roam and set up their camps wherever they chose; throughout the entire film his gaze is turned backwards. He ushers us into his story with a flashback; actually, the entire film unfolds in a flashback with Dave's voice commenting on the events from a later point in time, when the dice are already cast and destinies decided. Pierson employs flashbacks in combination with a voiceover narrative, a technique typically used in *noir* to amplify the sense of futility the hero feels standing face to face with destiny, the sense of time lost and all-surrounding hopelessness (cf. Grob 23).

It is notable that destiny, the past and 'gypsy' lifestyle are all three perceived as synonymous forces in *King of the Gypsies*. Going back to his clan, Dave steps back to the medieval 'gypsy' modus of being he has tried futilely to outrun (i.e. he withdraws to the past) and having committed a murder, he has failed and symbolically fallen down into the mythic world of shadow (i.e. he is fettered by his 'gypsy' destiny). His return is then a return to another – vertically opposed – time-space, the mirror-inverted universe of 'gypsies'. Such an organisation of symbolic space-time along a vertical line is characteristic both of *noir* films and 'gypsy'-themed films. Grob points out that the dramaturgy in *noir* films does not unfold horizontally, as in the Western,

where the plot advances in a forward motion and can be constantly subjected to changes, but vertically, as in melodramas, and is marked by the hero's inability to change life circumstances through conscious effort or action, also containing abrupt, fateful disruptions which cut off all ways leading ahead, pulling everyone back into the abyss (cf. 23–24).

Considering the similarities between film *noir* and 'gypsy'-themed films, I want to note in passing that these can be observed on all the four pertinent levels highlighted by Grob: atmosphere, style, motifs and themes. As in *noir* films, the atmosphere in 'gypsy'-themed films is often marked by a sense of futility, by a discrepancy between outer appearance and inner nature, and by the ambiguity of situations. Stylistically, 'gypsy'-themed films contain a play with light and shadow (or black and white colour) and contradictory compositions. The *noir* motifs in 'gypsy'-themed films encompass the following: sympathy for suspect characters, the seductive lure of the *femme fatale*, preference for night-time activities, and a tendency to blur (or even remove) the boundary between reality and insanity. Thematically, 'gypsy'-themed films espouse the power of destiny, entanglement in criminal activities and violence that permeates all spheres of life (cf. 15–16). All these *noir* characteristics, it has to be pointed out, are modulated to accommodate the central 'gypsy' theme and are further shaped by the filmmaker's artistic style.

One dimension of film *noir* that is absent in Grob's multi-aspectual description of the genre is *noir*'s reliance on racial tropes. Here the inherent similarity between film *noir* and 'gypsy'-themed films becomes immediately apparent, for both forms take interest in the seamy side of life, coding the underworld of human degradation in 'ethno-racial' terms; both forms are "variants of film grey or film off-white", working with all shades of black, if we are to borrow Paul Schrader's formulations, where the rich palette of black also emerges as a broad gallery of racialised characters (53–54). In his perspicacious article "The Whiteness of Film *Noir*", Eric Lott focuses attention on this hardly broached problem, namely that racial tropes shape the sense and structure of cultural products which on their surface have nothing to do with 'race' (542). The author demonstrates that the figural play of light against dark in film *noir* is in fact animated by racial concerns. By referring to a number of canonical works – *Double Indemnity* (1944), *In a Lonely Place* (1950), *Mildred Pierce* (1945), *Gilda* (1946), among others – Lott points at the fusion of moral terminologies, visual devices

and racial codes. As he astutely remarks, film *noir* is about people falling from (g)race and into the zone of the shadows (548). Lott's discussion considers the various racial auras projected onto characters (black, Mexican, Asian) and is vigilant enough to consider a 'gypsy' presence in a classic *noir*: in Michael Curtis's *Mildred Pierce*, the main villain, the mysterious roué Monte Beragon introduces himself as "an old gypsy fortune teller". Beragon's lineage becomes subsequently a source of fascination; the character is implicated in miscegenation and incest, while "his racial aura is in some sense aligned with his profligacy" (560). A worldly 'gypsy' madam shows up in another *noir* film from the genre's classic era. Orson Welles's masterpiece *Touch of Evil* (1958) features Marlene Dietrich as the raven-haired, mystical fortune-teller Tanya.⁹⁶ The *femme fatale* makes a memorable entrance in one scene, speaking in a Germanic-tinged baritone and blowing clouds of smoke with her cigar. In this context, it is hardly a coincidence then that Raoul Walsh, Ray Nichols, Joseph Losey and Charles Vidor, four of the classic *noir* filmmakers, have also authored popular 'gypsy'-themed films: *Carmen* (1915, with Theda Bara) and *The Loves of Carmen* (1927, with Dolores del Rio); *Hot Blood* (1965); and *The Gypsy and the Gentlemen* (1958) and *The Loves of Carmen* (1948, with Rita Hayworth) respectively. What is more, Vidor's version of *The Loves of Carmen* represents, in some sense, an organic synthesis of the two aesthetic movements: his is a 'gypsy'-themed *noir* in which Rita Hayworth enacts the quintessential *femme fatale*, the very first anti-heroine to rebel against domesticity, "a siren whose libidinal victims crash on the rocks of fatal desire" (Evans 115). Curiously enough, Vidor's *The Loves of Carmen* is not included in Schrader's or Grob's canonising lists of *noir* films, although the film was created directly after *Gilda* (another Vidor-Hayworth collaboration and Hayworth's most discussed role as a *femme fatale*) and although, stylistically and thematically, it adds only a nuance, another shade of black to the *noir* diffuse formula.⁹⁷

96 In *The BFI Companion to Crime*, Marlene Dietrich's character in *Touch of Evil* is described as "the weirdest ever Mexican gypsy" (Phillips 330).

97 Further titles from the film corpus that draw on the stylistics of the film *noir*: *The Barefoot Contessa* (1954, Dir. Joseph L. Mankiewicz), starring Ava Gardner; *I Even Met Happy Gypsies* (1967, Dir. Aleksandar Petrović), starring Bekim Fehmiu and Olivera Vučo; *Guardian Angel* (1987, Dir. Goran Paskaljević), starring Ljubiša Samardžić and Jakup Amzić; *Gypsy* (2000, Dir. Manuel Palacios), starring Joaquín Cortés; *The Pilgrimage of Students Peter and Jacob* (2000, Dir. Drahomira Vihanová);

I want to conclude this section dedicated to the *noir* elements and the message of plotlines in 'gypsy'-themed films by wrapping up our discussion of *King of the Gypsies*. Even though the plot in Pierson's film is loose, haphazardly meandering through the multi-faceted 'gypsy' world, its underlying structure is quite simple and follows the established pattern of a *noir* (black) story. Dave is a typical *noir* (black) anti-hero whose life story develops backwards (in time) and downwards (in space) in symbolic terms and constitutes in its totality a moral downfall; the disparate events of the plot are organised by his voice and around his *noir* (black) plight. This parallel to the *noir* genre allows me to isolate the 'ethno-racial' coding in Pierson's film, to view it separately from the *noir* elements and to highlight its significance with regard to the story's overarching message. In film *noir*, it is a 'white' hero who falls into a state of abjection, into the moral underworld populated by 'non-whites', who also come to signify its shadows. In 'gypsy'-themed films, it is a 'non-white' hero who fails to transcend his abject state and join the translucent and spiritually immaculate 'whites' above ground. So, we could say that *King of the Gypsies* is an ethnicised form of a *noir* film, one particularly dark version of it, where the colour black – in addition to a moral symbolism and a type of storyline – comes to denote a stigmatised ethnicity through its main anti-hero. Conversely, *King of the Gypsies* spawns a colour-coordinated universe where the 'gypsy' mask is loaded with a mythic symbolism, racialised and specifically employed to enact the story of human demise. Taking 'gypsy'-themed films as a vantage point, one may also ask if *noir* films are not, in fact, a de-ethnicised ('whitened') variation of a 'gypsy'-themed film; after all, the 'gypsy' figure of Carmen is the prototype for the *femme fatale*, the latter being the most emblematic figure of the *noir* genre. Whatever the answer, the bottom line is that the visibility and recognisability of the 'gypsy' mask rests not only on its conventional appearance or on its established repertoire of qualities, gestures and emotional states, but also on its affiliation with destiny, of which I give a broad variety of examples in the next section. Needless to say, the cultural practice of ethnicising (racialising) the story of man's failure has far-reaching political, social and psychological consequences.

Papusza (2013, Dir. Joanna Kos-Krauze and Krzysztof Krauze), starring Jowita Budnik; or *Suburra* (2017, Dir. Stefano Sollima).

6.3 The 'Gypsy' Mask in Motion or the Vertical Storyline in 'Gypsy'-themed Films

As to the plotline in 'gypsy'-themed films, the leading questions are as follows: What kind of plot is the 'gypsy' figure set in? Is the 'gypsy' figure the main hero in the story and if so, is there an option for him/her to complete the hero's journey, transcend his/her limited circumstances and achieve a higher level of individuation? If the plot negotiates the relationship between a 'gypsy' figure and a 'white' figure, a representative of the dominant culture, does it allow for the possibility of coexistence (a love relationship or marriage)?

Set in motion in 'gypsy'-themed films, the 'white' mask and the 'gypsy' mask perform identical movements in two mythic worlds that symmetrically mirror each other and have a clear hierarchical ordering: the upper world of light (consciousness) and the lower world of shadow (the subconscious). The 'white' hero begins his journey from the world of light, becomes submerged temporarily in the world of shadow, only to resurface renewed into the world of light. The same sequence of movements but in an inverted order is performed by the 'gypsy' anti-hero: his starting point is the world of the shadow, which he leaves striving for the world of light, only to plunge back unchanged into the world of shadow. Both masks make a circular movement with three distinct stages that can be described in terms of (presence/absence of) light. The movement of the 'white' mask follows the scheme of light – shadow – light, while the movement of the 'gypsy' mask follows the reverse scheme of shadow – light – shadow. There is one significant difference in the ontological status of these two movements: the trajectory of the 'white' mask is perceived and represented as the linear (historical, individualising) time of culture that leads to the future and signifies progress, while the trajectory of the 'gypsy' mask is perceived and represented as the circular time of nature that points to the past and stands for regression.⁹⁸ Thus, 'gypsy'-themed films form an aesthetic tendency, even a genre in their own right,⁹⁹ where stories unfold along the vertical axis, joining the group of film *noir* and melodrama

98 It is insightful to consider in this context the imagery of failure discussed by Alexandra Zsigmond (540).

99 The question of the "Gypsy genre" is treated summarily by Jordanova in her article "Mimicry and Plagiarism: Reconciling Actual and Metaphoric Gypsies". The film scholar, however, examines the "Gypsy film" exclusively through the lens of literary analysis, defining it as a set of tenacious tropes or stereotypes; a represen-

as the only two genres of the vertical (cf. Grob 24). It is also important to highlight that the above-described dynamics are pertinent to 'gypsy'-themed films in particular; the 'gypsy' mask and the 'white' mask are generally dramatised in juxtaposition in narratives that (re)-negotiate European national ('white') identity where the 'gypsy' mask is often used on its own to (re)define the national 'white' Self by implication. In the following pages, I consider the vertical storyline in 'gypsy'-themed films, as well as some salient elements in their plot structure, providing various types of examples.

A good illustration to start with is one of the very first Russian fiction films,¹⁰⁰ *Drama in a Gypsy Camp near Moscow* (1908), because it – or, to be more precise, what is presumed to be the extant film's opening sequence – represents a mini-narrative of the 'gypsy' mask in motion, outlining its signature 'dance'. Within a mere 104 seconds, the film director, scriptwriter and photographer Vladimir Siversen has managed to pack in an entire jealousy drama with a fatal ending: a young 'gypsy' kills his fiancée after she rejects him, having promised her heart to another man. Eventually, driven by penitence or by fear of punishment, the murderer hurls himself off a steep cliff. For several seconds, we watch his body falling vertically down in a straight line. Denise Youngblood describes Siversen's work as one of the earliest examples of "murder-and-mayhem films" in Russian cinema, commenting that "[t]he schematic development and lack of obvious motivation for the actions are not unique but are (...) generally characteristic of early experiments with narrative film" (91). Discussing the beginning of Russian cinema, Graham Roberts claims that the very early fiction films already point to the development of a 'Russian style', with its predilection for "sad denouements, particularly as punishments for earlier misdoings" (36). In his short commentary to the film in *Silent Witnesses*, Paolo Cherchi Usai links the story to the socio-historic world and wraps up the moral of its downward movement.

tational pattern that allows for little variation and boils down to stories of "poor, passionate, freedom-loving Gypsies who end up in self-destruction" (306).

100 The first Russian fiction film is generally regarded to be Alexander Drankov's production *Stenka Razin* (Dir. Vladimir Romashkov), released on 15 October 1908. It preceded by a little over two months the release of *Drama in a Gypsy Camp near Moscow*, a production of Alexander Khanzhonkov's studio, which premiered on 20 December of the same year; Khanzhonkov cherished the "dream of releasing Russia's first picture on an everyday theme" but failed to materialise it, because the film was flawed (Tsivian 50).

Despite its flaws, this gypsy drama insists on an atmosphere drawn from real life: the final shot of the suicide of Aleko, victim of his own demonic fever, turns the *dénouement* into a symbol of figurative harshness. (Tsivian 46)

Even though the film does not show the 'dance' of the 'white' mask, it is not difficult to reconstruct by implication its normative values or the schematic narrative it espouses, namely fidelity, love and a celebration of life moving in an upward direction.

In its movement through space, the 'gypsy' figure marks the trajectory of human downfall. Filmmakers create different visual metaphors to suggest the moral and spiritual dimension of this descending parabola. In *King of the Gypsies*, for instance, Groffo's degradation is signalled in one memorable scene where we watch him collapse over a huge roasted pig and continue to lie there in a drunken stupor, with the animal in his embrace (**Fig. 26**). His son's undoing is visualised in a more stylishly subtle manner (wrapped in his elegant black leather long coat, Dave falls down on the white skating ice (**Fig. 24b**), as described earlier in Sequence 20), but the underlying message in both cases is the same. Later in the film, each of these two 'gypsy' males, father and son, will commit a grave murder.



Fig. 26. Screenshots from *King of the Gypsies* (1978, Dir. Frank Pierson): costumed in a flamboyant red suit and a yellow shirt, Groffo (Judd Hirsch) lies in a drunken stupor over the huge roasted pig served on the table.

Another example of deploying the pig metaphor as a way of suggesting the demise of the main 'white' hero can be seen in the British melodrama *The Gypsy and the Gentleman* (1958) directed by the American émigré filmmaker Joseph Losey. Here, I consider the opening

sequence¹⁰¹ and the way it relates to the main story, because, as I demonstrate, it represents a metaphorical miniature of the entire film and indirectly provides the interpretive coordinates for understanding the story. Losey's Regency-period melodrama starts with a close-up of a burning torch, against which the film credits – in thick red letters – roll down. A long low-angle shot reveals that the burning torch, actually two of them, illuminate the entrance of an imposing building; it is apparently late at night. Well-dressed gentlemen come in and out of the building. A horse-drawn carriage stops in front of it and a gentleman in a brown frockcoat and a tall hat gets off in a state of great agitation. On the stairs, he bumps into two other gentlemen and asks them if Sir Paul Deverill is in the club. They reply that he is in the cellar, having found a new entertainment. The film cuts to the cellar; a mid-shot of Sir Deverill (Keith Michell) highlights his blond hair and impeccably white shirt with frilled collar and sleeves. The gentleman in the brown frockcoat enters the cellar and starts descending towards the gathering. The camera pulls back showing that Sir Deverill is in the company of other gentlemen, all engaged in a betting game (Fig. 27). One of the noblemen, in green livery, offers Sir Deverill a glass of wine and announces the next round. Two servants appear in the foreground holding a small squealing pig that is smeared in white fat. "Mademoiselle the piglet awaits your attention," the man in green livery announces. The piglet is placed on the floor and held by the servants. "To Mademoiselle!" Sir Deverill raises his glass; "To Sir Deverill!" the nobleman in green livery raises his glass. Sir Deverill steps towards the animal on the floor with his arms open, cooing: "Come to my arms, you bundle of charm!" A close-up of the nobleman, his white shirt filling up the frame, is edited to a close-up of the piglet, covered with white slabs of grease, standing amidst legs in white socks. Sir Deverill hurtles towards the

101 By choosing to focus on the symbolic import of the introductory scenes, I lean on "the multifaceted and stereometric approach to narratives" which the film theorist Thierry Kuntzel has advanced with his two ground-breaking analyses of the film openings in *M* (1931, Dir. Fritz Lang) and *The Most Dangerous Game* (1932, Dir. E.B. Schoedsack, and Irving Pichel) (Elsaesser 52). As Elsaesser and Hagen point out, "Kuntzel's ambition was to show how the entire film is folded or condensed in the opening scenes, at once prefiguring what follows in a kind of mini-narrative, and anticipating it in a condensed and encrypted form" (53). The idea that the opening sequence may figuratively recap the entire film is indebted to Freud's dream work, to which Kuntzel overtly refers; his exemplary textual analysis has encouraged a new tendency in film studies, one that is especially attentive to the different intensities and textures of cinematic language (cf. 53).



Fig. 27. Assembled screenshots from *The Gypsy and the Gentleman* (1958, Dir. Joseph Losey): Sir Paul Deverill (Keith Michell) trying in vain to hold on to Mademoiselle, a small pig smeared with white grease.

piglet, grabs it and tries to hold it tight in his embrace while the other gentlemen count the seconds. Several times, he slips on the floor, also smeared with fat, falling down, then scrambling back to his feet until finally he falls flat on his back, the piglet fleeing from his arms. While still on the floor, he is served another glass of wine and gulps it down in one go. His audience cheers.

It is not difficult to detect the correspondences between the film's opening scenes and the main story, which revolves around Sir Deverill's humiliating and self-destructive infatuation with the 'half-breed' 'gypsy' temptress Belle (Melina Mercouri in her first English-language film). Belle is portrayed as a beautiful but tempestuous brunette, wearing black or inflaming red, who drinks, lies, steals and as a typical *femme fatale* uses her sexual appeal to lay her hands on the nobleman's wealth. She is loyal only to her 'gypsy' lover and partner in crime, Jess. Holding Belle under a spell, it is Jess who hankers after Sir Deverill's riches. A true incarnation of evil,¹⁰² he contrives various horrifying plots to

102 It calls to attention that the same motif is used in *The Bohemian Girl* (1936, Dir. James W. Horne, and Charley Rogers), where the 'gypsy' wife turns out to be an instrument in the hands of an unscrupulous 'gypsy' lover, Devilshoof, who maintains an amorous relationship with her only because she can steal from her husband and supply him with valuable possessions. Both films emphasise the evilness of the 'gypsy' lover by showing that Devilshoof and Jess are only inter-



Fig. 28. Assembled screenshots from *The Gypsy and the Gentleman* (1958, Dir. Joseph Losey): by pretending to be lost on a rainy night in the forest, Belle (Melina Mercouri) manages to enter the carriage of Sir Paul Deverill (Keith Michell); infatuated with her, Deverill marries Belle, sinks into alcoholism and eventually drowns together with her. Sir Deverill's sister Sarah (June Laverick) is the moral, social and 'ethno-racial' opposite of Belle.

dispossess Sir Deverill and his sister Sarah – blonde, blue-eyed and dressed invariably in white with bluish undertones (**Fig. 28**) – of their inheritance. Feverishly obsessed with Belle, Sir Deverill tries to take possession of her by marrying her and making her the lady of the house, but all he achieves is to demean himself, turning into everybody's laughing stock. He sinks into debilitating alcoholism, vicariously aiding

ested in riches and are brazenly indifferent to their blindly infatuated partners. Obviously, the function of this motive is to excoriate miscegenation and to sound the theme of the inescapable decline and degeneracy of social classes/nations due to their mixing with social outcasts ('gypsies'). In their discussion on Hollywood and 'race', Shohat and Stam point out that the figure of the "half-breed" whose along with the positively connoted figures of the class/national elite are some of the stereotypes Hollywood has inherited from Anglo conquest fiction. Their discussion actually focuses on the representation of Mexicans, but some of the points raised in it are just as relevant to 'gypsy' figures (196–197).

Jess' nightmarish schemes and eventually ends up, with Belle in his embrace, at the bottom of the river.¹⁰³

In short, the film recounts the story of a decadent Regency baronet whose life spirals downwards into a living hell and finishes with a horrible death. In the opening sequence, the nobleman's moral degradation is visualised metaphorically as a vertical descent in space: instead of taking us directly to the club gathering, the camera focuses on a burning torch at night and then follows Sir Deverill's lawyer as he goes down into the club's cellar. We see the man at the top of the stairs, standing well above the inebriated gathering of gentlemen, from where he can observe Sir Deverill throwing himself onto a piglet placed at the feet of the servants and then wallowing in the dirt on the floor in futile attempt to keep hold of the animal. When we consider the arrangement of bodies, of the men and the piglet, in relation to the architecture of the club building, with its various levels, it becomes evident that all these bodies are studiously placed in a way that aims to pinpoint the extreme lowliness of Deverill's fall.

In the main story, the nobleman's demise is signified by his relationship to the half-'gypsy' *femme fatale*. The more Sir Deverill tries to get a firm hold of Belle, the deeper he sinks into the hellish schemes plotted by her 'gypsy' lover. It should be noted here that Losey's period melodrama contains some *noir* devices and verges on a horror film in its second half. In combination with the film's imagery, these elements also foster the allusion to biblical hell, inviting us to witness the 'white' hero's plunge into the moral darkness of sin. At some point, Sir Deverill says to Belle: "I was only half bad when I

103 Many parallels can be drawn between *The Gypsy and the Gentleman* and Veit Harlan's anti-Semitic propaganda film *Jud Süß* (1940) with regard to film genre, storyline and individual scenes. Both films are historical costume melodramas and cautionary tales, revealing the destructive force of an ethnic Other. In both films, the fatal intrusion takes place in a carriage: after a road accident, Jud Süß solicits a lift from Dorothea Sturm, whom he later rapes and drives to suicide. To her question about where he comes from, he answers that the world is his home. In a similar vein, Belle is rescued on a stormy night by Sir Deverill and his sister Sarah (Fig. 28), both of whom are to suffer greatly at her hands. When asked where she comes from, Belle replies that the fields and rivers are her home. It should be noted that while *Jud Süß* is classified as a "reserved film" in the collection of Murnau Foundation and generally viewed as "one of the most notorious and successful pieces of anti-Semitic film propaganda produced in Nazi Germany" (Culbert 205), *The Gypsy and the Gentleman* is available for purchase and hardly perceived as racist. It would be a worthwhile endeavour to conduct a comparative study that takes these two films and the history of their reception as its focus.

met you. Now I am Satan's man." His remark invigorates the film's religious subtext but also raises the important question of agency: is it that the baronet is brought low by the evil 'gypsies' or is it that he brings himself to ruin? Judging from the opening sequence, it seems that the director foregrounds Deverill's personal responsibility, for it is the nobleman who willingly and consciously brings himself down to the level of the piglet. A lot can be said here about Losey's critical stance on historical events, but I want to draw the reader's attention to the figure of the pig, which is used in the film to mark the lowliest of all social positions and is matched with the 'half-breed' 'gypsy' female character in the main story. The parallel between the two is suggested in a couple of ways: both are females, both become Sir Deverill's female partners in his 'social games' and both have names that rhyme with one another, Mademoiselle and Belle. In addition, both figures are brought into association with 'whiteness' in a way that foregrounds the absurdity of the idea: the body of Mademoiselle the piglet is covered in big slabs of white fat, whereas Belle receives a title of nobility; she is, however, incongruous with her new role and is despised even by 'pure' 'gypsies'. An elderly 'gypsy' woman dismisses Belle with the scornful remark: "You may own the land but you are no lady. You belong to a ditch."

The image of the pig requires particular attention here, because it is often used in the context of 'gypsy'-themed films as an emblem of the fallen man (**Fig. 26** and **Fig. 27**), and this once again points to the religious elements woven into the fabric of the 'gypsy' mask. Now, as we shall see, metaphors relating to pigs have, first of all, an overpoweringly negative meaning and, secondly, boast a long history of use in European culture, harking back to the Bible. Judith Paterson argues that the image of the pig appears in a broad range of metaphors and is coded mainly with "dirtiness, bad conduct, dirty behaviour, lack of taste, poor physical shape, etc." Allan also notes that "[p]igs (or swine)...were...seen as unclean animals in the Jewish tradition, and are therefore used as symbols of filthy, subhuman creatures 'standing for what is despicable and hated'" (qtd. in Paterson 34). In her concluding remarks, Paterson makes the important observation that the figurative usage of pigs is one of the oldest in the English language, adding that this fact can be partially explained by the large number of allegorical uses for swine in the Scriptures, the latter also being highly influential during the Middle Ages (45). Barak-Erez's analysis of biblical texts and other Jewish sources furnishes further pertinent details:

In various exegeses, the pig appears as a Janus-like character. In other words, it is an animal that purports to be pure because of its cloven hoof and yet not, and is hence a symbol of guile and duplicity (...) The pig is often singled out as a symbol of abomination. It is the ultimate profanity. (17)

And also:

In the New Testament, pigs still appear in negative contexts. Jesus warns his believers: "Do not cast your pearls before swine" (Matthew 7:6). He also drives the demons out of possessed men into a herd of swine (Matthew 8:28–34). (20)

The use of visual metaphors involving pigs is not unique to antigypsy discourse; as Barak-Erez demonstrates, it occupies a specific centrality in anti-Semitic discourse and, certainly, the metaphor has a broad applicability and can be used in reference to any minority or majority group. The point here, however, is that both imaginary constructs, the 'gypsy' figure and the pig, have strong religious connotations that tend to surface rekindled in narratives where the centre stage is given to the 'gypsy' mask and its subterranean universe. The attention to the symbolism of pigs in 'gypsy'-themed films has also been heightened by the observation that scenes with pigs are almost an obligatory component in documentary films attempting portrayals of the Roma minority.¹⁰⁴

The short excursion into the usage and history of the pig metaphor lends further weight to the argument that the 'gypsy' mask is constructed to signify and enact the destiny of the fallen man. This background information also helps us to understand the religious symbolism in another 'gypsy'-themed film that has enjoyed enormous popularity in the 1970s and is still referred to as the most successful Yugoslavian film production, namely Aleksandar Petrović's work *I Even Met Happy Gypsies* (1967). Here again, the opening scenes set out common interpretative coordinates for the entire film, this time by evoking the destiny of the Gadarene swine with a direct quote from the Gospel of Luke:

104 Here are just a few of the countless examples: *Kinder des Windes – Zigeuner in Europa* (1991, SWR); *Bread and TV* (2013, Dir. Georgi Stoev); *Ghetto No.1* (2007, Dir. Ivan Pokorný); *When the Road Bends... Tales of a Gypsy Caravan* (2006, Dir. Jasmine Dellal); or *A Mother* (1972, Ferenc Grunwalsky).

And there was there an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they besought him that he would suffer them to enter into them. And he suffered them.

Then went the devils out of the man, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked. (KJB, Luke 8.32–33)

Attached to the opening credits, this epigraph appears directly after the director's name¹⁰⁵ and stays for good ten seconds against the backdrop of an Orthodox church fresco depicting a man possessed by demons. The man represented on the fresco is naked and in a state of agony, with his hands raised in the air. Two black creatures fly in the whirls of his steaming breath: a devil with a long tail and a dragon with wings. Though small in size, the demonic creatures draw attention to themselves, because they occupy the centre of the frame and their black silhouettes clearly stand out against the whitish clouds of breath exhaled by the man. The biblical quotation appears overlaid upon the fresco, which is a direct invitation to the audience to perceive the 'gypsy' characters in the film through the lens of the Gadarene swine. It is a fitting introduction for a story that revolves around a lust triangle in an isolated 'gypsy' community, a lukewarm drama with incestuous and heathenish undertones that closes with a brutal murder, after which the victim's body is dumped in a lake, while the other two characters vanish into thin air. The character portrayal and their destiny are in line with the customary view that 'gypsies' embody the forces of moral and social disintegration, rightfully rejected as an object of divine punishment. Discussing the quotation from the Gospel of Luke, the Serbian film scholar Nevena Daković succinctly concludes that the "story of Gypsy passion could be read as (cinematic) exorcism, expelling demons/Gypsies and their passions from the normal world" (400).

105 In the film's official press book from 1967, the producer company Avala Film circulated the following paratext signed with the name of the director: "By being on the brink of society, incomplete, constantly searching for something, they [Gypsies] are close to the absolute! And right next to them is the mystery of death which creates for these feather gatherers a specific relationship towards religion; they are neither religious nor antireligious. To these unreachable pagans, religion is similar to the rest – a part of life: grand and horrible, tender and bitter, charming and revengeful, free and luring, exactly the way this film wants to show it" ("Press Book").

Goran Paskaljević's film *Guardian Angel* (1987) is yet another Yugoslavian 'gypsy'-themed production that uses images of swine as a way of signalling the demise of its main hero, who in this case is the investigative journalist Dragan (Ljubiša Samardžić). Principled, brave and kind, Dragan takes to heart the plight of Sajin Saitović (Jakup Amzić), a 'gypsy' boy from the ghetto, sold into slavery in Italy by his destitute father. Dragan is resolved to save the boy from his fate but fails and instead meets his own death. Paskaljević's film grapples with the grim social realities of the 1980s, confronting the viewers with the fact that "over 20,000 gypsy children from all over Yugoslavia are being handed over to the mercy of white slave traders across Europe", as we are informed by the film's afterscript. The socially conscious filmmaker, however, packs the problem of child-trafficking into a noiresque drama in which one high-minded journalist is pitted against the mafia and its 'gypsy' abettors (all 'gypsy' adults in the film, without exception, are either drunk, ill or indifferent, or traffickers themselves), so the tragic ending is fated from the start. Going against good judgement, Dragan pursues his plan, without any support from the police and being warned on all sides that he cannot help Sajin. The futility of his heroic endeavour and tragic death are also foreshadowed by the film's noiresque elements: in one scene, we see Dragan sitting in a dusky hotel room, drinking and smoking, with shadows of the venetian-blinded window across his face; later that night, he is chased through the dark maze of narrow alleys in the 'gypsy' ghetto. The film ends with his dead body lying discarded on the rubbish dump, around it a herd of swine rummaging in search of food. The inexpedient mixing of visual metaphors, *noir* stylistics and almost documentary images of harrowing poverty robs Paskaljević's social critique of its sharp edge; what is worse, it reduces his film to a cautionary tale that predicts the downfall (death) of anyone who dares to change the lot of 'gypsies'.

Unsurprisingly, the image of the pig as a symbol of downfall and disintegration is used in Emir Kusturica's famous work *Black Cat, White Cat* (1998), where it is raised to a new level of surreal explicitness. In the tragicomic fairy-tale world of the film, the director inserts a miniature self-contained story that unfolds parallel to the main action; we watch a huge solitary pig busy eating away at the rotting hulk of an abandoned Trabant (**Fig. 29a**). At regular intervals, the camera returns to the pig, updating us on its progress until the Trabant is completely devoured. This montage sequence is so ludicrous that it impresses itself indelibly upon the memory of anyone who has seen the film. So, here



Fig. 29a and Fig. 29b. Screenshots from *Black Cat, White Cat* (1998, Dir. Emir Kusturica): two visual metaphors of disintegration and downfall – a Trabant being devoured by a pig, and the fall of Dadan (Srđan Todorović).

again, we have an indirect reference to 'gypsies' who, as the main story attests, represent the forces of social disintegration. Their uncontrolled bodily instincts – for which the pig is a visual metaphor – demolish the attainments of the spirit, even the mediocre ones, bringing society to the primordial state of chaos. Discussing the filmmaker's visual style, Bertellini comments that in *Black Cat, White Cat* Kusturica abandoned historical metaphors and opted instead for caricatures; the two examples he gives are the story with the pig and the story of Dadan Karambolo (Srđan Todorović) (104). The fate of the anti-hero Dadan, whose cocaine-induced frenzy fuels the pace of the story, is indeed a caricature of man's fall and a particularly revolting one. At the end of the film, the gun-toting 'gypsy' gangster is exemplarily punished for his cruel insanities – to the viewers' great satisfaction – by having to fall through the floor of an outside toilet, sinking up to his neck in excrement (**Fig. 29b**). As to this ending, a much more pertinent remark comes from J. Hoberman in his review for the *The Village Voice*:

Black Cat, White Cat is determined to twist every character into an ideogram for vulgar humanity. Perhaps these gypsies are a screen on which the Bosnian-born director can project his own feelings of ostracism and homelessness. In any case, the scatological closer rebounds unpleasantly on him.

When considering the storyline of 'gypsy'-themed films, it is mandatory to return once again to Kusturica's breakthrough film *Time of the Gypsies* (1988). It recounts the story of the steep, almost tragic human downfall of its main hero Perhan, an orphan and a 'half-breed' 'gypsy', the bastard child of an unknown Slovenian soldier. His mother is long

since dead and he and his sister Danira are taken care of by their grandmother. Perhan is portrayed as a dreamy, sensitive boy who supports his family by running a small business selling limestone. He is in love with the neighbours' daughter, Azra, whom he charms with his magic stories and telekinetic powers. Perhan asks for Azra's hand in marriage but is snubbed by her shrill, darkish mother, who tells him that her daughter, being a 'white' beauty, is worth millions. After a failed suicide attempt and other misfortunes, Perhan ends up in Milan, where he is offered the opportunity to earn real money by entering the underground world of human trafficking. Basically, the film shows how an honest person is broken; we watch how the gentle and imaginative Perhan transforms into a seasoned criminal, a thief, a pimp and a trafficker of minors. When he returns home to ask a second time for Azra's hand, now filthy rich, he finds out from her mother that Azra has slept with his uncle Merdzan. Almost nine months pregnant, Azra tries to convince Perhan that she is carrying their child, but to no avail. Having lost faith in humanity, Perhan abandons himself to alcohol and debauchery, plans to sell his own child into beggary, indirectly causes Azra's death, becomes a murderer and eventually gets killed. He is shot by an angry bride while trying to jump from a bridge into the open car of a passing freight train, so at the end we see his body falling off a bridge.

In a nutshell, the film narrates the story of the 'gypsy' anti-hero and his futile seeking after 'whiteness' (the 'white' beauty Azra); he ends up in the darkness of moral dissolution, visualised as a literal fatal fall. On a meta-level, his punishment is conceived and exercised by the scriptwriter and the film director. Here, I want to highlight one crucial detail and to show how the psychological motivation of the characters, often vague or even improbable, is sacrificed to the needs of the downward-spiralling storyline. One of the breaking points for Perhan comes when Ruža, Azra's mercantile mother, explains her daughter's pregnancy with the following remark: "She is a woman. She ran around and amused herself." Perhan is already a rich man, able to pay for Azra's 'white' beauty, yet Ruža misleads him into thinking that Azra is pregnant by somebody else. Clearly, Ruža's lie works against her daughter's interests, but also against her own interests, for Azra wants to marry the father of her child while Ruža wants to sell her daughter well. Ruža's insinuation, however, is supportive of the filmmaker's plan to portray the total moral and physical ruin of the 'gypsy' anti-hero. As Hinson remarks in his critical review for *The Washington Post*, when Perhan decides to sell his child, "the film loses its edge and collapses into a funk."

As in *The Gypsy and the Gentleman*, the opening sequence in Kusturica's film prefigures the story to follow. At the start, we have a 'gypsy' bride who laments her ruined wedding, her comatose drunken husband lying upside down in a cart, his head dragging in the mud (compare to **Fig. 3**). The camera cuts to the village fool,¹⁰⁶ who recites in a monologue: "They want to clip my wings. What's a spirit without wings? My soul is free. Free as a bird. (...) When God came down to earth, he couldn't get along with us Gypsies and took the next flight back. Not my fault." The film, as already said, is brought to an end by an angry bride, who gets revenge for her ruined wedding by shooting her husband's murderer, Perhan. At this stage, it is instructive to consider Nebojša Jovanović's unsavoury commentary, quoted below, because it deciphers the 'gypsy' mask as a shorthand for the trajectory of human downfall, inflected in this case both by filmmaker and film scholar in an abominably racist manner:

Time of the Gypsies (1988) opens with a long shot of a muddy Gypsy slum with its picturesque dwellers. One of them is an anonymous man who directly addresses the audience with a muddled rant about his miserable life (...). The shift between Malik's smiling gaze at the end of *Father* and the incoherent rambling of an underdog at the beginning of *Time of the Gypsies* testifies to Kusturica's progressive disillusionment with the Yugoslav condition in the late 1980s. If *Father* ends with the ascendant prospect of an open future, the opening shots of *Time of the Gypsies* challenge that prospect with a descent into dirt and insanity, inviting us to identify with Yugoslav Roma people, the most 'excremental' segment of Yugoslav society. (165)

Though Kusturica's film comes across as erratic, as if defying all genre definitions, it displays with predictable regularity the aesthetic and structural characteristics that I have isolated here as defining for 'gypsy'-themed films. To give further substance to my claim, I shall

106 In his article "Symbols and Dreams: Some Thoughts on Kusturica's *The Time of the Gypsies*", Ian Hancock interprets the character as an unnamed "shaven-headed inmate of the Nazi camps where over a million of Romanies were murdered during the Holocaust" (40–41). The film, however, offers no clues as to the character's identity. Hancock's overly positive reading of Kusturica's work draws heavily on the scholar's knowledge of Roma traditions and hardly on the film itself.

refer to some observations in Bertellini's analysis of the film's narrative structure and artistic influences.¹⁰⁷ The scholar-critic points out that:

Time of the Gypsies is divided into two distinct parts. The first consists of stories and scenes of Gypsy life, featuring a range of original characters. In the second part, attention centers on the young protagonist Perhan, and on his tragic odyssey from adolescence to adulthood, ending with his violent death. (51)

Even though Bertellini sides with Kusturica's unsavoury and unethical mix of crude anthropology and magic realism, he gives ample evidence of the director's central role in the fabrication of the cinematic 'truth' about 'gypsies' from script, through casting and musical score to location shooting, and he mentions that the film is "replete with folkloric and quasi-ethnographic details, featuring dialogues that are for the most part in Romany" (48-49). In addition, in support of my view that 'gypsy'-themed films revive the anarchic energy of the early cinema of attractions, Bertellini adds that *Time of the Gypsies* "has a choppy and surreal narration that carries magic realism to new heights" (49); "it was conceived as a *cinematic experience*, consisting of succession of emotions to live with for two and a half hours, where

107 Setting aside the aesthetic evaluation of the film, it has to be said that Bertellini uncritically reproduces the antigypsy discourse in his references to the Roma minority using disparaging descriptions, such as "the most unmodern European minority" (48), "a nomadic culture that has often been regarded as lacking civil dignity" (49) or "the primitive sounds of the Gypsy community" (61). His probably most perplexing statement is: "[w]e should remember that the oneiric dimension is an integral part of daily Romany life" (53) to explain the surplus of material collected during the film's shooting in Skopje's Roma quarters. Now, the term 'oneiric' is used in film analysis to describe the dream-like quality of the work, while Bertellini treats it as a quality inherent to an existing minority group. Yet, later in the text, he says that Kusturica has been profoundly influenced by Andrey Tarkovsky's oneiric obsessions and the endeavours of this Russian auteur "to enter *visually* into the dreams of his characters" (59-60). Bertellini also refers, in all earnestness, to some of Kusturica's statements that are unabashedly racist. In a section of the book called "Filming Gypsies' Bodies and Colors", the filmmaker is quoted to have said in an interview for *Cineforum* that "Gypsies lead a life and think at a pace that is different from ours. Their body temperature is usually around 100 to 102 degrees Fahrenheit. Music, which is quite present in the film, drives them crazy, and makes them very aggressive. I had to provoke the professional actors and bring them to the same body temperature" (152-153). At the same time, Bertellini refers, albeit briefly, to critical literature on the media representation of the minority and even maintains that Kusturica did not construct his film "on the basis of ethno-racial alterity" (59).

life and death, time and space diverge from their usual Western configurations" (54). The scholar does not fail to notice the characteristic fusion of the ethnographic and the aesthetic – another defining feature of 'gypsy'-themed films – the former lending authority to the filmmaker's community portrait, the latter contributing with visual appeal. In combination, the two elements produce a 'truth' about 'gypsies' that everyone – from ordinary viewers to experienced film experts – embraces with automatic readiness, hypnotised either by the aura of modern science or by the cinematic quality (allure) of the images or by both. Bertellini's eulogist text is just one example; for him "[t]he film is certainly an opportunity for an ethnographic celebration, but it is also infused with cinematic homages and media references" (59). Among the directors whose strong influence he detects in Kusturica's work, he mentions Charlie Chaplin, Orson Welles, John Ford and Andrey Tarkovsky (59–60), later also calling *Time of the Gypsies* Kusturica's *Miracle in Milan* (1951, Dir. Vittorio De Sica) (100). In another essay, Andrew Horton studies *Time of the Gypsies* as a cinematic remake of Francis Coppola's *The Godfather* (1972) and *The Godfather II* (1974). It cannot be disputed that Kusturica's 'gypsies' owe their singular screen presence and visibility to a long-standing tradition of prodigiously talented filmmakers.

In Kusturica's next auteur work, the dominant aesthetic and structural features of 'gypsy'-themed films are present in an even more extreme and self-conscious form, as the following quote by Bertellini illustrates, and from which it also becomes evident that the scholar does not take into consideration the implications of these features:

But in *Black Cat*, *White Cat* there are also important new developments in tone. If in the past Kusturica filled his screenplays with situation devoid of narrative relevance but rich in visual and spectacular effects, here he goes even further. It is as though the entire film were constructed like a series of out-of-phase and isolated sequences whose connection with or position within the flow of events is not all that important for the story's coherence. The relations between the scenes are not dictated by a desire to dramatize the actions of the characters; for one thing, there are no genuine *characters* in *Black Cat*, *White Cat*. They are all, to a certain extent, caricatures. The accumulation (and not the interweaving) of scenes leads to the increase in the delirious and carnivalesque effect. (107)

In defence of the Serbian filmmaker, Bertellini maintains that the caricatures in *Black Cat*, *White Cat* should be viewed as a token that the exaggerations in *Time of the Gypsies* “have not been understood and appreciated, or rather, as though they had been taken all too seriously¹⁰⁸ (which did indeed happen)” (104). The extent to which the issue of ethics in filmic representations remains a blind spot even for Giorgio Bertellini, an associate professor at the University of Michigan, becomes evident when we consider the same scenario but replace the Roma with the African American or Jewish minority. Hardly any film scholar nowadays would think of applauding the stock characters in blackface minstrelsy shows, nor could screen caricatures of Jews be easily played down as harmlessly funny. All the while, and somewhat unwittingly, Bertellini’s perspicacious analysis provides copious evidence in support of the claim that the ‘gypsy’ mask is a highly elaborate artefact; that film directors have to resort to a plethora of conventions, devices and motifs – meticulously crafted over centuries in the media of literature, painting, photography, opera, film and modern science – if they want to infuse their ‘gypsy’ figures with life, if they want to assert the truthfulness and reality, the realness, of their imaginary creations. Wondering “who are the Gypsies in the film”, Bertellini offers the only plausible answer:

One has to think of the Gypsies in the film as an invented community-character, highly eroticized and therefor “true” as a caricature. Although he has never been an ethnographer, Kusturica takes us this time into a dimension of extreme fiction that projects intense poetic constraints on the Gypsies (...). What is Gypsy, then, in the film is much more than the characters and the story. Instead, one must think on the level of pure textual surfaces, evident in the casting (...), the costumes, the makeup, the free editing, the highly-coloured cinematography, and the histrionic music. We should also consider the paratextual and extratextual levels: note the effect that the “Gypsy” element has on Kusturica’s authorship, a true Gypsy of international productions, the celebrated champion of antinaturalism, magic realism (...), and caricatural irreverence. (104)

108 In a filmed interview disseminated as DVD bonus material to *Time of the Gypsies*, Kusturica explains in all earnestness: “Gypsies when they keep the mobile phone in their hands, it’s apparently not like in our case who... race-wise who design it but in the Gypsy’s case it’s beautiful because instantly you have a communication in between medieval age and modernity” (“Rencontre”).

In the next chapter, the focus shifts to the formal aspects of the 'gypsy' mask, highlighting some of the cinematic devices involved in the fabrication of this material surface. In this chapter, however, I have demonstrated that the artfully constructed 'gypsy' face is lined with specific content representing a dynamic constellation of qualities, values and traits that encompass almost all spheres of human life and that mirror in reverse the shifting grid of qualities, values and traits that constitute the cultural norm. Historical developments may inflect its malleable content matrix in various ways, but pared down to its basic meaning, the 'gypsy' mask is our culture's sign for social disintegration *per se*. Consider, for example, the two diametrically opposed norms propagated in *The Gypsy and the Gentleman* and in *King of the Gypsies*. In the first film, an aristocrat is ruined because he rebels against the norm of arranged marriage, taking a 'gypsy' as a wife; in the second film, 'gypsies' fail to embrace the norm of love marriage and are doomed to perdition for adhering to the anti-norm of arranged marriage. Clearly, the stories manifest and negotiate the normative worldviews of two different historical periods, but in both films, the 'gypsy' role stands for the equally possible life trajectory of deviation and, as a consequence, it is exemplarily subjected to the most severe punishment. The disciplining message of the plot in 'gypsy'-themed films remains an invariable constant. Conventionally, the 'gypsy' mask is used to represent outlawed or even tabooed emotional states, the mixed bag of moods and feelings that come to the surface in carnivalesque reversals, and this psychic disorderliness, in turn, is reflected in the episodic structure and genre hybridity of 'gypsy'-themed films. Artists like Emir Kusturica turn to this ready-made and universally recognisable mask to express their sense of existential lostness, confusion or alienation, and they do it convinced of being genuinely revolutionary. What they fail to realise is that the 'gypsy' mask is a product of the status quo, its Other face, and has the important function of re-directing the energy of revolt towards the cultural periphery and away from the cultural centre against which it is aimed.

7

Formal Analysis of the ‘Gypsy’ Mask or the ‘Gypsy’ Mask as a Set of Cinematographic Conventions and Devices

— ※ —

We know a thing by its opposite.

Blaine Brown (40)

In the preceding chapter, the notion of the ‘gypsy’ mask has been employed as a meta-term to denote an abstract cluster of attributes that underwrites the ‘gypsy’ role and its universe, the mythic anti-world of ‘gypsies’. In this chapter, the focus will shift from the content to the form and materiality of screen images and, therefore, the term ‘gypsy’ mask will also be used in a very concrete sense, to refer to the artistic rendition of the human face and figure on the two-dimensional surface of the silver screen.

To make the ‘gypsy’ figure legible for cinema audiences, filmmakers avail themselves of a broad palette of visual devices and tools, such as lighting, framing, editing, colour schemes, make-up, hair-grooming, costumes and props, etc. Not only are these visual elements numerous and diverse, but they can be employed in countless combinations to accommodate the film genre and its conventions, as well as the filmmaker’s artistic style. Cinematic tools and conventions have evolved immensely since the early days of cinema, so it is also crucial to bear in mind that the technical options available to the first filmmakers differ greatly from the range of options directors have at their disposal nowadays. For all these reasons, it is

impossible to pick out a specific and relatively stable set of cinematic tools and devices and claim that it is characteristic of 'gypsy'-themed films in general; instead, it is more productive to study the deployment of the historically available visual elements in the context of individual works. Common to all 'gypsy'-themed films, though, is a visual design that employs a sharp colour-coded dichotomy, juxtaposing the 'white' mask against the 'gypsy' mask and their mythic worlds. In early silent film, as well as in very recent films, the rich panoply of available visual elements is invariably harnessed to stylise the norm-setting ethno-social identity as white, in opposition to the black/non-white 'gypsies'. Almost without exception, 'gypsy' characters in 'gypsy'-themed films are portrayed metaphorically and/or literally as 'non-white'/'black', often presented in a realist style that alludes to and borrows from the authority of ethnographic documentation, reducing 'gypsy' protagonists to generic figures and depriving them of an elaborate individuality. For the sake of contrast, characters representing the normative ethno-social identity in 'gypsy'-themed films are, as a rule of thumb, conspicuous blond-haired types.

In the previous chapter, we saw that the content matrix undergirding the 'gypsy' mask is antithetical to the model (= 'white') human being and its aspirational qualities; the 'gypsy' mask designates in a summary form the depravity of human nature, providing an instructively entertaining spectacle of the fallen human being and his/her inner values, traits, gestures, emotional states, acts, and life-script trajectory. Visually, the embodied anti-norm is marked by a symbolic colour: black as well as all its non-white substitutes, such as soiled white, black-and-white stripes and/or patterns, signal red, a mix of variegated colours and patterns. The formal analysis of 'gypsy'-themed films, therefore, foregrounds the colour symbolism of the 'gypsy' mask as well as its complex and often ambivalent relationship to film lighting, facial visibility and realist skin colour. The leading questions concerning form to be tackled in this chapter can be summed up as follows: How is the 'gypsy' mask modelled by means of any of the following visual tools and devices: lighting style, colour control in lighting, use of lenses, choice of location, camera angles, set design and colour scheme, set dressing, wardrobe, make-up, casting choice? What qualities are ascribed to it through the use of these visual elements? Is it crafted in juxtaposition to the 'white' mask and how? Who in the film is privileged by the use of

facial lighting, close-ups and white colour schemes? Who is de-individualised and how? Is the film explicitly intent on producing difference on the level of skin colour? What aesthetic strategies does it pursue to achieve this goal?

7.1 Colour Schemes in *Gucha – Distant Trumpet* (2006), Serbia

The feature fiction film *Gucha – Distant Trumpet* (2006), written and directed by Dušan Milić, readily lends itself to analysis of the various visual elements that are regularly employed for the cinematic construction of the ‘gypsy’ mask. The Serbian filmmaker makes a very straightforward, deliberate use of lighting and colour schemes, set design and dressing, wardrobe, make-up, hair styling and casting to stylise Serbians (representatives of the dominant culture) as ‘white’ in opposition to Serbian ‘gypsies’, who are portrayed as ‘black’. In this section, I examine how the opening sequence in *Gucha* [00’51:3’40] establishes the two opposing worlds associated with the ‘white’ mask and the ‘gypsy’ mask. Here is how the film begins: after showing footage from the real-life Brass Festival in the village of Gucha, which imparts a documentary aura to his work, Milić acquaints us in a three-minute sequence with the rivalry between two Serbian orchestras. The one called Vladisho Trandafilović – Satchmo represents the national majority; the other, called the Sandokan Tigers, stands for the minority. The rivalry between the two bands, which is to unfold over the course of the story, satirises the strained relationship between these two groups in Serbian society. The camera introduces first the main ‘gypsy’ character, the young trumpeter Romeo (Marko Marković), while he is playing together with his fellow musicians in the dim interior of a crowded restaurant boat. The place gives an impression of a murky underworld populated by swarthy males: the faces of the ‘gypsy’ musicians are poorly lit; as the camera moves from one musician to the other, we can see the dense shadow of a trumpet crossing one of the faces, literally blotting it out. The sense of darkness is reinforced by the fact that all the trumpeters wear identical dark blue shirts and black trousers. It is also apparent that during the casting, preference was given to darker types; their phenotypical colour is accentuated in addition by the hair styling: all the men have relatively long black hair.

The shots acquainting us with the ‘gypsy’ orchestra alternate through parallel editing with shots of the Serbian orchestra playing at

a wedding in the next restaurant boat. A series of medium shots focus attention on its lead trumpeter Satchmo (Mladen Nelević). Unlike the 'gypsy' band, the Serbian musicians are shown outside, on a raft¹⁰⁹ flooded in sunlight that brings out the shine of their uniform-like white shirts and gold ties, the outline of a modern cityscape in the background. The men have their hair cropped short, so in spite of being mostly brunets, their hair colour has little impact on the overall colour scheme. The mise-en-scène is dominated by the colours of light: gold and white. The camera cuts to the bride, radiant in her pristine white dress, and the groom, who wears a beige suit; the wedding decorations are also in white, with masses of white balloons filling up the frame.

In a fit of competition, the two orchestras abandon their engagements and move to confront each other. The 'gypsy' trumpeters rush out of the dark boat's belly and align themselves along the raft edge, so that they can face their Serbian rivals, who gather at the railing on the opposite raft. Anchored on the riverbank, the two restaurant boats have almost identical rafts that are situated within earshot of each other, so while the rival bands can show off with their musical dexterity, they stay framed through the set design as two distinct groups separated by a stretch of water. A long shot of Satchmo's orchestra and its cheering crowd shows them enveloped, as if in a group portrait picture, with a festoon of white balloons, their gold ties and brass trumpets glittering in the sun. The sun is overhead, producing a flattering top-light on the Serbian musicians, with a good amount of bounce light from below (**Fig. 30a**). In fact, the front lighting is so strong that the men have to squint their eyes, one of them even shading his eyes with a hand. The musicians at the railing are joined by a brunette with blonde highlights in her hair, who cheers with them, the pale gold colour of her blouse rhyming with their gold sparkle. The woman is Satchmo's wife and Juliana's mother; Juliana (Aleksandra Manasijević) is the film's main female character and the apple of her father's eye. Soon the girl is also introduced, in a separate frame, gazing out of a window decorated with a festoon of white balloons (**Fig. 31a**). The filmmaker uses a frame-within-a-frame composition to focus attention on Juliana's sweet, innocent face: she is fair-skinned, blue-eyed, with long golden hair, to which the camera is soon to pay

109 The film's shooting location is the famous Belgrade moored floats (in Serbian called '*splavovi*'): these are floating boats or anchored rafts holding up cafés, restaurants or clubs.



Fig. 30a and Fig. 30b. Screenshots from *Gucha – Distant Trumpet* (2006, Dir. Dušan Milić): the Serbian orchestra Vladisho Trandafilović – Satchmo marked by the colours of bright daylight, and the ‘gypsy’ orchestra the Sandokan Tigers marked by the colours of night’s darkness.



Fig. 31a and Fig. 31b. Screenshots from *Gucha – Distant Trumpet* (2006, Dir. Dušan Milić): Juliana (Aleksandra Manasijević), the blue-eyed, blonde-haired beauty who serves as a cue, prompting the viewers to perceive her fellow people in the modus of the ‘white’ mask; Sandokan (Slavoljub Pesić), the leader of the Sandokan Tigers, has a distinctly darker face that serves as visual cue, prompting the viewers to perceive his fellows in the modus of the ‘gypsy’ mask.

a special tribute.¹¹⁰ The blonde maiden is placed slightly above all the other protagonists in the scene, as befits someone who is closest to the aspirational ideal of ‘whiteness’.

By contrast, the mise-en-scène of the ‘gypsy’ orchestra and their cheering fans is dominated by the colours of darkness: black and dark blue, invigorated by elements in bright red, such as tablecloths, decorative flags and t-shirts (**Fig. 30b**). Unlike the Serbian musicians, the

110 Exactly ten minutes into the film, there is an entire scene dedicated to Juliana’s blonde hair [10’06:11’21]. For over a minute and a half, we watch the girl unfasten, shampoo under the shower, dry, comb and plait her beautiful, waist-long, golden hair. At first, Juliana is alone, to be joined later by her black pet lamb, which goes by the name Cigo. One cannot skate over the allusion of the black animal and its name Cigo to the denigrating term *cigan/циган* in Serbian.

'gypsy' musicians are not top-lit but backlit by the sunlight, with the result that their faces and bodies appear overshadowed. The camera cuts to a closer view of Sandokan (Slavoljub Pesić), lingering for a moment on his distinctly swarthy face (**Fig. 31b**); set against his white shirt (the latter is used as a neutral reference for the white balance), it comes off as a dark spot. The attention to his appearance has a strategic function: it literally adds skin colour to the collective portrait of the 'gypsy' band and provides a visual cue for the spectators, prompting them to perceive the entire group as 'non-white' in the modus of the 'gypsy' mask. The woman who finds her way to the centre of the 'gypsy' band is a black-haired temptress, her curvaceous figure outlined by a tight-fitting, glittering silver dress. She wears bright red lipstick, which is yet another detail alluding to her allegedly passionate 'gypsy' nature. With an agitated gesture, she takes a deep pull at her cigarette, then energetically swaps it for a microphone and starts singing. The song lyrics also deserve some attention here, because they address the colour/light contrasts worked out at the level of imagery and furnish a mythic frame of interpretation:

The one over there, no, she's not me.
That one stole my love.
The one over there, on your shoulder, she's not me.
Her hair is blonde, not black like the night. [my translation, R.M.]

In a very elliptic manner, the last line construes similarity between daylight and blond hair, evoking in the same breath its logical inversion: night-time and black hair. In Milić's film, blond hair functions not only as an embodied metaphor of light but – through the figure of Satchmo's daughter Juliana – it is also made a distinguishing attribute of Satchmo's band, and by extension of the Serbian 'white' nation. All the while, black hair being an embodied metaphor of darkness is made a characteristic sign of the Sandokan Tigers, and by extension of the 'non-white' Serbian minority. In the film's visual design, the figurative meaning of light (white, fair and good) and darkness (black, ugly and bad) is expanded through the phenotypical feature of hair colour to include a biological ('white'/'non-white' 'race') and ideological ('white' nation/'non-white' minority) signification.

In its opening sequence, Milić's fiction film already establishes an unbreachable rift between two groups of people within Serbian society, constructing 'ethno-racial' alterity by the coordinated use of numerous visual elements: choice of location, the film's lighting and colour

palette, costumes, props, hair styling, make-up, casting and editing. It is insightful to specify the visual tools and devices used to design each of these two worlds. Put in abstract terms, we can say that in the introductory sequence, the world of the 'white' mask is modelled through profusion of sunlight, the colours white and gold, uniform costumes consisting of white shirts with gold ties and ochre trousers, neatly cropped hair for the men and blonde hair for the women, a cast of 'normal' types. In keeping with the principle of obverse mirroring, the world of the 'gypsy' mask is modelled through profusion of shadow, the colours black, dark blue and silver, uniform costumes consisting of dark blue shirts without ties, black trousers, black longish hair for men and women, a cast of swarthy types. The contrast is also emphasised through the use of rhythmic parallel editing; its metaphoric meaning is also intimated in the song lyrics. Without doubt, the film's visual design aims to evoke the archetypal opposition between light and darkness (absence of light), bringing Satchmo's brass band into association with daytime and golden sunlight, while the Sandokan Tigers are associated, as far as the circumstances allow it, with night-time and silver moonlight. As for the cast, let us be reminded here that Dušan Milić works with select actors who are chosen on the basis of their only slightly differing flesh tones, a difference that the filmmaker deliberately magnifies through strategic deployment of lighting, costumes and grooming to produce two 'races' within Serbian society: a 'white' national majority and a 'black' minority. In a video interview, Milić provides a forthright rationale for his choice of visual storytelling elements:

On the first picture, you have two completely different worlds: one is black and the other is white. For me that was the most interesting conflict. Through that conflict, I tried to raise the forbidden love story. A film is a picture. If you have two very similar faces, people can be, maybe, sometimes, you know, not so sure what they are looking at. Because of that I wanted to have the girl Juliana with green eyes or blue eyes and blond hair and the complete opposite to her: this Gypsy Roma boy who is completely black, you know. From their skins, from their completely different cultures, this music is completely different. (*Gucha* DVD)

The broken syntax in the last sentence, in which the director first decides for one object ("skins") and then complements and clarifies it

Formal Analysis of the 'Gypsy' Mask



Fig. 32a and Fig. 32b. Screenshots from *Gucha – Distant Trumpet* (2006, Dir. Dušan Milić): Satchmo’s brass band in traditional Serbian dress, in sharp contrast to the Sandokan Tigers, who wear Italian purple suits with large tiger-patterned lapels.

with another (“cultures”), clearly evidences the logical slip by which skin colour difference is equated with cultural difference. This difference is, moreover, perceived as unbridgeable in spite of the fact that “Serbians are living for a long, long time, for decades, for centuries with the Roma people and they have developed some special connections”, as the director himself acknowledges in the interview (*Gucha* DVD). Near the film’s end, Milić creates another colour-coded contrast between ‘white’ and ‘gypsy’ Serbians that also deserves a brief mention here (see also Section 8.3). During the climactic competition for the Golden Trumpet Award, Satchmo’s brass band appears on-stage in traditional Serbian attire: the trumpeters play costumed in white shirts decorated with intricate embroidery (**Fig. 32a**). The Sandokan Tigers, by contrast, are dressed up in shiny purple suits with large tiger-patterned lapels; a point is made to inform the viewers that the purple suits were ordered especially for the occasion from Italy (**Fig. 32b**). The clear-cut separation created through the choice of costumes sheds light on the polysemic and slippery nature of antigypsyism. Dressed up in their imported garish suits, the ‘gypsy’ musicians – and by extension the entire ethnic minority – are branded not only as ‘ethno-racially’ different, that is, as ‘non-white’/‘coloured’ and somewhat animal-like, but also as symbolic foreigners to the Serbian national project.

There is something ironic about the film’s blatant use of racialising imagery and symbolism. Dušan Milić adopts, in all earnestness, the black-and-white lens towards his protagonists in order to expose and satirise racism (antigypsyism) at the level of the narrative. Invoking association with Shakespeare’s tragedy *Romeo and Juliet*, he produces a light-hearted semi-documentary comedy with a happy ending, in which the main ‘gypsy’ hero is celebrated for his ability to end up victorious

and transcend the boundaries between majority and minority. Romeo outplays Juliana's father Satchmo at the Gucha Trumpet Competition, earning himself the right to become his son-in-law. The story's message is clearly at odds with the film's visual design. It would be interesting to examine, scene by scene, the conflicting meanings that arise from the film's racialised look and its anti-racist narrative, how these two storytelling levels contend for domination, subvert or support each other. Questions concerning the film's ideological implications, however, go beyond the scope of this section. It suffices to provide here only one quote from the director's comment published in the film's press book:

Before I started making this film I had intended to tell a Bollywood-style story of forbidden love; a colourful, lyrical, film about two teenagers from totally different worlds, socially and – more importantly – racially. Two people whose love for one another is prevented from flowering because of the environment they live in.

What I wanted to highlight was the power of the force opposing them. The racial problem alone was potent enough to build the story around, but I wasn't interested in only that. I didn't just want to make a real-life story revealing the dark sides of human nature, where aggression and rivalry explode ending in bloodshed, and I didn't want a sad end, demonstrating how cruel life can be.

My mission here was to portray the main character – a talented gypsy trumpet player who – with his instrument as his only weapon – matures through music, finds love and discovers the world of his elders, regardless of their skin colour. (Milić 3)

The director's comment is an industry-created paratext that was circulated during the Panorama of the 57th Berlin Film Festival. It is important to mention it here, because – while denouncing racism – it foregrounds the notions of 'race' and 'racial' difference as one of its basic tenets, and thus sets the interpretative frame for the story and determines how it will be received by professionals, the media and wider audiences.

To wrap up, the opening sequence in *Gucha* offers a particularly dense example of the various tools and devices that filmmakers resort to when modelling the 'gypsy' mask on the big screen. Dušan Milić creates two collective portraits, fabricating a colour-coded difference between the two by means of highly contrastive colour and lighting schemes,

layered with archetypal symbolism and reinforced by a casting based on skin tone. Commonplace as this approach may be in the industry of 'gypsy'-themed films, it represents – and this has to be underscored here – a glaring instance of racialisation. The sequence illustrates the effect of radical Othering that visual elements have when harnessed *en masse* and when their message is supported by official paratexts. What is more, by using the above-described devices, Dušan Milić, or virtually any filmmaker, can produce a 'white' and a 'black' 'race' within or among any of the European nations and cinematically reify imaginary divides that pit national majorities against a given minority, but also Europe's North against the South, or the West against the East. The question is what makes Dušan Milić's visual design in *Gucha* so unobtrusively normal.

7.2 Europe's Golden-haired Nations vs 'Gypsies'

Hair of Gold, Heart of Gold
TV Tropes

Impossible as it is to make sweeping generalisations about the formal aspects that are singularly characteristic of 'gypsy'-themed films, Dušan Milić's work exemplifies one common black-and-white perception lens: visualised in juxtaposition to 'gypsies', national majorities in Europe and the USA appear to be markedly blond (**Fig. 33**, **Fig. 47a**, **Fig. 48b**, and **Fig. 49a**). If we consider that a film cast is selected from a wide spectrum of possible human types ranging from pale-skinned blonds to swarthy brunets, then we can establish the following rule of thumb. To signal that a figure belongs to the national majority, filmmakers tend to choose individuals from the light end of the spectrum, casting blond actors and especially blonde actresses as emblematic embodiments of the 'white' nation and/or its blue-blooded aristocracy. When Roma are selected for a 'gypsy'-themed film – in the majority of cases as authentication extras – preference is given to individuals from the dark end of the spectrum; their swarthy appearance gives a visual cue to the viewers, prompting them to perceive the entire minority in the modus of the 'gypsy' mask. In turn, celebrity stars cast to perform in 'gypsy' mask tend to be brunets. In terms of skin and hair tone, they occupy the ambivalent middle of the human type spectrum. This pattern of



Fig. 33. Screenshot from *Gucha – Distant Trumpet* (2006, Dir. Dušan Milić): a medium two-shot of golden-blond Juliana (Aleksandra Manasijević) and her black-haired Romeo (Marko Marković); the forbidden love between the Serbian 'white' nation and its 'non-white' minority triumphs.

casting based on hair colour and skin tone is ubiquitous in European and US American cinema. Augmented by the wide palette of cinematic visual tools and devices, it provides for a spectacle of sharp, racialising contrasts in which the colours 'white' and 'black' are richly layered with metaphoric and emotional content. The examples of racialising visual designs in films are countless. The male 'gypsy' protagonists in *Hot Blood*, *The King of the Gypsies* (**Fig. 25a** and **Fig. 25b**) and *Queen of the Gypsies*, for instance, have hapless affairs with females from the majority society, all of whom are conspicuous if not exaggerated blondes. Also yellow blond is Phoebus in the animated version of *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* (1996, Dir. Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise), set against a black-haired and dusky Esmeralda (**Fig. 16a** and **Fig. 16b**) and so on. Blond hair has been glamorised and fetishised through film lighting in ways that no other artistic medium has achieved before and, obviously, filmmakers do not hesitate to avail themselves of this visual shorthand, effectively underscoring the 'whiteness' of Europe's national majorities.

Regrettably, even filmmakers who are sympathetic to the plight of Roma seem to make an automatic use of blond-haired actors to mark representatives of the national culture. Consider, for instance, the short fiction film *Remember* (2017, Dir. Igor Kachur), in which the story of the Roma Holocaust in Ukraine is recounted¹¹¹ (**Fig. 34**). The young

111 The producer of the short film (13'24 mins) is the Ukrainian Roma Petro Rusanienko; his project was supported by the International Renaissance Foundation (IRF).



Fig. 34. Screenshot from the short film *Remember* (2017, Dir. Igor Kachur): a two-shot of the persecuted black-haired Romni Lyalya (Serine Sianosyan), who finds a temporary hiding place in the house of blonde Maria (Anastasiya Pustovit).

filmmaker condenses the historical events to a brief but highly dramatic encounter between two young women: the black-haired Lyalya (Serine Sianosyan), who stands for the Ukrainian Roma, and the pale-skinned, blonde-haired Maria (Anastasiya Pustovit), who represents the Ukrainian national majority.

Another example of unwitting racialisation comes from the children's animation *Bango Vassil* (2016), scripted and directed by the Berlin-based Bulgarian filmmakers Milen Vitanov and Vera Trajanova.¹¹² The artists take a local custom – the celebration of Bango Vassil, which is popular among Bulgarian Roma – and weave it into a universal story about overcoming prejudice and experiencing the gift of friendship. As in Igor Kachur's *Remember*, their film presents a brief but intensely dramatic encounter between a 'gypsy' and a representative of the national culture; in this case, these are the 'gypsy' girl Ati and the Bulgarian boy Emil. In tune with the pictorial tradition of pitting the 'gypsy' mask against the 'white' mask, Ati is darker-skinned and with long black hair, while Emil is lighter-skinned and yellow-haired (**Fig. 35a**). When assessing a film's cast, there is always the possibility that the director has been influenced in his/her choice of actors by accidental factors. Animators, however, have full control over their characters' appearance and can specify their features to the minutest detail. For that reason,

¹¹² The animated short (8'30 mins) is a German-Bulgarian production, supported by the Robert Bosch Stiftung, BKM/Kuratorium Junger Deutscher Film, Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg and Bulgarian National Film Center.

it is worth paying closer attention to the colour-coded dichotomy that organises the fictional world of *Bango Vassil*. It is striking that, compared to Emil and his playmates, Ati is emphatically marked as 'non-white'. The 'gypsy' girl stands out with her darker skin tone (produced through the finely nuanced contrast with her head-enveloping flesh-coloured hat), her thick, brush-like black eyebrows and her waist-length, pitch-black hair. By contrast, Emil and his playmates all share the same 'normal' skin tone (no colour contrast is sought in their case) and thin eyebrows, and have a variety of hair colours (**Fig. 35b**). In addition to being marked as 'non-white', Ati is also the only one to wear a knit hat with bear ears that move when she walks; though endearing, this visual detail may be interpreted as an allusion to the supposed affinity 'gypsies' have with nature and animals or as an allusion to a clichéd feature of 'gypsy' culture. The story is set in the open, in a snow-covered forest populated by talking animals and the latter inevitably invite a comparison with the girl. (In fact, visual allusions to wild animals are often used by filmmakers to characterise a 'gypsy' figure; consider the 'gypsy' trumpeters in *Gucha*, who are likened to tigers, or the title character in *Gipsy Anne*, who wears raptor feathers in her hair.) So, the attempt to tell a local story with universal appeal that every child can relate to makes *Bango Vassil* a telling example of an artwork that, while designed with the best intentions and great skill, reproduces the racialising aesthetics spawned by the 'gypsy' mask.



Fig. 35a and Fig. 35b. Screenshots from the short animation *Bango Vassil* (2016, Dir. Milen Vitanov, and Vera Trajanova), in which the 'gypsy' girl Ati is portrayed with waist-long black hair and thick black eyebrows. Following the logic of racialisation, Emil, the 'white' Bulgarian boy, who undergoes a cathartic ordeal together with Ati, is yellow-haired. Ati is also the only child to wear a brown knit hat with bear ears.

7.3 Elements of Visual Style and Facial Visibility

*Die unterhaltendste Fläche auf der Erde für uns
ist die vom menschlichen Gesicht.*

Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, "Sudelbücher"

By convention, the 'gypsy' mask is brought to life in artworks as a universally recognisable sign that signifies *absence of light* (or *shadow*). This meaning can be interpreted figuratively to refer to *darkness*, that is, *the dark side of human nature*, and/or 'ethno-racially', to indicate *the character's belonging to the 'non-white'/'black' part of the spectrum of human groupings*. As we saw in the previous section, in the medium of film, a whole arsenal of visual tools and devices is mobilised to model the 'gypsy' mask on the screen – from lighting through colour schemes to casting, whereby the metaphoric shadiness of the 'gypsy' mask and/or its 'ethno-racial' 'non-whiteness' is coded on one or more levels: it can be marked via costumes, through the rendering of face and hair colour, and/or by the figure's integration in the setting.

Again, by convention, the main function of the 'gypsy' mask is to furnish a dark contrastive background for the 'white' hero who can stand out in relief against it. This is to say that in purely aesthetic terms, the 'gypsy' mask confers visibility on the 'white' mask and is therefore suited to performing auxiliary roles. When elevated to the status of a main hero, the 'gypsy' figure presents – not only from a narrative but also from an aesthetic point of view – a contradiction in terms. The main hero, as a rule, is both individualised and credited with the limelight. By directing the spotlight towards the 'gypsy' figure, the filmmaker has the challenging task of bringing this figure out of the shadows, illuminating its face and making it visible in all its individuality. This is further complicated by the fact that 'gypsy' roles are often performed by (inter)national celebrities, that is, by glamorous 'white' faces whom (inter)national audiences strongly identify with in the pro-filmic world. Since 'gypsy'-themed films lay claim to a so-called authenticity, filmmakers have to juggle numerous variables that pertain, on the one hand, to the film's diegesis and, on the other hand, to the socio-historical world inhabited by the spectators. To illustrate the difficulty of negotiating visual elements from the film's narrative world that are of relevance to the socio-historical world of the audience, we can consider two screenshots from Frank Pierson's film *King*

of *the Gypsies*. The first is a close two-shot that shows the handsome ‘gypsy’ David cheek to cheek with his blonde girlfriend Sharon; both roles are performed by actors from the dominant culture: the debuting Eric Roberts (Julia Roberts’ brother) and Annette O’Toole, the “go-to actress for all-American girlfriend roles” (Sweeny) (**Fig. 25a**). When Sharon and David’s heads are in the same frame, Sharon is clearly privileged by the composition: her blonde hair and pale-skinned face are beautifully illuminated and in full view, while David’s head is cast down, his face in shadow, so that his dark-brown hair comes to the fore. In the medium two-shot (**Fig. 25b**), Sharon’s face is foregrounded again and juxtaposed to David’s backgrounded reflection in the mirror. Elaborately composed, these two-shots evidence that the director Frank Pierson has compromised the facial visibility of the titular character (David will become the new king of the ‘gypsies’) for the sake of the colour contrast that runs through his entire film (see also Section 6.2). Pierson’s solution is just one of the many possible options, as we are about to see.

Taken as a whole, the specific difficulty of filming the ‘gypsy’ mask in a lead role arises from the complex interplay of casting choice, the film’s visual aesthetics and design, and its narrative structure. Therefore, to enable the comparative analysis of ‘gypsy’-themed productions at the level of form, our initial catalogue of questions has to be expanded with the following queries: Is it an early film or a later, more technically advanced production? What range of options does the filmmaker have at his disposal, especially when it comes to the rendering of facial and hair colour? Does the filmmaker use close-ups as an element of his visual language? Has the filmmaker developed a consistent pattern of contrasts between the ‘white’ mask and the ‘gypsy’ mask in his film? Or is it a film that brackets out the world of the ‘white’ mask, concentrating entirely on the world of the ‘gypsy’ mask? Does the film strengthen the message of its fictional story by claiming to present a truthful slice of ‘reality’ and feigning ethnographic documentation? As all these questions make it clear, the analysis has to account for a large number of variables, so it is hardly possible to draw general conclusions. A more useful approach is to consider the unique solutions individual filmmakers have opted for, and we shall do so by taking a close look at two black-and-white productions with a ‘gypsy’ female character in the lead: the 1920 Norwegian film *Gipsy Anne* and the 2013 Polish film *Papusza*.

7.3.1 Facial Visibility, Character Centrality and White Make-up in *Gipsy Anne* (1920), Norway

Rasmus Breistein's silent film *Gipsy Anne* (1920) takes us back to the early days of cinema when filmmakers had at their disposal a considerably limited palette of technical options. Examined next to recent productions, such as *Gucha* (2006) or *Papusza* (2013), Breistein's carefully thought-out film instructs us about the axiomatic interdependence of facial visibility, character centrality and white make-up that operated in early black-and-white films. Heavy white make-up was indispensable in the first days of filmmaking as it had two fundamental functions: by rendering the face literally white, it ensured its radiant visibility on the screen, so that the white (= visible) face also signalled the character's prominent place in the story. However, before examining the multiplicity of meanings generated by the masks of white make-up in this Norwegian 'gypsy'-themed film, it is necessary to give a short summary of the story.

The film is about Anne, a 'gypsy' foundling raised by a family of rich Norwegian farmers.¹¹³ The opening sequence focuses on the childhood pranks of Gipsy Anne, who is portrayed in clear opposition to her slightly younger stepbrother Haldor. An intertitle informs us from the very start that "the girl was a wild one", whereas "Haldor was more of a silent tranquil boy." Three brief episodes from Gipsy Anne and Haldor's childhood are recounted in the film's prologue, which should prepare the viewer for the drama in their adult lives. In the first episode, Gipsy Anne climbs up a big birch tree and destroys a bird's nest. Two farmhands come along and, seeing the misdeed, punish Haldor, while Anne hides in the grass and laughs at him. In the second episode, Anne shows a precocious interest in love affairs, and after spying on a courting couple, she urges Haldor to behave like her sweetheart and kiss her on the mouth. In the third episode, Anne takes Haldor to a creek that is off limits for the children; the boy falls into the water, gets wet

113 The story set-up is a symmetric inversion of the kidnapping tale; the axis of inversion is the common theme underlining the foundling/kidnapping narratives: the unchangeability of inborn human nature. In other words, these two types of stories both explore the question of nature vs. nurture, upholding the essentialist view of the unchangeably noble nature of the Self and the incorrigibly wild nature of the Other. It is notable that when a 'gypsy' child is raised by 'whites', whereby its wild nature is put on display, the child is always a foundling. Conversely, when a 'white' child is raised by 'gypsies', whereby the constancy of its noble nature is put to a test, the child is, by all means, a stolen one.

and returns home crying. In a fit of anger, the mother shouts at Anne: “You only stir misery. You don’t belong here and should never have been allowed to stay here at Storlien, you little rogue.” That is how both Anne and the spectators learn about her ‘gypsy’ origins.

The story proper expands on these three episodes. Grown-up Haldor (Lars Tvinde), the richest and most sought-after bachelor in the village, has a playful relationship with Anne, who works at the family’s summer farm. Haldor sets out to build a big house, and when Anne raises the question of marriage, he promises to share his life with her in the new place. Haldor’s mother (Johanne Bruhn) is against their union and tells her son that he cannot take a woman of unknown origin. Easily swayed by her words, Haldor proposes to another girl, the rich and respectable Margit (Kristine Ullmo), who befits his social status. Deeply hurt and carried away by her impulsive nature, Anne destroys Haldor’s “nest”, setting his new house on fire. This time the damage is paid by the cotter Jon (Einar Tveito), who has all along been protective of Anne. In court, Jon takes the blame for the arson and goes to prison. When he comes out, he suggests to Anne and his mother (Henny Skjønberg) that they leave for America. The last intertitle announces a happy end: “And on the next American line ship, three happy people crossed the ocean. They travelled to the country where every man can be himself – without class difference and prejudice.” The film has a complex message that transforms the conventional binary opposition of Self and Other in a surprising way. While maintaining that ‘gypsies’ are incorrigibly different, it also employs the plastic figure of Gipsy Anne to level criticism at the social mores in Norway, thereby shifting the spotlight from the rich farmer Haldor to the cotter Jon; as it were, the story’s ending restructures the chain of events in retrospect, showing Jon to be the real hero and a model worthy of emulation. We are reminded that none other but the humble cotter Jon saves baby Anne’s life when her mother is turned away by Haldor’s family and left to die of exhaustion in their barn. He comforts the girl when her stepmother disowns her, and it is again Jon who asks Anne for her hand in an attempt to spare her the pain of seeing Haldor marry another woman. Jon’s compassion, patience, self-sacrifice and unflinching love transform Gipsy Anne into a likeable character and bring about the story’s happy ending.¹¹⁴

114 As pointed out in Chapter Two, the film marks a number of firsts for Norwegian cinema: *Gipsy Anne* is the first film shot by a Norwegian director in Norway with a story based on a Norwegian novel; it is the first film to make use of professional actors and the first to receive support from an official institution. Moreover,



Fig. 36. Screenshot from *Gipsy Anne* (1920, Dir. Rasmus Breistein): Gipsy Anne (Aasta Nielsen) in her new role as a nanny taking care of two town children; the three of them are clad in impeccable white from head to toe.

At this stage, we can direct our attention to the film's symbolic imagery. Rasmus Breistein takes recourse to costuming to create and model Anne's plastic alterity: as a small girl, Gipsy Anne wears a dark dress with an eye-catching pattern of stripes and not the radiantly white, doll-like dress that little girls invariably sport in early film. Instead of a big white ribbon, she has striped raptor feathers as hair decoration. Grown-up Anne, however, wears a traditional Sunday dress, identical with the dresses worn by the other village girls of marriageable age (notably, the imagery in Breistein's silent film allows one to imagine the 'gypsy' as part of the nation, unlike the imagery in Dušan Milić's recent work *Gucha*). The truly pivotal moment – when Anne transcends her 'gypsy' nature – comes with Jon's decision to pay for her impulsivity and take on the punishment. While her saviour is in prison, Gipsy Anne transforms into a responsible nanny who is employed in town: in her new role, we see her wearing a shining white maid's apron while in charge of two small children, also clad in radiant white (**Fig. 36**).

as the first Norwegian film to take up the topic of the countryside, *Gipsy Anne* must have enjoyed great popularity. The few available sources confirm that, in Myrstad's words, rural films "ranked close to the top in competition with masterpieces by Charlie Chaplin and Cecil B. De Mill" (184). Furthermore, and not unimportantly, *Gipsy Anne* marked the start of Rasmus Breistein's filmmaking career. Myrstad reports that to shoot this "'true' Norwegian film", Breistein, one of the most cherished Norwegian directors, took out a mortgage on his house and invited fellow actors to spend a holiday in the scenic village of Vågå (cf. 184).



Fig. 37a and Fig. 37b. Screenshots from *Gipsy Anne* (1920, Dir. Rasmus Breistein): two-shots of Gipsy Anne (Aasta Nielsen) with Haldor (Lars Tvinde) and with Jon (Einar Tveito); it is plain to see that due to the lack of white make-up, Haldor's bandaged hand appears almost black, strongly contrasting with his and Anne's faces.

It is notable that Breistein was not interested in constructing alterity on the level of skin and hair colour. Throughout the film, Anne's face is shown in numerous close-ups and two-shots where her face appears as 'white' as that of the other protagonists, all of them 'proper' Norwegians (**Fig. 37a** and **Fig. 37b**). However, there is one make-up anomaly that can help sharpen our understanding of 'whiteness' and the multiple functions this ubiquitous convention fulfils in film. In Breistein's film, only the characters with significant roles wear white make-up which makes their faces visible; moreover, the make-up is applied in such a conspicuous manner that it often looks as if the actors were wearing a white mask (**Fig. 39**). The extras, in turn, have no make-up, so their faces appear, by comparison, distinctly darker and far less discernible (**Fig. 38** and **Fig. 39**). Most probably, the filmmaker had to economise on the resources; his frugal distribution of the valuable white substance tells us that Breistein discriminated between characters with significant roles and characters with less significant roles; by privileging only the main cast of actors with white make-up, he constructed, metaphorically speaking, characters with faces, as opposed to the faceless extras. Importantly, the visibility of Gipsy Anne's face – which gives the figure her individuality – was a priority for the Norwegian filmmaker and he enhanced it through the combined use of white make-up, lighting and framing.

The way Breistein apportioned make-up betrays one axiomatic interdependence that is specific to the medium of film – that between a character's status in the story, the discernibility of his/her face on



Fig. 38. Screenshot from *Gipsy Anne* (1920, Dir. Rasmus Breistein): Hal-dor (Lars Tvinde), his fiancée Margit Moen (Kristine Ullmo) and mother (Johanne Bruhn) sit in the first row during the court hearing. They all wear a thick layer of white make-up, which renders their faces visible; in the film, being visible equals being white. The extras in the background, by contrast, wear no make-up and their flesh tones come off much darker, so that their faces appear both non-white and less clear to see.



Fig. 39. Screenshot from *Gipsy Anne* (1920, Dir. Rasmus Breistein): Jon (Einar Tveito) before the judge (Edvard Drabløs) in court. The faces of the men in the background are without white make-up, looking distinctly darker.

the screen and the cinematic construction of ‘white’ identity. This conflation of significations, all of which gravitate around the filmic convention of ‘whiteness’, may result from different visual tools: in early films, it was the white make-up that privileged an actor’s face, ensuring its visibility and signalling to the viewer that the character had a central role in the story, while also assigning that character to allegedly the most beautiful of all human ‘races’. In later black-and-white films, facial make-up and lighting techniques become much subtler, but the correlation between the character’s facial visibility, centrality and ‘whiteness’ continues to be prevalent. Applied to ‘gypsy’ protagonists, this cinematographic axiom entails a contradiction in terms, especially when racialisation – the construction of a skin colour alterity – is one of the filmmaker’s goals. In the next section, I examine *Papusza* (2013), a realist black-and-white film, to demonstrate the problems that arise – in purely aesthetic terms – when the ‘gypsy’ mask is staged in a lead role, but also the intriguingly complex solutions that contemporary filmmakers come up with in keeping with the racialising aesthetics of authentication.

7.3.2 Lighting, Framing and Facial Visibility in *Papusza* (2013), Poland

The Polish feature fiction film *Papusza* (2013), written and directed by Joanna Kos-Krauze and Krzysztof Krauze, offers an example of much subtler tactics of negotiating ‘whiteness’ on the big screen. If *Gucha* mobilises exaggerated, almost farcical colour dichotomies, *Papusza* opts for black-and-white cinematography that reduces the palette of possible colours to an unobtrusive play with tonal values. One may say that the black-and-white cinematography here has a paradoxical effect. Despite its obvious artifice, it allows the filmmakers to gain full control over the black-and-white contrasts in the film in a way that makes these contrasts appear natural and realistic. The juxtaposition of ‘non-white’ Polish ‘gypsies’ to the ‘white’ Polish majority is achieved through elaborate lighting schemes, and since lighting schemes are themselves less conspicuous (as compared to colour-coded costumes or sets), they can enact and thus affirm in an indirect but highly convincing manner the default black-and-white lens of perception. In this section, I focus on this aesthetic property of the film and, more specifically, on the use of lighting and camera technique for the construction of visual alterity in which ‘white’ and ‘non-white’ skin colour play a central part.

Often categorised by reviewers as a biopic, *Papusza* is based on the real-life story of Bronisława Wajs, the first Roma poetess in Poland to be translated into Polish, who has been celebrated for her work ever since. Even the title, which refers to Wajs' nickname, already prepares us for a story that places the female artist centre stage, shedding light on her complex self. Yet a close study of the film's use of lighting overthrows this expectation. In spite of the directors' widely advertised intention to produce an intimate portrait of the Romni poetess, their *Papusza* is disadvantaged, not privileged as befits a central character, by the lighting and camerawork. The character is deprived in various ways of her most significant individualising attribute: facial visibility on the big screen. Throughout the film, *Papusza*, and especially her face, remains largely inaccessible to the viewers, dimly illuminated, obstructed and/or placed away from the camera. The filmmakers seem to say by their choice of visual style that they have little interest in *Papusza* as an individual and an artist, reducing her character rather to a generic 'gypsy' figure. I will venture to say that *Papusza*'s name and dramatic biography are used as a pretext for staging a picturesque 'gypsy' spectacle, the effect of which is an implicit affirmation of Polish 'white' national identity.¹¹⁵ To support this claim, I consider in detail the three-minute scene in which *Papusza*'s character is first introduced to the viewers [6'18:9'44]; then, listing the various uses of figure lighting and camera movement in a number of other scenes, I sum up the ways in which the character is de-individualised in the modus of the 'gypsy' mask. In addition to that, I examine the aspirational ideal of 'whiteness'

115 Interestingly, Joanna Kos-Krauze and Krzysztof Krauze's film shares some telling similarities with Harley Knoles' black-and-white silent film *The Bohemian Girl* (1922). Shot four years after WW1 and Poland's reappearance on the political map, Knoles' film reworks the familiar plot of Cervantes' "La gitaniella" to tell the dramatic story of Thaddeus, a young exiled Polish officer, who is referred to as the Baron of Poland in the film's intertitles; as a male figure of high birth, he metonymically stands for the Polish nation and its re-emergence on the map of Europe. In the film, it is Thaddeus (Ivor Novello) who resurfaces as a true nobleman (to wit 'white') out of the dark 'gypsy' world, where he has been forced to hide for twelve years, and succeeds in marrying the daughter of an Austrian count, Arline Arnheim (Gladys Cooper). A metaphysical proof of his nobility is Arline's unwavering love for him, as well as her readiness to sacrifice her social rank and lifestyle in order to be with the man of her heart. *Papusza* contains a number of key scenes and motifs that are reminiscent of scenes and motifs in Knoles' film *The Bohemian Girl*. One example is a scene which visualises a dream of Arline's: one night, she dreams of being in a palace full of white marble sculptures; Arline stands in the middle of it wearing a lavish white dress and relishes the company of suitors and white angel boys.

and the place it has in the film visual design. Finally, I take a look at the use of facial lighting in the production of skin colour difference.

An important note has to be made here that bears direct relevance for the formal analysis, namely that the film's production set-up is analogous to a blackface minstrel show with its asymmetrical distribution of power (see Chapter Five). *Papusza* is conceived, written and directed by a Polish director duo, a popular Polish film star (Jowita Budnik as adult and old *Papusza*) is cast in the lead role, and the film as a whole makes an elaborate effort to provide an allegedly authentic rendition of the lifestyle and worldview of Polish 'gypsies', which sets it on a par with a para-ethnographic show meant to instruct and entertain a 'white' national majority.

Here is how we get to know *Papusza*: as the title dissolves, the film opens with a low-angle shot of a prison wall reinforced at the top with barbed wire. The camera cuts to a long shot of the prison entrance, an imposing wooden gate painted in a black-and-white zigzag pattern and with a tiny cut-in window on the right side. It is an overcast, wintry day. A woman gets out of a black car and enters the building. In the next shot, we see her 'white' face in a medium close-up, lit with three-point lighting in the classic Hollywood style (**Fig. 40a**), as she tries to convince the head of the prison to release *Papusza*. The man ponders, shadows crossing his face as he turns his head to the left into a profile. We can infer from the dialogue that the woman has been sent by the Polish minister of culture. Next, the camera cuts to a long shot of a prison cell full of women. A female guard calls out the name of Bronisława Wajcs; one of the prisoners steps forward and then walks out of the frame, her face turned down. A close-up of *Papusza*'s personal items follows as they are returned to her one by one: a pair of round golden earrings, a ring, a pen, a lighter, a notebook, a gemstone necklace, an amulet-like bag, a set of tarot cards, and a feather. The camera cuts again to a long shot of the prison entrance. *Papusza* is still inside, but we can see that she is walking towards the exit, because her face is bobbing within the frame of the small cut-in window. In the next shot, already outside, she is ushered into the backseat of the car and when the car starts moving, the camera cuts – for the very first time – to a close-up of *Papusza*. For a good few seconds, we can observe her dark profile, silhouetted against the light coming in from the car window (**Fig. 40b**).¹¹⁶

116 Similar is the introduction of Marlene Dietrich's 'gypsy' character in *Golden Earrings* (1947). Lydia finds herself in the woods at night, when the English colonel –



Fig. 40a and Fig. 40b. Screenshots from Papusza's introduction scene: an employee from the Ministry of Culture (Maja Meissner) and a peripheral character; the first close-up of the main character Papusza (Jowita Budnik) (*Papusza*, 2013, Dir. Joanna Kos-Krauze and Krzysztof Krauze).

One may wonder why of all possible beginnings, the filmmakers have chosen to mark Papusza as a 'petty criminal' instead of introducing her, say, as a 'Holocaust survivor' or as a 'self-aware poetess' by showing us an extreme close-up of her handwriting. It is also astounding *what* the camera, assisted by the lighting, singles out as important for us to pay attention to in this introduction scene. We should take a good look of the prison building, the camera seems to say, and its thick concrete wall, its entrance accentuated by the black-and-white paintwork, its director and guards, its cells with locked metal doors, and its inmates in drab, shapeless prison uniforms. We should examine Papusza's modest belongings, metonymically describing their owner and invoking, by chance or not, associations with typical female 'gypsy' activities, like smoking, divination and witchcraft. We should register the face of the woman from the Polish ministry rendered perfectly visible and white by the lighting, even though the character has an episodic role and is not even introduced by name. The camera draws our attention to all these details, while simultaneously denying us visual access to Papusza's face.

The face of the nameless Polish woman is handled in the modus of the 'white' mask: it is shown in full view with 'normal' lighting,

and by extension the viewer – first casts his eyes upon her. According to the film script, the atmosphere is "[m]oon-shadowed, eerie." The camera goes with the colonel and a description is given of his first sight of Lydia: "[n]ear a large rock, A WOMAN is kneeling with her back to the camera. She is bent over a fire built deep in the ground, and so cleverly concealed that it is scarcely visible. A faint glow, however, silhouettes her darkly" (Butler 16). Later in the film, however, we do get to see close-ups of Marlene Dietrich's delightful and theatrically blackened face. Her role in the film is that of an ordinary 'gypsy', not of a prominent poetess like Papusza. As noted earlier, *Golden Earrings* belongs to the category of films that take a subversively playful stance towards antigypsy clichés.

which makes it appear conventionally white, its colour emphasised by the frame that her dark hair and equally dark fur lapels form, as well as by the shadowy background. The woman's face receives 'normal', that is to say individualising, visibility, and as such it does not draw special attention to itself; viewers will register it as the default way of staging and illuminating a figure. At the same time, the 'normal' face of the ministry employee provides an important reference for comparison¹¹⁷ – not only in this scene but also in the entire film – for the camera never grants the privilege of 'normality' to Papisza. There is not a single close-up of her face in full view in daylight or with three-point lighting with a frontal key light in the entire 126 minutes of the film. The unfavourable treatment of the titular character evokes even greater puzzlement when one considers the fact that the role of adult and old Papisza is performed by Jowita Budnik, a well-known Polish actress with a wide emotional range and a captivating face that has a lot to offer to the camera. The visual negation of Papisza's individuality, presence and agency, the aesthetic segregation of the film's main character, also becomes obvious when one compares Kos-Krauze and Krauze's work with *Yentl* (1983, Dir. Barbra Streisand). In fact, it is enough to take a brief look at the posters of the two films to see the diametrically different approaches they have to their main characters' facial visibility, which needless to say strongly affects the manner in which spectators identify with the female protagonists. Again, a biographical film about a young woman from a Polish ethnic minority, *Yentl* tells the story of Yentl Mendel, a girl living in an Ashkenazi shtetl in Poland in 1904, who, just like her contemporary Papisza, is drawn to learning and fights to have her own way in an oppressively patriarchal society. The starring role is performed by Barbra Streisand, whose expressive face the audience can enjoy throughout the entire film, shown in numerous close-ups and lavished with light from various sources.

In the numerous debates I have had about Papisza's diminished visibility in Krauze's film, the counterargument has been raised that her shadowy portrayal reflects the character's marginal position in society, and that the film's aesthetics should be interpreted as a critique

117 My critical approach draws on Dyer's discussion of movie lighting techniques and the construction of 'whiteness'. Dyer focuses on face lighting and articulates its functions, stressing that "the face is seen as both the most important thing in an image, and also, as a consequence, the control of the visual quality of everything else", and also that "[m]ovie lighting of the face is at the heart of ordinary production" (88–89).

of Polish mainstream society for averting its eyes from the Romni poetess. Here, I have to note that among the voices defending *Papusza*, Urs Heftrich has been the most vocal. My differing position, however, is informed by the view that “images are much better understood as framing the conditions of possibility – that is, in influencing what can and cannot be seen, thought, discussed, and articulated” (Bleiker 320). Later in this chapter, I also compare the invisibility of the title heroine with that which the camera makes accessible for the spectator and rejoices itself in ‘seeing’. In this context, it is worth pondering one more general question: what would become of films if we agreed that filmmakers were entitled to deny facial visibility and voice to, say, female characters or people forced into slavery, on the grounds that women or people forced into slavery, as a rule, have no visibility nor the right to speak in society?

7.3.3 The Strategy of Diminished Light

The establishing sequence which introduces us to adult *Papusza* is characteristic of the film’s idiosyncratic visual style; unobtrusively but quite successfully, it marginalises and de-individualises its titular character by depriving her of facial lighting. Most of the time, the camera shows *Papusza* from a distance – in a medium shot or a medium-long shot – either in three-quarters view with strands of uncombed hair across her face, often smoking or looking down, or in profile (**Fig. 41a**, **Fig. 44a**, **Fig. 45a**), or from the back (**Fig. 41b** and **Fig. 43b**).¹¹⁸ In a number of highly dramatic scenes, *Papusza* is shown in silhouetted profile: when she writes poetry at home; when she asks Jerzy Ficowski (Antoni Pawlicki) to burn her poems; or when she herself burns her poems. There is also a recurrent use of shots that circumvent *Papusza*’s face while

118 In a number of scenes, *Papusza* is shown for relatively long stretches of time from the back. The standard repertoires of character shots commonly used in films (like a close-up or a medium shot, etc.) do not list a shot that shows a character from the back. It is self-evident that this type of shot, which should probably be better called an anti-shot, does not add to the figure characterisation and is therefore not considered “one of the fundamental building blocks of cinema”, to use Blaine Brown’s definition (20), nor is there a special term to denote it (cf. Brown 22). One short note: when examining the narrative use of lighting, Brown gives an example from the film *The Natural* (1984, Dir. Barry Levinson) and its *femme fatale*. The scholar explains that the Lady in Black is first presented to the viewer in silhouette and from the back, further adding that this female character is “[u]sually portrayed backlit or in shadow, as befits her evil nature” (71).



Fig. 41a and Fig. 41b. Screenshots from *Papusza* (2013): Jerzy Ficowski (Antoni Pawlicki) bringing Papusza a newspaper with her published poems and her pay; Papusza (Jowita Budnik) selling the pen that Jerzy Ficowski gave her as token of his friendship.

centring on another character, again in emotionally charged moments that invite a psychological study of her inner state and therefore a close-up. When Papusza receives the news that her work has been published in the Polish media, we get to see her posed in profile in half-light, while Jerzy is filmed face-on (**Fig. 41a**). When she sells the pen that Jerzy has given to her as a special gift, we get to see the back of her head in an over-the-shoulder shot, and the shop owner's face shot in full view (**Fig. 41b**). These are some of the numerous examples. The film's lighting scheme credits its central character with diminished light, showing Papusza illuminated by a bonfire in the recurrent night scenes, as a silhouette in the background, with her face marred by shadows, or enveloped in smoke, or behind falling rain (**Fig. 45b**). For the most part, the cinematography adheres to a strategy of obstruction, limiting the viewer's visual access to the protagonist, while, at the same time, it follows the aesthetic conventions of realism. That the film is able to efface its own artifice and pass for a regular biopic is in itself a remarkable artistic feat. Papusza's partial visibility is purposefully staged and well calculated scene for scene; the effect is also aided by the interplay of camera perspective, body posture in front of the camera and physical objects placed between the camera and the protagonist. One may only wonder why all this effort to limit the light on Papusza's face when the film is dedicated to her.

7.3.4 The Film's Take on the Ideal of 'Whiteness'

From a cinematographic point of view, it is the ideal of 'whiteness' that plays the main role in *Papusza*, not the Romani poetess. What is at stake in this Polish film is 'whiteness' in its threefold manifestation – as a

lighting convention that ensures facial visibility, as a set of aspirational values, and as an 'ethno-racial' national marker. The filmmakers present their main character as a borderline figure of ambivalent colour, one that oscillates between the cultured Polish majority and the illiterate 'gypsy' minority. She is shown to be 'non-white' when compared to Polish 'white' females, yet 'whiter' than other 'gypsy' women. This is where her value lies: Kos-Krauze and Krauze's Papisza is a curiosity, an exception – not an exceptional human being herself, but rather an exceptional 'gypsy' who is drawn to the symbol of 'whiteness', i.e. to written culture, to the elevated art of poetry and to Polish men of letters. Papisza is the only one among her fellow people who is literate; a voracious learner, she teaches herself to read and write at the risk of being ostracised. There are several scenes in the film which reveal the brutal aggression that Papisza's educatedness triggers in some of the 'gypsy' males. In community gatherings, it is her solitary voice that advocates for school education and sedentary life; nobody else seems to place value on the attainments of the national culture. Thus, the sympathy created for Papisza underlines the abusive and violent behaviour of her uneducated fellow 'gypsies', ensuring antipathy for them, emphasising their distinct difference to her but also the threat that their incorrigible backwardness poses to the cultured 'whites'. This juxtaposition also underscores the refinement and sophistication of the Polish, whose claim to Europeaness and whose elevated sense of 'white' self is asserted as the default value through the film's visual design; their 'whiteness' is validated as normality.

There is one scene [30'51:31'25] in which Papisza's aspiration to 'whiteness' is visualised so artfully that it reads like a textbook definition, mobilising almost all the layers of meaning linked to this cultural ideal. A high-angle shot shows young Papisza at night in the forest, sitting alone by the light of a burning log and teaching herself to read. She has a black cloth over her head and body to protect her from the night chill and the coming rain, her face is smeared with dirt and her hair tousled (**Fig. 42a**). In these precarious circumstances, the 'gypsy' girl spells out letter by letter the word "Adonis", which she then repeats five times during the scene; the name of Adonis is meant to evoke images of ancient Greek statues, to wit, lofty models of male beauty and perfection.¹¹⁹ An insert zooms in on the word "Adonis": through Pap-

119 Visual references to the marble-white sculptures of antiquity is an established topos in film narratives that claim 'whiteness' for European nations. A particu-

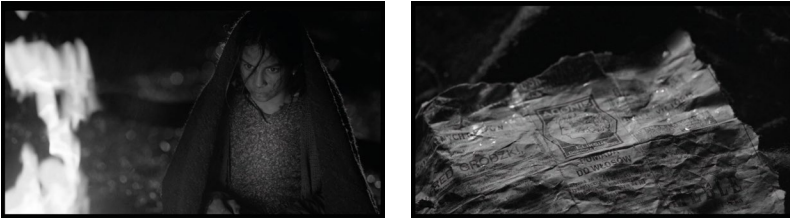


Fig. 42a and Fig. 42b. Screenshots from *Papusza* (2013): young Papisza (Paloma Mirga) learning to read by the light of a self-made fire on a rainy night in the forest; a line drawing of a ‘white’ male, where the meaning of ‘whiteness’ can be decoded, all at once, as a social norm, as an ‘ethno-racial’ category and as a representational convention.

usza’s magnifying glass, one after the other we can see the big printed letters that make up the word. The next insert, however, dismisses all these lofty associations to reveal an image that is humorously mundane in comparison, but just as symbolic. It turns out that Papisza is gazing at a newspaper advertisement of men’s hair pomade, the camera re-focusing on a line drawing of a gentleman’s profile (**Fig. 42b**). Through the editing, Papisza’s illicit passion for books and learning is thus mockingly devalued, linked to a cheap promotional drawing of a ‘white’ dandy (the line drawing is made on a white sheet of paper, so that the dandy’s skin colour is identical with that of the newspaper’s neutral background). In a wry play of associations, the image of the desirable ‘white’ Polish male is connoted in this scene with classic antiquity, sophisticated stylishness and a literally white skin colour (cf. Dyer 111).

The ‘white’ and ‘non-white’ imagery in the film spawns a line of dichotomies that give the structure to its implicit message: the colour antinomy is used to mark skin colour difference, but in addition to that, it is overlaid with a number of identity-forming attributes. These attributes are imagined by default to be in place for the Polish national

larly good illustration here is Leni Riefenstahl’s technically innovative documentary *Olympia* (1938). The film’s 24-minute-long prologue constructs a genealogy that connects the ancient Acropolis to the modern Olympic Games in Berlin. In the opening sequence, the camera presents a gallery of marble statues, lingering on the faces of Alexander the Great, Ares, Aphrodite, Apollo, etc. all drenched in hazy light that gives them almost an ‘alive’ look; then it moves on to the sculpted muscular body of Erwin Huber, blending it with the stylised movements of female athletes to finally present the parade of national teams in Berlin, the Germans clad from head to toe in glowing white.

majority and to be absent for Polish 'gypsies'.¹²⁰ In one of her conversations with Jerzy, Papisza formulates the difference between the two groups by inferring a causal relationship between physical traits and cultural traditions:

I have black eyes; you have green eyes but we see the world just the same. Because the world is there. *We* see the world just the same, but we live differently. Your people are strong; mine are weak, because *we* have no science or memory. Maybe that's for the better. If Gypsies had memory, they would all die of worry. [48'19:49'50] [my translation of the German subtitles; my emphasis, R.M.]

One should bear in mind that Papisza is the mouthpiece of the script-writers, who reproduce the common slippage, described by Dyer, whereby 'ethno-racial' markers become conflated with cultural ones (cf. 61–70). The dialogue, with the two different "we" in it, also signals Papisza's borderline position, her 'ethno-racial'/national and cultural in-betweenness that will also become the source of her personal tragedy.

Papisza's yearning after 'whiteness' culminates in her infatuation with the Polish poet Jerzy Ficowski, who, following the paradigm of 'whiteness', is unable to reciprocate her feelings, because he himself is apparently caught in the snarl of this ideal. The character of Jerzy is motivated by the specific position he occupies in the aspirational matrix

120 One scene early on in the film constructs in a very deliberate manner an opposition between the Polish majority and Polish 'gypsies' with regard to memory. It is a short dialogue between the poet Jerzy, Papisza's little son Tarzan and Papisza. In a playful mode, Tarzan grabs Jerzy's notebook and runs away with it. Jerzy chases after the boy and the following dialogue ensues:

Tarzan: What do you write there?

Jerzy: I write poems.

Tarzan: What are poems?

Jerzy: Poems will let me remember tomorrow how I felt yesterday.

Tarzan: Doesn't it hurt your head. I would kill myself.

Papisza: In Romani "yesterday" and "tomorrow" is the same. [00'21'50:00'22'20]

It is presumptuous to suggest that only the literate majority has memory as opposed to the illiterate 'gypsies' who, as Tarzan's reply suggests, do not have the body constitution for memory work (remembering gives them physical pain), for there are other ways for conserving and transmitting knowledge besides written texts. Let us also be reminded here that many Roma made a living with itinerant cinema, so again it is presumptuous to portray the minority as averse to the fruits of enlightenment.



Fig. 43a and Fig. 43b. Screenshots from *Papusza* (2013): Wanda Ficowska (Joanna Niemirska), a peripheral character, asking her husband if Papusza was in love with him; a ten-second take of Papusza’s back (Jowita Budnik) after parting with Jerzy Ficowski and disclosing her feelings to him in an unreciprocated kiss [57’38:57’47].

of ‘whiteness’: as a Pole and a man of letters, he is an embodiment of ‘whiteness’, but as a male, he is less ‘white’ than Polish women and therefore irresistibly drawn to their light. The cinematic portrait of the Polish intellectual is modelled on the pattern “dark desire for the light”, both a lighting scheme and a metaphoric relationship that film lighting constructs between male and female characters, all of which is discussed in detail in Dyer’s chapter on the glow of ‘white’ women (139). This is the underlying logic that explains Jerzy’s indifference to ‘gypsy’ girls, his markedly asexual interest in ambiguously ‘white’ Papusza and his overt passion, later on, for his ‘white’ (Polish) wife. Wanda Ficowska (Joanna Niemirska) has a marginal role in the story – she is mentioned by name only in the film credits – yet we do get a 30-second glimpse of her delightful, young face shown in full view in a medium shot [1’11’33:1’12’04]. Several times during the sequence, Wanda’s face catches the direct sunlight, which gives her skin that highly cherished translucent glow. The frame composition also uses the effect of internal framing to draw our attention to the character’s face: Wanda is shown from the chest up, moving left and right of the screen, but for a moment, her ‘white’ face is framed emphatically by the woodwork of her painting stand (**Fig. 43a**).

The scene in which we see young Papusza admire the image of a ‘white’ male and spell the name of Adonis provides a key to her life story: it helps us understand Papusza’s desire for education as well as her passion for the highly cherished national poet, a passion that he never reciprocates. This scene, however, is a figment of the filmmakers’ imagination, which is more revealing of their specific perspective on historical events than that of Papusza’s.

There is also one scene in which young Papisza stares at a male torso cast in bronze, a brief encounter which, apart from displaying a model of classic beauty in a black material, has, in my view, little to offer. Papisza is sold as a teenage bride to a much older 'gypsy' who – we are shown – mistreats and disrespects her, scoffs at her reading and writing skills, cheats on her and is often physically violent. The fact that teenage Papisza is forced into wedlock is shown to be highly traumatic for the girl, because we see her swearing an oath against having children with her husband. One may ask whether this really happened. At the same time, had the film shown Jerzy Ficowski admire a female torso in a black material, had the film suggested that the famed Polish poet is drawn physically to Papisza, it would have been possible to consider its stance subversive to the prevailing aesthetics of racialisation. Yet Joanna Kos-Krauze and Krzysztof Krauze's story repeatedly suggests that there is an impermeable line of difference between the Polish majority and the Roma minority, making it crystal clear that Ficowski is not and cannot be drawn to the talented Romni. Again, this is a view which has strong antigypsy undertones and which is imposed by the filmmakers, reflecting their own interpretation of historical events, for it is not possible to know with full certainty how the Polish poet felt for the Romni poetess.

7.3.5 Face Lighting and Skin Colour

There is a noticeable difference in the way the faces of Paloma Mirga, a young, unknown actress, and Jowita Budnik, an actress with star status in Poland, are modelled by the lighting. Paloma Mirga, in the role of young Papisza, is marked as distinctly 'non-white' (**Fig. 44b**), while the skin colour of Jowita Budnik, playing adult Papisza, is left uncommented on, so that at times it is clearly visible that she has an identical skin tone to that of other 'white' characters (**Fig. 45b**) and thus appears to be 'whiter' than her people; finally, old Papisza, again performed by Jowita Budnik, literally fades to a shadow of herself. On the one hand, there is ambiguity about Papisza's skin colour and, on the other hand, there is an unambiguous difference in the lighting schemes used for the two actresses.

Paloma Mirga's Papisza is portrayed as 'non-white' in terms of skin colour through the use of the lighting set-up and strategic contrasts in two-shots. There are several scenes in which she is juxtaposed to 'white' ladies: when she learns to read under the instruction of her Jewish



Fig. 44a and Fig. 44b. Screenshots from *Papusza* (2013): young Papusza (Paloma Mirga) talking about books and reading with an upper-class lady, a peripheral character; a close-up of young Papusza readied for her wedding, which takes place at night in a forest.

teacher, Papusza is posed in profile in the shadow, while her teacher's face is lit up in full view in the modus of the 'white' mask; and when Papusza talks to an upper-class lady sitting opposite her, the 'gypsy' girl is profiled and semi-silhouetted with her back to a large table-lamp – the only visible source of light in the room – while the light falls full on the 'white' lady's face and arms (**Fig. 44a**), etc. All the main characters in the film are shown without exception in medium-close shots, that is, from the chest up, but there is one close-up of Papusza, actually the only close-up in the entire film, that is particularly memorable because it stands out in many ways. It is a night portrait of Paloma Mirga wearing a white bridal veil, her face separated from the background with a 'bokeh' effect (**Fig. 44b**). The light coming from the background blur highlights the bridal veil, producing a tell-tale contrast between the white fabric and the girl's skin tone, which comes off a shade darker. The purpose of this singular close-up is nothing other than to provide



Fig. 45a and Fig. 45b. Screenshots from *Papusza* (2013): Papusza (Jowita Budnik) next to a swarthy-faced 'gypsy' female, the three women secretly examining the contents of Jerzy Ficowski's bag; Papusza (Jowita Budnik) and Jerzy Ficowski (Antoni Pawlicki) standing shoulder to shoulder behind a thin curtain of rain.

a visual cue to the viewers, prompting them to perceive the character as 'non-white' in the modus of the 'gypsy' mask. The 'non-white' skin colour here is modelled through lighting, camera focus and a piece of white fabric used for a reference point of 'whiteness'. If Mirga's face were lit up with a three-point lighting against a darker background, like the Polish woman in **Fig. 41a**, her skin would have come off just as 'white'. Or, if her bridal veil were not backlit,¹²¹ it would not contrast so strongly with her face and, subsequently, her skin tone would not come across as markedly 'non-white', for it is obvious that she is filmed in dim light during a night scene.

The comparison between Paloma Mirga's 'non-white' Papusza and the 'white' Polish women in the film highlights two major predicaments that filmmakers, as a rule, have to deal with in 'gypsy'-themed films. The first question is how to construct 'non-white' skin colour that is markedly visible on the screen and that is perceived as realistic by the viewers when the actors are no different – in terms of their pro-filmic skin tone – to a great number of Europeans, those who can be very broadly described as fair-skinned brunets. This predicament can be formulated in a different way so as to reveal the potential for symbolic violence concentrated in it: the majority of Europeans can be lit up as 'non-white' if filmmakers choose to do so. Hence, the majority of Europeans can be represented on the screen in the modus of the 'gypsy' mask. It is a film convention informed by a long literary tradition that prescribes that representatives of one singled-out minority in Europe should be seen as 'non-white' or 'black'. This specific way of seeing reflects the needs of the medium, especially if the artist's goal is to create the effect of realism: as in literature, images and stories on the big screen are produced through the contrastive use of light and shadow, of the colours white and black both in their literal and figurative sense. Thus, portraying a character as 'non-white' or 'black' in the modus of the 'gypsy' mask has much more to do with the inner logic of the written or filmed story than with the objective rendering of skin tones.

121 The primary function of backlighting or rim light is to foreground the figure from behind, separating it from the background. This effect is intensified here by the camera's shallow focus, which profoundly separates and foregrounds Papusza's face by blurring the clutter in the background. Another function of backlighting is to provide definition and subtle highlights around the figure's outline, while other areas remain darker. In the screenshot, the soft back light is used to model the outline of Papusza's veil-covered head, i.e. it places emphasis on the white colour of the fabric.

The second predicament is related to the blackface set-up that ‘gypsy’-themed films often have: ‘white’ celebrity actors giving a performance in the screen face of the ‘non-white’ Other. Here, the issue for filmmakers is how to present realistically a Hollywood or national film star cast in a lead ‘gypsy’ role so as to accommodate the demands of the diegesis, on the one hand, according to which the ‘gypsy’ character is ‘black’/‘non-white’, with the audience’s pro-filmic knowledge, on the other hand, according to which the film star is ‘white’. Jowita Budnik’s Papusza is a good example here: she gains her ‘non-white’ skin colour vicariously through the delineation of Paloma Mirga’s Papusza and other ‘gypsy’ females (**Fig. 44b** and **Fig. 45a**). Jowita Budnik’s celebrity status provides one possible explanation as to why the filmmakers felt the need to use all the tactics and strategies described above to keep her face visually inaccessible. So, one may ask here: if the filmmakers were so concerned with preserving Jowita Budnik’s ‘whiteness’ on the big screen that they had to obliterate the individuality of their titular character, why didn’t they simply opt for another lead actress? Or were they simply unable to discern and acknowledge Papusza’s individuality from the very beginning?

7.3.6 A ‘Gypsy’-themed Film rather than a Historical Biography

Joanna Kos-Krauze and Krzysztof Krauze’s fiction film *Papusza* claims to take an interest in the personality of a Romani poetess, but in reality it reproduces the clichéd fascination with ‘gypsy’ lifestyle in a Romantic yet essentialist manner that places the film in the category of ‘gypsy’-themed films. In his Karlovy Vary review for *The Hollywood Reporter*, Stephen Dalton rightly observes that

barely a trace of historical or political context ever intrudes on this closed world. Only a handful of Papusza’s simple, folksy verses are quoted in the script, and nor is there much psychological insight into her character. Cursed for being self-educated and gifted by a fiercely patriarchal culture, her story becomes a kind of universal feminist fable, but low on personal detail or emotional warmth. Ultimately, *Papusza* is less of a literary biopic than a widescreen ensemble drama that recreates the lost, culturally rich world of Poland’s Roma community in the 20th century.

Also, in his film review for *Screenanarchy*, Patryk Czekaj makes the pertinent comment that

[a]lthough the movie serves its purpose as a biographical piece it doesn't put enough focus on the titular character, thus failing to reveal the complexity of a weary, troubled, emotionally imbalanced figure and a person that forever changed the way we perceive Romani culture. What we get is a rather vague description of a poet, who had to deal with a lot of criticism from the only people she could ever consider family. The character of Papisza is rarely in the foreground. That oversight gives an impression that she's there only to communicate a valuable message about Roma in general, not about the real Papisza herself. The fact that the film sparsely refers to Papisza's poetry also undermines her actual contribution to the literary world.

On the whole, the film conveys the highly questionable idea that there is an impervious line of difference between the sedentary and literate Polish majority and the nomadic and illiterate Roma minority: by showing that a nomadic lifestyle, a deep-seated hostility to education, and dysfunctional, abusive family relations constitute the minority's defining traits, the film implicitly asserts its alterity and non-integrability. It is striking that there is not a single strong relationship among Roma shown in the story, whether between friends, siblings or marriage partners. Usually, when filmmakers want to subvert antigypsy stereotypes, they stress the strong bonds, as is the case with films like *Korkoro* (2010), *Gadjo dilo* (1997), or *And the Violins Stopped Playing* (1988).

Moreover, there is a well-preserved body of poetry penned by Papisza, of which the spectator gets to hear only lame fragments. If the filmmakers were indeed interested in the titular character, why have they deprived the Romni poetess of her voice, too? It is after all a decision that the filmmakers have made as to which poems should appear in the story. The word "poems" is misleading with its plural form here, because throughout the entire film, we hear only one poem, a very short one, spoken by Papisza. It is striking that a biographical film about a celebrated poetess turns not only a blind eye but also a deaf ear to its main character and her artistic work. I see this as a tell-tale sign that the filmmakers do not take Papisza's poetic contribution seriously; in other contexts, such a treatment of a national poet would be considered downright offensive.

In conclusion, it is worth considering what the camera is drawn to: it indulges in panoramic long takes of 'gypsy' caravans moving through idyllic landscapes, all in all seven such scenes throughout the

film, alternating them with night-time crowd scenes by a picturesque bonfire, altogether four such scenes in the film. The camera's perspective betrays the filmmakers' para-ethnographic ambition to portray the community as a whole – instead of close-ups of Papsusza's face, preference is given to long takes of the 'gypsy' camp at night or bird's-eye views of it during the day.¹²² Although the film narrates historical events that can be arranged along a linear timeline, its episodic and non-chronological structure – punctuated by vignettes of 'gypsy' lifestyle – evokes the mythic world of the radical, 'non-white' Other coded with nature, night and cyclical time. As the formal analysis indicates, by re-enacting the Otherness of 'gypsies', the film stabilises and reifies by implication Polish 'white' national identity, 'whiteness' being its most valuable attribute and also a visual assertion of the nation's rightful place in the history of Europe.

7.4 Lighting Set-up and Skin Hue in Colour Film

As to the second predicament, discussed above, concerning 'gypsy'-themed films in which 'white' film stars are cast in the role of the 'non-white' Other, there are other lighting schemes worth mentioning. Directors of photography overcome this predicament by shooting the

122 The 'gypsy' camp is the most salient spatial trope of alterity in 'gypsy'-themed films. What is more, within the dominant visual regime, the image of the 'gypsy' camp has become an effective visual shorthand for ascribing radical Otherness to the supposedly eternally nomadic minority, while implicitly affirming a sedentary lifestyle as the common norm. Thus, it is not surprising that the 'gypsy' encampment is a recurrent theme in the visual arts across all of Europe. Here are some of the countless examples from the field of painting: *Rivieralandschap met zigeuners* (ca. 1585–1631) by Arent Arentsz, Rijksmuseum; *Mule Train and Gypsies in a Forest* (1612) by Jan Brueghel the Elder, Museo del Prado, Madrid; *The Gypsy Fires are Burning for Daylight's Past and Gone* (1881) by Sir James Guthrie, the Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery, University of Glasgow; *Landscape with Gypsies* (ca. 1753–1754) by Thomas Gainsborough, Tate Gallery; *Les roulettes, campement de bohémiens aux environs d'Arles* (ca. 1888) by Vincent van Gogh, Musée d'Orsay, Paris; *Wooded Landscape with Gypsies, Evening* (1745) by George Lambert, Government Art Collection, London; *Gypsies in a Landscape* (c.1790) by George Morland, Bristol Museum and Galleries Archive; *Accampamento di zingari* (1845) by Giuseppe Palizzi, Palazzo Pitti Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Florence; *Campement de tziganes, Roumanie* (ca. 1909) by Eustatiu (Eustache-Grégoire) Stoenescu, private collection; *A Beech Wood with Gypsies Round a Campfire* (ca. 1799–1801) by Joseph Turner, the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge; *The Halt at a Gypsy Camp* by Philips Wouwerman, private collection.

entire film either in bleak, low-key lighting with dull earthy colours or in mid-key lighting with saturated colours; the sought-after effect is heightened by a predilection for interior scenes, night scenes or exterior scenes with overcast weather, to the total exclusion of bright, sun-drenched settings. The outcome is that all 'gypsy' characters in the film – no matter whether they are played by 'white' celebrities or Roma extras – appear to have uniformly darker (coloured) flesh tones. These lighting schemes are particularly well-suited for modelling the 'gypsy' mask when filmmakers find it important to define 'gypsies' as 'non-white' on the level of skin colour but also choose to portray them in isolation, as an encapsulated community that has little contact to the 'white' national majority. One example is Aleksandar Petrović's auteur work *I Even Met Happy Gypsies*¹²³ (1967), almost entirely "shot in a kind of sickly and drab grey-yellow light (...) [that] perfectly suits the dreary, flat, rainy and muddy landscape", not to mention the characters' faces (Partridge). Other influential auteur films are *Gipsy Magic*¹²⁴ (1997) by Stole Popov and Emir Kusturica's *Time of the Gypsies*¹²⁵ (1988), both of which stand out with their rich colour palettes.

In an interview for *Cahiers du Cinéma*, Kusturica confirms the pre-meditated use of colour in *Time of the Gypsies*: "My film resembles their typical outfit. Underneath their shirt, they wear three shirts of different colors. Their pants look like they come from another planet. In my film about them everything is mixed, because that's the way life is" (Bertellini 153). Kusturica's statement appears in a subsection of Bertellini's

123 Petrović's film features in the modus of the 'gypsy' mask the Yugoslavian celebrity actors Bekim Fehmiu, Olivera Vučo, Bata Živojinović and Milosav Aleksić. In 1967, *I Even Met Happy Gypsies* won the Grand Prix at Cannes Film Festival, the International Critics' Prize (FIPRESCI) and the Golden Arena Prize at the 14th Yugoslav National Film Festival in Pula; the following year, it received Oscar and Golden Globe nominations for Best Foreign Film as well as the award for the Best Foreign Film featured in Czechoslovakia (cf. Sudar 123–144).

124 Stole Popov's film features in the modus of the 'gypsy' mask the non-Roma actors Miki Manojlović, Katina Ivanova, Arna Shijak, Goran Dodevski, Toni Mihajlovski, Sinolicka Trpkova and Jordanco Cevrevski. In 1997, *Gipsy Magic* was the Macedonian candidate for Oscar nomination; the same year, it won the Grand Prix "Antigone d'Or" for Best Film at the IFF Mediterranean in Montpellier, and in 1998, it received the Special Jury Award at the IFF in Izmir (stolepopov.com).

125 Kusturica's film features in the modus of the 'gypsy' mask the non-Roma actors Davor Dujmović, Bora Todorović, Predrag Laković, Sinolicka Trpkova and Mirsad Zulić. In 1989, *Time of the Gypsies* won the Best Director Award at the Cannes Film Festival, where it was also nominated for a Palme d'Or. At the 1990 César Awards in France, it was nominated for Best Foreign Film, while at the 1991 Guldbagge Awards in Sweden, it won the award for Best Foreign Film (IMDb).

book bearing the tell-tale title “Filming Gypsies’ Bodies and Colors”. Both the filmmaker’s words and the scholar’s framing text evidence that the ‘gypsy’ mask is perceived and cinematically constructed in a colour mode that sets it apart from the ‘white’ mask. Commenting on Kusturica’s cinematography, Goran Gocić notes that, “like most works of ethno cinema, colours are indeed expressive”, going on to say that “[t]he colorfulness of Kusturica’s films is not only a stereotypical metaphor, it is a literal description, for the colours are an absolutely integral element of his work’s ‘fashion statements’ and its moods.” Oblivious to the issue of skin colour, the author wraps up the topic by making a general statement about light and colour being “absolutely essential for the differentiation of ethno”, innocuously admitting that there is a whole set of cinematic devices employed in the construction of ‘ethno-racial’ alterity (139).

7.5 Conclusion

As the numerous film examples from European and US American cinema have shown so far, the performance in ‘gypsy’ mask – be it in a short sequence or over the entire length of a film – presents a rarely powerful visual storytelling tool. We can think of it as a human personification of darkness, as a visual metaphor for lack of light where the notion of darkness can be inflected to convey any of its multiple meanings: biblical, symbolic, social, psychological, ideological or aesthetic. In other words, the ‘gypsy’ mask is a visual expression of the unilluminated side of the European semiosphere, signifying the multitude of diverse phenomena that are banished to the periphery of its conscious life. No wonder that this shadowy creation has always been in great demand in the art industries. So, in their own way, films reproduce, often unwittingly, a centuries-old black-and-white regime of seeing – formed and fostered by European literature, fine art and popular media – that sets ‘gypsy’ figures as a dark/colourful background against which the ‘whiteness’ of the upper classes and/or the national majority can stand out in relief.

Filmmakers have devised numerous creative ways of visualising the intrinsically dark nature of this universally recognisable anti-hero. The ‘gypsy’ has made its appearance on the big screen as an inverted reflection of a human being (**Fig. 2**), or as an insensate man turned upside down (**Fig. 3**), or as a fallen man (**Fig. 26** and **Fig. 27**), or as a

shadowy presence (Fig. 5), or as a silhouetted dark profile (Fig. 23a and Fig. 41a), or as a face/figure in the shadow (Fig. 25a and Fig. 44a), or as a figure dressed in black or any of its non-white variations, such as soiled white, black-and-white stripes and/or patterns, signal red, a mix of variegated colours and patterns (Fig. 7, Fig. 8, Fig. 9, Fig. 24a, Fig. 46b and Fig. 47b), or finally, but significantly, as a figure of 'non-white'/'black' skin colour (Fig. 15, Fig. 31b, Fig. 49a and Fig. 49b). In the medium of film, the metaphoric and mutable meaning of darkness is often transformed into a stable somatic quality, into an epidermal fact. All the while, the 'gypsy' figure is imagined as an antithesis to the normative human being (Fig. 1), invariably an embodiment of light – the so-called 'white' man, whose 'whiteness' can signify one or more of the following: social class (be it aristocrats or the bourgeoisie in the West, or the working class in the former Eastern bloc), nationality, European descent, and 'white' 'race'. This accounts for the immense plasticity and non-specificity of the 'gypsy' anti-hero – both in narrative and pictorial terms – as s/he appears to be equally threatening to feudal, democratic, socialist or post-socialist societies.

Unlike common types and stereotypes in film, the 'gypsy' figure has a remarkably wide range of application: it can be brought to life at any given historical phase of modernity in any national culture on the Old Continent or in the USA, and it can be contrasted with any socio-political form of organisation and its model human being. What makes it particularly suitable for the big screen is that the 'gypsy' mask comes with its own anti-narrative, its own *noir* aesthetics and its own anti-world. And even though the medium of film has contributed substantially to the racialisation of the 'gypsy' character, this imaginary figure continues to be a highly mutable construct, an empty signifier also visually; a handful of non-specific visual cues are enough to revive the metaphoric meaning of its intrinsic dark nature: a black cloak, a golden earring, a setting with low-key lighting. And if anti-Jewish or anti-African-American figures are little accepted in cinema nowadays, the 'gypsy' mask – with its negative life-script, with its black visual aesthetics and its titillating netherworld – continues to be regarded as a dramaturgically indispensable tool

If we conceive of the 'gypsy' mask as a structure of human psyche, as the unacknowledged part of one's own mental universe, then we can better understand its relationship to the aesthetics of realism and the market demand for 'authenticity'. Filmmakers are not interested in Roma but in re-creating the psychic reality of the cultural anti-norm;

the great masters among them are able to deliver extremely fascinating, very cinematic and just as lucrative film spectacles of anti-human beings who speak an anti-language, display an anti-behaviour and live in an anti-universe. When shooting in Roma villages or town ghettos, the filmmakers' gaze switches to the selective filter regime of the anti-norm, so that the mechanical eye of the camera is drawn to images of fascinating and photogenic deviations. Such 'gypsy'-themed films are nothing but catalogues of human depravity, meticulous para-ethnographic documentations of its various forms. Certainly, it is possible to shoot a film with an antigypsy gaze among the poorest of the poor within one's own ethno-national group, but such a spectacle would be unsettling and highly unflattering for the national culture, as well as dangerous for the filmmaker. It is much safer to meditate on one's own negative and negated traits by exporting them onto a stigmatised ethno-social group. The psychic anti-world is thus rendered real, while the masquerade that the dominant culture stages on the big screen is reified through ethnification, culturalisation and aesthetisation. Put bluntly, the Roma are scapegoated not only in socio-political but also in purely aesthetic developments. It has to be said here that Roma have become target of this symbolic violence due to unlucky historical circumstances; if by some magic they all become university professors and are no longer available in slums for artists to authenticate their studies of human aberration, the 'gypsy' underworld will continue to be a fascinating literary and cinematic topos. For other marginal groups can be blackened with the stigma, forced to perform in a 'gypsy' mask and then be celebrated as the 'real' ones using all the many available filmmaking tools and devices.

8

Claims to Truth and Authentication Strategies

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There is no question that ‘gypsy’-themed films are fictional works of art: they are scripted, produced and officially categorised as fiction films, that is, as highly crafted figments of human imagination. Yet these films lay claim to truth and authenticity in a way which invites their viewers to decode them as documents of scientifically sanctioned knowledge and facts. It is highly paradoxical that while staging an ‘ethno-racial’ masquerade and featuring popular actors in gypsyface, these films are in a position to claim expert authority on the subject matter of ‘gypsy’ culture, customs and way of life, and even to openly boast an ethnographically truthful portrayal of ‘gypsies’ in general. The *sui generis* relationship that ‘gypsy’-themed films establish with the socio-historical world calls for sustained critical scrutiny. It is necessary to examine the ways in which this type of films harness the evidentiary power of the mechanically recorded image and sound to endow their fictional storyworlds with an aura of authenticity. The cinematic effect of documentary (ethnographic) authenticity forms the aesthetic core of ‘gypsy’-themed films. What is more, ‘gypsy’ authenticity is the yardstick by which the films’ artistic merit is generally measured and it also appears to be their main selling point. Elusive, multifaceted and continually shifting with technological advancement, the aesthetic quality of authenticity specific to ‘gypsy’-themed films is, needless to say, meticulously scripted, directed and staged. The power of its aura rests in the ability to transpose the purely fictional into ‘a slice of reality’, to put it in a nutshell (and not unimportantly, this reality effect can also be evoked by one or more carefully choreographed

scenes even in films in which the 'gypsy' theme is peripheral). So, my aim in this chapter is to examine the stylistic and genre ambiguity of 'gypsy'-themed films, their epistemological stance which obliterates the distinction between made-up fictions and scientific truths, between screen images and pro-filmic reality, between cinematic storyworlds and ethnographic documents. The key questions to be tackled here highlight the framing effect of the film's self-promotional materials as well as the role of the various types of elements that go into the script of 'gypsy' authenticity: How does the film present itself and its relation to the socio-historical world? Does it lay claim to authenticity? If so, what aesthetic strategies does the film pursue to attest to its alleged truthfulness? What elements are used to produce an effect of authenticity? How does the created effect of authenticity come to bear upon the film's storyworld, on the delineation of its 'gypsy' characters and on its bottom-line message? What paratexts are circulated in support of the film's truth claims?

The following pages shed light on the racialising aesthetics of authentication specific to 'gypsy'-themed films, breaking it down to its main types of elements and offering concrete examples from a broad range of films, most of which are already familiar to the reader. The various elements and strategies of authentication are grouped and critically scrutinised under three main headings: paratexts, visual style and sound design.

8.1 Paratexts

Coined by the French literary scholar Gérard Genette, the term 'paratext' describes an assortment of auxiliary texts that surround and pre-define a main literary text, and whose primary purpose is to facilitate the reception and consumption of this main text (cf. Genette 261–272). Genette's analytical approach to paratextual phenomena in literature has also found wide application in film and media studies.¹²⁶ In the context of films, we can say that paratexts – the various texts situated on the threshold to the cinematic text, such as the title of the film, the director's note or the blurb on the DVD back cover – assist spectators in making the transition from the socio-historical world

126 See, for instance, Cornelia Klecker's article "The other kind of film frames: a research report on paratexts in film".

(outside) to the storyworld of the film (inside). An important feature that defines these thresholds of textual interpretation is their authorship: according to Genette's definition, paratexts are auxiliary texts produced by the same industry that has created the main text, and as such they possess a certain degree of authority and can control the way in which audiences engage with the main text. In other words, paratexts are powerful framing tools and they are customarily deployed by the film industry to pre-structure the spectators' horizon of expectations and shape their knowledge of and position towards a film. One of the first and basic questions regulated through paratexts is the film's relationship to the socio-historical world, the question whether it is a fictional work dealing with allegorical truths, or whether it is a non-fictional work presenting arguments and verifiable facts. Paratexts are not only sites of transition but also sites of transaction, because they forge a 'communicative contract' between spectator and text (cf. Elsaesser 46). Consequently, one and the same text written or filmed in an aesthetically liminal style will be subject to two completely different readings depending on whether it is attributed to a fiction or a non-fiction genre, whether it is labelled a 'novel' or an 'autobiography', a 'fictional' or a 'documentary' film.

Paying attention to paratexts as well as to other promotional or scholarly texts of paratextual import is crucial to understanding the phenomenon of 'gypsy'-themed films and their liminal aesthetics poised on the border between the fictional and the documentary (the ethnographic). The assorted set of paratexts surrounding films about 'gypsies' is another key element in the intricate technology of truth-production employed and exploited by the filmmaking industry. In my research, I have considered mainly, but not only, the official publicity materials which accompany the films, that is, texts with a high degree of paratextual authority, such as distributor manuals, press kits, director's commentaries, print/filmed interviews with members of the film crew, DVD extras, etc. It is notable that, by and large, these paratexts resort to a proven repertoire of rhetorical gestures, openly inviting spectators to decode 'gypsy'-themed films as ethnographic documents. As we are about to see from the examples, there is a long-standing tradition in promoting this genre of fiction films via their documentary (ethnographic) truth value. Reduced to their core message, the accompanying paratexts usually make one or more of the following truth-claiming statements:

Claims to Truth and Authentication Strategies

- the film affords an insider's glimpse into the world of 'gypsies';
- the film director has grown up with Roma friends, has lived among Roma for a certain period of time or has done research in Roma quarters;
- the film director feels himself to be a 'gypsy' and has a very special personal relationship to 'gypsies';
- the film is based on a true story or on police records; or it is inspired or provoked by a newspaper article;
- reputable scholars who are expert on Roma issues have been consulted for the film;
- the film features real 'gypsies', that is, Roma non-actors, also called 'naturals', Romani folklore/Gypsy music and/or Romani language;
- the film has been shot in a real Roma quarter.

The reality of the 'gypsy' underworld, the truth about 'gypsies' as a single group (perceived as an ethnic minority with an outsider status to the national project and/or as a social underclass incongruous with the higher social strata) is undoubtedly the main product that 'gypsy'-themed films painstakingly craft and enthusiastically advertise. It is hardly surprising that a similar preoccupation with authenticity was also evinced by blackface minstrelsy performers; as Roediger notes, "[m]instrel entertainers both claimed to be pupils, or even kin, of the Blacks they mocked and as passionately made clear that they were white. (...) early minstrels delighted in claiming to be a 'student of the negro' and therefore 'authentic' performers" (116–117). Obviously, modern 'ethno-racial' masquerade works with many 'non-white' faces and it will be interesting to explore how the aesthetics of authentication has been used in the portrayal of Native Americans in early film¹²⁷ or in the portrayal of Jews in Nazi film. Still, it is hard to think of any other minority nowadays whose cinematic portrayal continues to be surrounded with such truth-validation stories. Moreover, we should not forget that the truth claims voiced through the publicity texts are not merely a rhetorical device but work in tandem with the films' cinematographic style and their audio-visual design, which are also primed

127 As Marrubio comments, the claim to authenticity is a central aesthetic and advertising element of early Indian film, and it was achieved by means of different artistic strategies. Similar to 'gypsy'-themed films, this focus on authenticity results in "a dangerous play of reality and fantasy within which the Native American's relationship to white America is always that of the primitive racialized Other" (38).

to produce an emotive effect of realness. The uniqueness of this paratextual strategy of authentication as well as its ridiculousness will become apparent to the reader if s/he carries out a mental test and considers the statements listed above after replacing 'gypsies'/Roma with Germans, Scots, Serbs, Armenians or Americans. The sense of absurdity aroused through the mental act of substitution actually betrays the degree to which the reader's internalised (automatic) view of reality coincides with the 'white' modus of the European gaze; the higher the sense of absurdity aroused, the greater the overlap.

It appears that these truth-claiming paratexts also establish the main criteria for the general reception and scholarly assessment of 'gypsy'-themed films. Rather than questioning the epistemological stance of the works, the majority of scholars and film critics, just like popular audiences, take the truth claims at face value and stay with the issue of authenticity and ethnographic documentariness. As Sean Homer observes:

the prevailing critical reception of Roma films (...) wants to read all feature films as ethnographic documents. We do not, however, ask these questions – Is this an ethnographically accurate portrait of contemporary North American society? What experience does the director have which allows them to represent North American culture in such a way? – every time we watch a Hollywood movie, so why should we ask them when we watch films about the Roma? (185)

Homer wonders also why film critics do not concern themselves with such customary questions as the film's technical virtuosity or narrative complexity; why authenticity seems to be almost the only criterion by which the artistic merit of 'gypsy'-themed films is judged. One way of interpreting Homer's pertinent critique is to say that 'gypsy'-themed films are and behave like regular films which reproduce the 'white' modus of the European gaze towards their protagonists and, therefore, should be assessed like the majority of film productions, that is, solely with recourse to the prevalent criteria for artistic achievement in the field of filmmaking. (Indeed, there are some, though very few, fiction films in which protagonists marked as Roma are portrayed in the visual regime of normality. Among these cinematographic rarities are two film-jewels scripted by Sir Steven Knight: *Gypsy Woman* (2001, Dir. Sheree Folkson) and *Peaky Blinders* (2013), as well as *The Garbage*

Helicopter (2015, Dir. Jonas Selberg Augustsén) and *Aferim!* (2015, Dir. Radu Jude).)

There is, however, another way of construing Homer's critique, which is also the critical position maintained here, and it is to view the selection of films introduced in Chapter Four as artworks with a heightened ideological load that reproduce the flipside of the European gaze, its 'gypsy' modus. On the surface of it, 'gypsy'-themed films appear to negotiate the 'truth' and the 'reality' of the 'ethno-racial' Other, while in fact they are concerned with producing, negotiating and stabilising the 'truth' and the sense of 'reality' of the 'ethno-racial' Self. Conceived as 'ethno-racial' masquerades, these fiction films act like skilled entertainers who strive to boost the self-image of the national majority by fabricating and spreading malevolent slander about an underprivileged ethno-social group; and to prove themselves right, they mobilise the entire film propaganda machine.

Probably the most extreme case in point here is the Nazi propaganda film *The Eternal Jew* (1940, Dir. Fritz Hippler). Though promoted as a documentary film, it resorts to the very same mix of elements and strategies that I have identified in relation to 'gypsy'-themed films and their racialising aesthetics of authentication: an ideologically loaded narrative which claims to show Jews in their original state, before "they put on the mask of civilized Europeans"¹²⁸ (Clinefelter 135). The film's anti-Semitic message is substantiated with footage from a real Jewish ghetto, featuring real Jews who are listed in the credits as playing themselves. Reinforced by the music and the narration, this cinematic compilation of para-ethnographic documentary and fictional material (including excerpts from Weimar-era and Yiddish films) is also surrounded by authoritative truth-claiming paratexts. The Nazi press backed the film's racist stance by disseminating the following director's statement: "we let the filmed Jews be on their own and tried to shoot in moments when they were unaware of the camera's presence. Consequently, we have rendered the Ghetto Jews in an unprejudiced manner, real to life as they live and as they react in their own surroundings" (Clinefelter 136). In her article "A Cinematic Construction of Nazi Anti-Semitism", Joan Clinefelter provides a superb dissection of Hippler's "archetypal anti-Semitic film", painstakingly outlining the types of components used for its

128 Clinefelter quotes here the English translation of the film's voiceover narration; the translation is appended in Stig Hornshøj-Møller and David Culbert's article "'Der ewige Jude' (1940): Joseph Goebbels' unequaled monument to anti-Semitism".

composition (134). And although a more circumstantial comparison to antigypsy films promises to yield valuable insights into filmic racism, I will halt at this point and return to our main topic here. By drawing a parallel to Hippler's crudely anti-Semitic film, my primary intention has been to place the universal fascination with 'gypsy' authenticity, its unquestioned normality in film, in a new and estranging light and thus to make it clear that an adequate assessment of 'gypsy'-themed films should *not* discard the issue of authenticity but should rather approach it as an essential component of a socially constructed system of power and knowledge, i.e. as a key element of the dominant racist/antigypsy discourse. Here the question is not whether the films are 'right' or 'wrong' about the ethno-social group stigmatised as 'gypsies'; this is a naïve question which rests on the assumption that "reality" is self-evident, that "truth" is immediately "seizable" by the camera, while characters are "fantasized as flesh-and-blood entities existing somewhere 'behind' the diegesis", to refer to Shohat and Stam (cf. 180, 215). Approaching the films as "fictive-discursive constructs", the critical inquiry should address and expose instead their technology of fabricating authoritative cinematic evidence about 'gypsies' (215). What is valued as authentic and truthful, and what is not? Who comes to speak on the matter of truth and authenticity, and who does not? What evidentiary strategies are employed to establish the films' position of authority and to perpetuate their homogenising and racialising truth claims? What functions does the effect of (ethnographic) 'gypsy' authenticity fulfil for the dominant culture? To begin tackling these questions, I present a broad selection of paratexts and other auxiliary texts that accompany and endorse the 'gypsy'-themed films under scrutiny here and thus largely predetermine their reception. Not only are these texts strategically employed to lend credence to the respective films, reiterating one or more of the truth-claiming formulas outlined above, but they also pinpoint some of the key elements that go into the script of 'gypsy' authenticity, elements such as costumes, setting, human and other props, music, language, etc. Consider the following examples; the quoted texts are listed in a chronological order, following the year of the film's release.

Drama in a Gypsy Camp near Moscow (1908) | Russia

The filmographic section of *Silent Witnesses*, Yuri Tsivian's history of early Russian film, opens with an entry on *Drama in a Gypsy Camp*

near Moscow, the first film produced by Alexander Khanzhonkov, one of Russia's pioneer film producers. The filmographic entry consists of the film synopsis framed by three other texts: the film credits, a short commentary by Paolo Cherchi Usai, one of the book editors, and an excerpt from Khanzhonkov's diary. The spatial organisation of the texts on the page replicates the way paratexts surround and control the interpretation of a film text: the film credits appear above the film synopsis, the editorial commentary is placed in the page margin, flanking the film synopsis to the right, whereas the diary excerpt comes afterwards, as a final note. In the film credits, we read: "Cast: gypsies" (46). Paolo Cherchi Usai's commentary informs us that:

Despite its flaws, this gypsy drama insists on an atmosphere drawn from real life: the final shot of the suicide of Aleko, victim of his own demonic fever, turns the *dénouement* into a symbol of figurative harshness. (46)

By contrast, Khanzhonkov's diary excerpt throws light on the production background:

We decided to shoot a thematic feature film. Our attention was drawn to a sprawling gypsy camp near Moscow. It had everything we needed: a young gypsy girl who danced with great suppleness, a handsome gypsy with a demonic face, a crowd of old gypsies and young gypsy-children who were unusually noisy and dirty. The scenario was knocked up hastily, but produced a good impression: it had selfless love, an irrepressible passion for gambling (the gypsy loses his young wife at cards), bloody vengeance, and dancing without end. (48)

These authoritative claims to authenticity made by the filmmakers are also uncritically reproduced in a plethora of academic articles.¹²⁹ Just

129 In summary form, Rachel Morley offers further evidence of authenticity-claiming paratexts; by exception, these are scrutinised in her book with a rarely critical eye: "in a 1908 edition of the newspaper *The Stage* a reviewer observed: 'The picture [...] introduces us to the life and *moeurs* of Gypsies near Moscow'. More recent critical responses to the film have also highlighted its 'realism': Ian Christie compares it favourably to Drankov's *Stenka Razin*, commenting that Siversen's film has 'a *plein air* freshness and authenticity (it uses real Gypsies) that *Stenka Razin* lacks'; Paolo Cherchi Usai states that the film 'insists on an atmosphere drawn from real life'; while echoing Semen Ginzburg's description of it as

one example: in *A History of Russian Cinema*, the film scholar Birgit Beumers highlights Khanzhonkov's contribution as a film producer, describing his first enterprise in the following terms:

Khanzhonkov's role for Russian cinema production is unique in that he skilfully recruited young Russian talents – directors, designers, animators and actors, and made films that aimed at an aesthetic development of cinema. His first production, *The Gypsy Camp* (*Drama v tabore*, directed and filmed by Vladimir Siverson, Khanzhonkov 1908), was a documentary-style film with real gypsies performing the story of an attempted abduction from a gypsy camp – with local colour and exoticism in abundance. (11)

Betta the Gypsy (1918) | UK

Two reviews of the film appeared in *The Bioscope*, in volume 40 from 26 December 1918 and in volume 41 from 27 March 1919. The first film review informs us that:

In selecting, for their first British production, a Romany story, Famous Pictures have certainly scored a triumph, for they have demonstrated once and for all that our island is capable of affording scenic effects equal to those of any other country. (...) Marga la Rubia plays the title rôle of Betta. Regarded by the usual standards of flaxen-haired lead, this actress fails to comply with conventional demands, but as a true picture of gypsy life, as a genuine character study, she throws her own personality away and becomes a living, vivacious, true-to-reality vagabond. (“Betta the Gypsy” 30–31)

The second film review shows that ‘gypsy’ figures are often used as a visual connection to what is conceived to be the genuine national nature (very much as in the Norwegian film *Gipsy Anne* (1920), which is discussed in Section 7.3.1):

‘half-ethnographic, half-acted film’, Denise Youngblood categorises it as ‘a kind of early docudrama’” (113). One further detail: the protagonist in the film, Aleko, bears the name of the hero of Pushkin's epic poem *The Gypsies*, which everyone knows in Russia, so again we have a fictional literary core that is authenticated via filmed images.

Adapted from an operetta by Edward Waltyre, this pictorially charming English production is something of a novelty. The pleasant atmosphere of romantic unreality associated with the light operatic stage is recreated in the terms of Nature at her loveliest and best, with rather surprisingly happy results. Picturesque gypsies cloaked and scarfed in the traditional manner parade, not against canvass forests: but amidst the sylvan beauty of genuine English woodlands. Sunny meadows and shadowy hills, foaming waterfalls and placid lakes, leafy bowers and windy plains – these are the ever shifting backgrounds against which this engaging story passes. It is the real thing at last – the impossible come true. (“Betta, The Gipsy” 73)

The People of the Simlång Valley (1924) | Sweden

The Swedish film magazine *Svensk filmtidning* No. 10 from 1924 informs its readers that the film producers engaged “a company of fifty gypsies” to play the role of *tattare* (Gustafsson 98).

I am a Gypsy (1932/33) | Austria

This example comes from a programme published by Fritz Weiss Film Production Company:

Der erste Tonfilm gespielt von wirklichen Zigeunern, ist vollendet.

Man muss nicht nach Afrika oder an den Nordpol fahren, um Expeditionsfilme zu drehen. Im Herzen Europas selbst, lebt ein uns fremdes, geheimnisvolles Volk, das überall und nirgends daheim ist... Das Volk der Zigeuner!

Trotzdem sie längst Christen oder Mohammedaner geworden sind, glauben sie an Dinge, die anderswo ihre Heimat haben...

Die Filmexpedition hat unter großen Mühen die ängstlich geheim gehaltenen Jahrhunderte alten Liebes- und Totenbräuche der Zigeuner festgehalten.

Zigeunermusik, die zum Teil aus dem 16. Jahrhundert stammt, wurde an Ort und Stelle aufgenommen, ebenso die eigentümliche Sprache der Zigeuner.

Aber auch moderne Musik wurde geschaffen, die in den Zirkusscenes des Films vorkommt. (“Programm”)

The first sound film played by real Gypsies has been completed.

You don't have to go to Africa or the North Pole to make expedition films. In the heart of Europe itself, there lives a strange, mysterious people who are at home everywhere and nowhere... The Gypsy people!

Even though they have long since become Christians or Mohammedans, they believe in things that have their home elsewhere...

With great effort, the film expedition captured the centuries-old Gypsy customs of love and death which were fearfully kept secret.

Gypsy music, some of which dates from the 16th century, was recorded on the spot, as was the peculiar Gypsy language.

But modern music was also created, which appears in the circus scenes in the film. [my translation, R.M.]

Gypsies (1935) | Soviet Union

The examples in this case come from an exhibitor manual designed to aid cinema operators in devising their local advertisement campaigns. It was produced and published in 1936 by Amkino Corporation, the company that had the film distribution rights for North and South America. Stretching over four pages, the exhibitor manual provides a variety of ready-made pieces of text that cinema operators could use for their local campaigns: a synopsis of the film, the film credits, a long list of newspaper “catch lines”, eight publicity stories and one advance story, a price list for newspaper advertisements and accessories, such as posters and scene stills, and various “exploitation leads”.

N.Y. Daily News “Catch Lines”

A lyrical saga of wandering people. See gypsies as they really are. Gypsy customs stranger than fiction. (...)

The dramatic colorful story of a people forever wandering toward a dream of happiness. (...)

A historic and poetic document that will be long remembered. (2)

Publicity Stories

“Strange Gypsy Customs”

Interesting light on strange Gypsy customs is shed in “Gypsies”, the new Soviet picture at the Theatre, depicting the successful Soviet effort to induce the Gypsy tribes to abandon their precarious nomadic existence and settle on the land. (...)

“Unusual Gypsy Music Heard in New Film”

Music plays dominant part in “Gypsies”, the new Soviet film at the Theatre, in keeping with its importance in the life of this nomad people. Just as music forms an undercurrent in the day-to-day happenings in a Gypsy camp, so here it unites the various episodes of the film. (...) The authentic music of the film is quite different from the Gypsy sounds and ballads so often heard in restaurants and music halls. Gone are the false pathos, the sensual undertones, the tremulous renditions and tearful minor keys of the conventional singer.

Advance Story

“Gypsies Set to Open Here”

Lala Chernaya, exotic star of the Moscow Gypsy Theatre, the only national Gypsy theatre in the world, plays the leading feminine role. There are a number of other Gypsy players in the cast. (...) “Gypsies,” new Soviet film coming to the Theatre on is the first authentic screen portrayal of Gypsy life. Gypsy customs, music and the dance are interwoven in a story telling how the Soviet Government had led these perennial wanderers to abandon their rude, primitive existence and settle on the land. It is a gripping and romantic story revealing little known details of Gypsy life. The picture contains some of the most striking photography even seen in motion pictures. (“Gypsies” 3)

Exploitation Lead

“Gypsies” has everything it takes for a bang-up exploitation and publicity campaign! Potent with possibilities, it affords you a chance to dig in and map out a real campaign – for widespread coverage at small cost! (...)

Street Ballyhoo

Arrange for a Gypsy costume street ballyhoo. You can rent some costumes cheaply for this stunt. Or you may be able to get costumes free or for theatre tickets from some theatrical society in town.

Local Gypsies

If there are any Gypsies in the vicinity, invite them to the preview. Gypsies always draw attention. Their presence will cause much word-of-mouth advertising of the picture. This is the kind of picture that Gypsies will want to see.

(...)

Music Store Tieups

All music stores have Gypsy records. You can spot stills and other material. Get them to play their Gypsy records. The opera "Carmen" has much gypsy music. Then there are the Hungarian "czardas" dances.

Book Store Tieup

Every book store has books about Gypsies. Get them to display these books. Use the stills for displays.

(...)

Lobby Exhibit

Gypsy costumes and other Gypsy items. Atmospheric Gypsy music in advance and currently. These are first-rate attention-getters and excellent advertising for your picture. ("Gypsies" 4)

Rich in meticulous detail, the exhibitor manual of Amkino Corporation provides an important insight into 'the kitchen of film promotion', outlining the various promotional and marketing practices that were common in the USA in the 1940s. In one of the advance stories, the sensationalist claim is made that the film *Gypsies* (1935) offers *for the first time* "an authentic portrayal of Gypsy life" – a claim that, interestingly, is repeated with slight variations in the promotional materials of many 'gypsy'-themed films to be produced in the next decades; evidence of such recurring claims which insist on the pioneering achievements of the film is provided in the examples that follow here. The exhibitor manual of Amkino Corporation also testifies to the commodity character

of 'gypsy' authenticity and its financially remunerative potential; the market value of authenticity appears to be increased by the purported 'virginity' of the mediated 'gypsy' world. Almost invariably, the films make the claim that the filmmaker's camera has penetrated for the very first time the hidden, dark and mysterious world of the 'gypsy' Other, and thus they promise the audience an 'authentic' and 'virgin' slice of daily life, unfiled until now. Through the manual, we can see that the much-celebrated 'gypsy' authenticity is but an illusionistic effect, painstakingly scripted and staged both in the film as part of its fictional storyworld and around the film as part of its self-presentation and marketing. The claims to authenticity couched in the publicity stories and the suggested deployment of authenticity artefacts in the tie-ups to local stores, lobby exhibits, etc. reproduce the liminal aesthetics of 'gypsy'-themed films, blurring the distinction between filmic and pro-filmic reality; but these claims to authenticity – installed in the form of print stories and/or artefacts – are also profit-oriented marketing strategies. Thus, with its price lists and explicit promises of big revenues, the manual makes it evident that even in the early years of cinema, 'gypsy' authenticity (preferably one unblemished by the modern eye) was already perceived and strategically exploited as a greatly sought-after and therefore particularly lucrative commodity.

Hot Blood (1956) | USA

The example here is a short film presentation from the official programme of Nicholas Ray's retrospective organised by Harvard Film Archive in 2010. (The reader is familiar with this quote, which appears in Chapter Four and which, for the sake of my argument, I repeat here once again in its entirety.)

Although inspired by careful research conducted by his first wife, the journalist Jean Evans, Ray's rarely screened exploration of gypsy culture is more fever dream than documentary, replete with saturated colors and hallucinatory dance sequences. The story of a community pushed to the far outskirts of society and a hero who attempts to assimilate into the "straight" world, *Hot Blood* bends its ethnographic impulse around Ray's deep empathy for outsider culture, creating a unique cultural document that

revels in day to day details of gypsy life while simultaneously rendering them strange and exotic. (“Hot Blood”)

Some publicity text forms are particularly thrifty with words and the above-quoted film synopsis is one such example. Its concise form, which calls for an efficient use of words, shows that paratexts pursue the double goal of presenting ‘gypsy’-themed films as highly entertaining works of art and as trusted and exclusive sources of scientifically verified knowledge about ‘gypsies’. As advertised in the paratexts, ‘gypsy’ authenticity is by necessity of a dual nature: it promises to fulfil both the need for entertainment and for reliable information; or, to use one fitting portmanteau word, audiences should expect ‘gypsy’-themed films to deliver a specific kind of big screen “infotainment”, which is what makes these screened spectacles in a scientific garb a particularly hard nut to crack.

I Even Met Happy Gypsies (1967) | Yugoslavia

The first quote here comes from the film’s 1967 press book circulated by the producer company Avala Film:

The film *I Even Met Happy Gypsies* will show you the life of Gypsies as it is.

This film is not romantic – it is raw and beautiful, as is the life of Gypsies.

The songs you will hear in this film, you will hear for the first time, because they are the songs of Gypsies from Vojvodina, rarely known.

In their life, reality is linked to fantasy – these are free people...

I Even Met Happy Gypsies is the first film in which Gypsies speak their own language. The majority of these roles are played by real Gypsies – they do not play in this film, it is their film. They play out, so to speak, their own destiny.

(...)

These people live a life of art; their tragic and desperately incomplete attitude towards life is the same as the relationship between art and life!

Aleksandar Petrović (“Press Book”)

The two following quotes come from a four-page interview with the Serbian filmmaker Aleksandar Petrović entitled “My Friends the Gypsies” and published by *UNESCO Courier* in 1994.¹³⁰ In the interview, Petrović assumes the pose of an expert and gives answers to broadly formulated questions about the education, language and lifestyle of ‘gypsies’. The reader may note that in the filmmaker’s final reply to the interviewer, framed under the heading “Eternal Outsiders”, the ethnic minority is reduced to a single figure; what is more, the collective portrait of the minority is stylised to that of a delinquent male:

My Lord, if you reincarnate me again after my death,
Let me be a Gypsy
Let me choose of the ways
The way of joy that will make me a happy man
Or the way of death and a new encounter with you
Aleksandar Petrović (38)

“Eternal Outsiders”

(...) Like everyone else, Gypsies are fond of money. But they’ll never sacrifice an immediate pleasure – a moment of intensity – for a few gold coins. Their attachment to freedom is not a rational choice, it is part of the natural order of things. They feel it in their bones. It brings radiance to their somber lives of mingled joy and pain.

The euphoria generated by a sense of boundless freedom can lead to atrocious crimes. The Gypsy hero of my film, who refuses to think about the consequences of his acts, is a character out of Dostoevsky. He doesn’t think about the consequences before committing his crime. For example, he doesn’t say to himself, “I must not kill, because if I do I’ll go to prison for ten years.” He goes through with his murderous act, knowing full well that he is bringing about his own ruin.^[131] (...)

130 For a scan of the print interview, for further examples of paratexts and for a full list of the film’s distinctions, see the director’s official website: aleksandarpetrovic.org.

131 This one paragraph contains two contradicting statements: if the second sentence asserts that the Gypsy hero refuses to think about the consequences of his acts, the closing sentence asserts that the hero knows full well what is in store for him. The comparison to Dostoevsky’s heroes is also ill informed, because the specificity of Dostoevsky’s heroes lies not in the fact that they do not think about the

Compared with the fleeting sense of power, by which he crosses over to “the other side” of social morality, his personal interest counts for little. He is ready to sacrifice his life for absolute freedom, through which he can affirm his personality.

Europe was recently horrified by murders committed by two Gypsies who, while under the influence of drugs, massacred an entire family in northern Italy. One was tried and found guilty, but the other chose to kill himself. The police surrounded his parents’ house, and he agreed to surrender but only after having a coffee and a cigarette in the courtyard. When he had finished his cigarette, he shot himself through the heart. He had set off on a road without end, signifying by his act the mysterious link that exists between crime and freedom.

Less attached to their personal interests than others, perhaps less “rational” because they scorn to consider the long-term consequences of their acts, Gypsies seem to me more sensitive than others to the world’s beauty and its suffering and more susceptible to unhappiness, for they are more vulnerable to the call of evil – if that’s what it has to be called – that we have in each of us. (41)

In this widely circulated interview, Aleksandar Petrović has the supremacist arrogance – for no other phrase would describe his attitude better – to brand an entire minority, amounting to several hundred thousand people in former Yugoslavia alone, as being “less rational”, “more vulnerable to the call of evil” and thus by nature prone to “atrocious crimes”. Not only that, the artist’s personal preconceptions are recreated on the big screen with the tools of the most influential medium of modernity, film, and then disseminated throughout the globe. Tracing the line of argumentation in the interview, one can see that Petrović makes no conceptual distinction between filmic representations and socio-historic reality, between the two-dimensional screen images of human beings and the flesh-and-blood human beings themselves. The filmmaker’s patronising and self-serving stance betrays a number of grave deficiencies: a lack of self-reflexivity, a flawed sense of professional ethics and an underdeveloped political awareness, especially as

consequences of their acts; Raskolnikov knows very well what awaits him, but he thinks that he, as a superior kind of human being, is entitled to murder a woman he ranks among lice.

regards ethnic minorities. His gaze, which permeates *I Even Met Happy Gypsies*, is a prime illustration of the colonial gaze – only directed towards one's own continent, looking down upon one of Europe's vulnerable groups; as a rule, the purveyors of this colonial gaze adamantly refuse to acknowledge their own epistemic limitations or their own privileged position, which leads to unsavoury antigypsy films.

Queen of the Gypsies (1975) | Soviet Union

The following text is a transcript from a filmed interview with the Moldovan film composer Eugen Doga. The interview is disseminated as bonus material on the film's DVD release:

The whole film was to be built on the Gypsy material, with real Gypsies participating besides the actors and with the real original musical material. We had an actual Gypsy camp, the real Gypsies, dressed as we always see them dress all around.

Pink Dreams (1976) | Czechoslovakia

The excerpt here is from a detailed presentation of the film written by Martin Votruba and published on the website of the Slovak Studies Programme at the University of Pittsburgh. Parts of his text were circulated in the 2010 programme of CinEast – Central and Eastern European Film Festival in Luxembourg (cineaste.lu).

Despite its whimsical poetic style, *Rosy Dreams* (*Ružové sny*) was the first Central European feature film that put the Romani (Gypsy) community at the center stage in a realistic manner. (...) The screenplay was Hanák's joint project with the writer Dušan Dušek (b. 1946). A graduate in natural history and geology, Dušek later became professor of screenwriting at the University of Performing Arts in Bratislava. The two wrote the screenplay during 1974–1975. The authorities delayed the shooting of *Rosy Dreams* for a year, because Hanák and Dušek refused to rewrite it with a socially optimistic ending that would have the two main characters getting married. Both authors did research in Romani settlements and fashioned their script accordingly.

They hired Professor of Romani Studies Milena Hübschmannová (1933–2005) as consultant, who also helped with the Romani dialogues. Parts of the film were shot on location at Trhovište, an actual Romani village, with all-Romani extras.

Another instructive example is a review of the film by Anne E. Kellogg, published by the online journal *New Russian Cinema: KinoKultura*:

Filmed partly on location in a Roma shantytown, this was the first Central European film that attempted to show the Roma in a realistic manner. *Rosy Dreams* is a difficult film to categorize. It is not a musical, a comedy, a documentary, or a fantasy, and yet it contains all of these elements and displays the same quirky sense of humor that is associated with Czech and Slovak films of the 1960s. It was called a “romantic comedy” in the former Czechoslovakia, although it certainly does not coincide with the American definition of that genre, which calls for lots of laughs and requires a “happy end.” By comparison, *Rosy Dreams* is somewhat tragic and, if it were for rent in a video store, it would likely end up under “drama.”

What transpires from Kellogg’s review is that the allegedly realistic portrayal of ‘gypsies’ can seamlessly coexist with the film’s genre hybridity; seemingly, according to the author at least, the assorted collection of genre elements that makes up this typical ‘gypsy’-themed fiction film does not interfere with or undermine its purported authenticity.

King of the Gypsies (1978) | USA

The first example here is an excerpt from a film review authored by Christopher Forsley for the online magazine *PopMatters*. The second example is a short, uncredited promotional text posted under the heading “Editorial Reviews” on the website of *Amazon*; it is intended for visitors to the website who may be considering purchasing the film.

Frank Pierson, who both wrote and directed the film, based much of the background material surrounding its captivating story on Peter Maas’s 1975 work of creative nonfiction by the same name. And whether it’s due to the fact that Maas reportedly

relied almost entirely on police records to write his book or simply Hollywood sensationalism at work, the stereotype that gypsies are nothing more than thieving, scamming, fighting misfits unfortunately acts as the engine behind the film. But stereotypes aside, Pierson offers with *King of the Gypsies* an intimate, relatively realistic look at gypsy culture in the United States that many Americans have long been ignorant of.

Susan Sarandon and Brooke Shields head up an all-star ensemble that explores the real world of gypsies in America. Eric Roberts plays David, a typical New Yorker with a not so typical family history. When his grandfather dies, he bequeaths to him the title King of their gypsy tribe, outraging his passed over father (Judd Hirsch). The intriguing web of song, dance, treachery and superstition that makes up Gypsy culture proves too alluring for David to resist, and the audience is along for the ride.

Angelo My Love (1983) | USA

The text quoted here is a synopsis from the film's original press kit disseminated by Lorimar Motion Pictures. The seventeen-page document contains general information about the film, a one-page synopsis, a longer press synopsis and a text about the making of the film. Nine of the protagonists, including the lead character Angelo Evans, are credited as "himself"/"herself", that is, the actors appear as film characters under their own names. Obviously, the film design obliterates the distinction between professional actors in fiction films who impersonate imaginary characters and social agents in documentary films who present themselves.¹³²

For the first time ever, moviegoers will have the unique opportunity to enter the largely hidden, often misconstrued world of American gypsies. Chronicled with meticulous attention to accuracy and detail, their day-to-day experiences are told in "ANGELO, MY LOVE", a forthcoming Lorimar Distribution International drama/adventure.

132 On the distinction between professional actors and social actors, see Nichols 8–10.

Written, produced and directed by actor/filmmaker Robert Duvall this fictional tale brings alive a subculture still flourishing on the perimeter of mainstream society. Because of his personal involvement with gypsies, Duvall was able to portray his leading characters as themselves, as well as filming on location in and around New York City's Lower East Side.

Unlike other films about gypsies, none of Angelo's gypsy players had any previous acting experience. Although a script was followed, most of the cast was unable to read, giving Duvall the opportunity to make his narrative even more realistic by way of improvisation. ("Angelo" 1983: 3)

In a review of the film, published in *Film Journal International* on 15 April 1983, the author L.F. gives an enthusiastic appraisal of the acting in *Angelo My Love*; the review is particularly valuable for our discussion here, because the author acknowledges, albeit uncritically, the fact that the film's documentary elements are subordinate to and in service of its fictional story:

Angelo My Love is filled with non-professionals playing themselves. Half the time we sat there wondering whether we were watching a staged documentary or a fictional film. There are actors playing themselves in a fictional structure written by Duvall, yet often one can't decide whether or not they're acting or if, for instance, they got into a fight in the middle of a scene and Duvall put it into the movie. Half of the film is subtitled as the character periodically break into gypsy language to harangue, harass and hug each other. The images of gypsy culture here are quite unique for the American screen.

Guardian Angel (1987) | Yugoslavia

The example in this case is a user review written by a user with the pseudonym Allenrogerj and published on the film's page on the *Internet Movie Database* on 27 July 2010.

"Not so angelic"

A film called *Guardian Angel* about a television journalist investigating the smuggling of Roma children from what was then

Jugoslavia [sic] to Italy as buskers, beggars and prostitutes, trying to save one boy, a talented musician... Surely the title refers to the hero.

Not when Paskaljevich directs it, it doesn't, and Dragan isn't a hero either. He may think he is; he spends the whole film with a half-smile on his face as if he believes his fame makes him invulnerable, but in the end, he accomplishes nothing but his own death. The true Guardian Angel is the man who owns the boy and his earnings for a year and to whom – for all his brutality – he must return for the sake of the family who sold him. It's a pessimistic, realistic, almost documentary film, convention and comfort removed. The social worker who tries to take care of the children deported from Italy knows they will run away or be kidnapped. In a more conventional film, there'd be a romance between Dragan and her, but here their relations are entirely professional. The Roma characters – as usual with Paskaljevich – are played by nonactors and real encampments round rubbish dumps are used: a world where a good man is one who doesn't sell his own children to the Guardian Angel. Grim, relentless and unillusioned, it's easy to see why Paskaljevich isn't as well-known as he should be, he offers no comfort, but if you can see this film, do so.

Time of the Gypsies (1988) | Yugoslavia, UK, Italy

The first example here is a transcription of a filmed interview with Emir Kusturica conducted by Jonas Rosales. The interview is included in the DVD bonus material under the title "Rencontre avec Emir Kusturica". In the quoted excerpt, the director comments on the reasons why he went for the 'gypsy' topic in his films:

The Gypsies as a theme was intriguing me both theoretically, as I said, and experience-wise because I was growing up in Sarajevo where the Gypsies were very present, not just physically, but present in my life. The direct relation to the life sources, everything that was just coming up before in the areas which were non-gypsy were much more attractive, much more impulsive, much more appealing than any other. (...) First kiss, first strong impression about life, first visible expressive way of creating the

world around, of changing the world, first fights. Everything was kind of Gypsy growth but not in a pejorative way, in a way that you could just stand the entire environment in much more carnivalesque, festivity way of receiving these first things. The Gypsies as a theme were for me part of my life.

In an extensively researched book on Emir Kusturica's work, the film scholar Giorgio Bertellini reiterates the truth-claiming statements made by the filmmaker and, by doing so, re-affirms their substance and legitimacy in the academic discourse. Through Bertellini, the reader learns that Kusturica decided to shoot the film "after reading an article published in 1985 in the Belgrade daily *Express Politika* that reported on a Romany family that had sold their newborn baby in Italy" (52). Again, in the words of Bertellini, the filmmaker supposedly

portrays a traditionally marginal community that, growing up in Gorica, he got to know better than most. Kusturica nurtured and amended different versions of the screenplay (...) on the basis of stories collected during his first-hand research in Skopje. He spent a great deal of time in close contact with members of the local Gypsy community, made friends and played soccer with them, and urged them to tell him their stories and myths. (...) During two month's residence in villages and quarters, Kusturica gathered 3,500 photographs of two thousand potential actors. Of these, he interviewed and made screen tests of 120. Ultimately, only about twenty remained (...) For the other roles, he chose professional actors, both young and established. (52)

If we consider the rigorousness with which the above-described casting was conducted, it becomes overt that only a fraction of the screen-tested Roma fulfilled the director's criteria for 'gypsies'; so on that point alone, the film's claims of representativeness fall flat. In addition to that, the film's truth claims are unquestioningly reproduced and circulated by other scholarly texts.¹³³

The next three examples come from articles that appeared in the German press in 1991 when the film was first released in Germany. Reading the articles, it becomes clear that they were written using the same press release:

133 See, for example, Gocić 93–106; Horton 172–190.

Die Idee zu seiner Sinti-Roma-Saga kam Emir Kusturica durch einen Zeitungsartikel. Darin wurde über die wiederholende Festnahme einiger Zigeuner an der jugoslawisch-italienischen Grenze berichtet. Sie hatten versucht, illegal nach Italien einzureisen, um dort zu betteln, zu stehlen und Kinder zu verkaufen. (Dittmar)

Emir Kusturica got the idea for his Sinti-Roma saga from a newspaper article. It reported on the repeated arrests of some Gypsies at the Yugoslav-Italian border. They had tried to enter Italy illegally in order to beg, steal and sell children. [my translation, R.M.]

In „Time of the Gypsies“ malt Kusturica keine Idylle, dazu ist sein Blick auf diese Roma-Gemeinde viel zu genau, und er bedient keine rassistischen Vorurteile. Die Geschichte des Films lässt eine weitgehend unbekannte Kultur hervortreten, die mit all ihren Dissonanzen ein merkwürdiges Spiegelbild westeuropäischer Gesellschaften zeugt. Wesentlicher Anteil am Gelingen dieses Wagnisses haben die Laiendarsteller, die den Film zu einem großen Kinoereignis machen. (Olsen; see also “Blick in die Welt”)

In *Time of the Gypsies*, Kusturica does not paint an idyll; his view of this Roma community is far too precise for that, and he does not serve any racist prejudices. The film’s story reveals a largely unknown culture that, with all its dissonances, provides a strange mirror image of Western European societies. A major part of this venture’s success is due to the amateur actors, who make the film a great cinematic event. [my translation, R.M.]

Kusturicas Thema sind die Saison-Raubzüge jugoslawischer Banden in westeuropäischen Metropolen: Diebstahl, Schmuggel und Handel mit Babys, sadistische Abrichtung von Kindern zu Bettelei, Raub, Betrug und Prostitution. Er zeigt ein Stück Dritte Welt mitten im Rinnstein der Ersten, eine Gemeinschaft, die verkommt, weil es außerhalb der Kriminalität kaum einen Überlebens-Erwerb für sie gibt, ein Volk, dessen legendären Stolz nur noch in sinnloser Messerstecherei triumphiert... Kusturica liebt seine Roma so sehr, dass er sie moralisch nicht bevormunden und ihr Treiben nicht beschönigen möchte: Er feiert sie als Anarchisten des eigenen Untergangs. (“Der Pate der Zigeuner”)

Kusturica's subject is the seasonal raids of Yugoslavian gangs in Western European metropolises: thievery, smuggling and trafficking in babies, sadistic training of children to beg, robbery, fraud and prostitution. He shows a piece of the Third World in the middle of the gutter of the First, a community that degenerates because there is hardly any means of survival for it outside of crime, a people whose legendary pride only triumphs in senseless knife fights... Kusturica loves his Roma so much that he does not want to patronise them morally or gloss over their goings-on: he celebrates them as anarchists of their own demise. [my translation, R.M.]

Gucha – Distant Trumpet (2006) | Serbia

The first example here comes from a transcript of a filmed interview with the Serbian director Dušan Milić (hence the idiosyncratic English) included in the DVD bonus material. Earlier in the interview, Milić says that 70% of the film cast is made up of non-actors.

We were casting for let's say two or three months. We were casting characters for this film and mostly of them are non-actors, first time appearing in front of the camera. For the Roma orchestra, I had nine of them, I had six musicians picked up from all different real orchestras from Serbia. And three of them were just non-actors which I liked their faces. I wanted to have them in the film. On the counterpart of the white orchestras I had three musicians and five of them were non-actors or actors, like my main character of the white orchestra Satchmo.

The second paratext is a print interview with Milić, published on 5 November 2012 by the German online journal *Kino* under the heading "Fakten und Hintergründe zum Film 'Gucha'":

Trotzdem ist mein oberstes Ziel eine realistische Darstellung gewesen. Eine frei bewegliche Hand-Kamera sollte ein Gefühl des Dokumentarischen erzeugen, so als würde sich der Zuschauer in unmittelbarer Nähe der Filmfiguren aufhalten, ihre Entscheidungen und Taten aus nächster Nähe verfolgen und sie nicht aus den Augen verlieren. Das heutige Publikum kennt die Möglichkeiten

des Films. Etwas andeuten, es zu stilisieren, reicht da nicht mehr aus. Um wirklich eine Illusion erzeugen zu können, muss man mit einem Film sehr nah an das echte Leben herankommen. Lange Einstellungen, kontrastiert mit der Nervosität schneller Schnitte im MTV-Stil, öffnen einen beeindruckenden Raum für tausende von „Festivalbesuchern“ – ein Sinnbild, wie dauerhaft zeitlos diese Musik ist. (Redaktion)

Nevertheless, my primary goal has been a realistic portrayal. A freely moving hand-held camera was to evoke a sense of the documentary, as if the viewer were in close proximity to the film characters, following their decisions and actions at close range, not losing sight of them. Today's audiences know what film can do. To suggest something, to stylise it is no longer enough. To really create an illusion, you have to get very close to real life with your film. Long takes contrasted with the nervousness of fast cuts in MTV style open up a stunning space for thousands of "festival visitors" – a symbol of how permanently timeless this music is. [my translation, R.M.]

Here, Dušan Milić quite openly lays bare the strategy of authentication as part of creating fiction: coming close to 'real life' is viewed as a presupposition for a perfect illusion.

Papusza (2013) | Poland

The two paratexts here come from the press kit disseminated by Kairos Film, the official distributor of the film for Germany. The first example is the film synopsis, also quoted on the cover of the German DVD release:

Papusza basiert auf der wahren Lebensgeschichte der ersten Dichterin der polnischen Roma. (...) Der Film verfolgt das harte Leben der fahrenden Roma, die Verfolgung vor und nach dem Krieg bis hin zu den Zwangsmaßnahmen zur Sesshaftmachung durch die kommunistische Regierung Polens. Denn die Biografie von *Papusza* ist eng verknüpft mit der Geschichte und Kultur der Roma in Polen im 20. Jahrhundert. ("Papusza")

Papusza is based on the true life-story of the first poetess of the Polish Roma. (...) The film follows the hard life of the travelling Roma, their persecution before and after the war up to the forced settlement measures by the Polish communist government. For *Papusza*'s biography is closely linked to the history and culture of the Roma in Poland in the 20th century. [my translation, R.M.]

The second example is an excerpt from a print interview with the co-director Joanna Kos-Krauze:

Und wir wollten die Roma-Sprache im Film haben. Das war natürlich eine große Herausforderung. Die Schauspieler mussten ein Jahr vor Beginn der Dreharbeiten Romanes lernen. Nicht nur ihre Dialoge, sondern die Sprache richtig beherrschen. Wir waren anfangs unsicher, aber ein Freund hat uns überzeugt: „Ihr müsst den Film in Romanes machen, das seid ihr ihnen schuldig, und es wird der erste Film in der Roma-Sprache sein“. (“*Papusza*”)

And we wanted to have the Roma language in the film. That was of course a big challenge. The actors had to learn Romani one year before the shooting began. Not only their dialogues, but also to have a proper command of the language. We were unsure at first, but a friend convinced us: “You have to make the film in Romani, you owe it to them, and it will be the first film in the Romani language”. [my translation, R.M.]

The list of examples given here represents a diverse collection of text forms. The core of this collection is made up of industry-created paratexts, such as exhibitor manuals, press kits, DVD bonus material, official filmmakers' commentaries, etc. Besides the official paratexts, I have also included various authorial epitexts, such as magazine interviews with the filmmakers, as well as other texts of external authorship, such as press reviews, film criticism and fan-produced texts. Some of the texts were published at the time of the films' original release, some appeared later. What unites them all is the purpose of their message and that is to assert the films' truthful cinematic rendition of 'gypsies', to lay claim to authenticity. On the basis of these examples, then, it is possible to reconstruct the process by which the discourse of authenticity that surrounds most 'gypsy'-themed films comes into being, and how it is transmitted and disseminated over time. The films' explicit claims

to historical veracity are first voiced by the filmmaking industry (the film director, producer and/or distributor) in widely publicised official paratexts. The truth-claiming stories are subsequently taken up by the press, film critics, academic scholars and ordinary film fans, who reiterate them in their own texts. As a consequence, the popular reception and the critical and scholarly evaluation of 'gypsy'-themed films engage automatically with the issue of perceived documentary (ethnographic) authenticity. The text collection indicates that the deployment of evidentiary strategies is not a new occurrence but an old and apparently effective marketing strategy dating back to the beginning of the cinematographic epoch. Over time, the growing number of texts create a network of references that echo and mutually reinforce each other's stance; this intertextual web of references lends further credit to 'gypsy'-themed films, normalising them as an artistic practice. When described schematically, we can see how the process of truth validation takes place in the echo chamber of public space, where notably no Roma voices are solicited: namely, a renowned institution (Harvard Film Archive, *UNESCO Courier*, University of Pittsburgh) sets the broader institutional context in which a (celebrated) filmmaker, such as Nicolas Ray, Aleksandar Petrović or Dušan Hanák, and his (award-winning) 'gypsy'-themed film are extolled, while the filmmaker presents his work as grounded in one of the discourses of sobriety (reality), referring, in turn, to a newspaper story or to a journalistic or scientific study. It should also be noted that in my extensive research I have not come upon a single official paratext that refers to a first-person statement made by a Roma person commenting on the artistic achievements of a given 'gypsy'-themed film, even though these cinematic works boast an ethnographically accurate collective portrait of the minority.

Before moving to the topic of authenticity and its audio-visual script, there is one more paratext of special prominence that needs to be mentioned here, and this is the film title. Film titles are paratextually integrated into the film through the opening credits, but they also appear on their own, as on film posters, in cinema programmes or in other promotional materials. Their two main functions, as Søren Kolstrup has succinctly put it, are to establish the film's identity and to contribute to its promotion and sales. It is common knowledge that film titles need to be short and catchy to sell well; as Kolstrup explains, they guide the viewers' perception and interpretation by emphasising a specific point of view or giving an abstract of the film, and as such they need to be memorable and contain an element of surprise or provocation. As

Table 1. Titles of 'gypsy'-themed films and their translations

Original Title	Official Translation(s)
<i>Das Mädchen ohne Vaterland</i> (1912) (The Girl Without Fatherland)	<i>A Romany Spy</i>
<i>Carmen</i> (1918)	<i>Gypsy Blood</i>
<i>The Loves of Carmen</i> (1927)	<i>Die Liebe vom Zigeuner stammt</i>
Последний табор (1935) (The Last Camp)	<i>Gypsies</i>
<i>The Bohemian Girl</i> (1936)	<i>Lustig ist das Zigeunerleben</i>
<i>Morena Clara</i> (1936)	<i>The Fair-Skinned Gypsy</i>
<i>Wings of the Morning</i> (1937)	<i>Zigeunerprinzessin</i>
<i>Jassy</i> (1947)	<i>Zigeunerblut</i>
<i>Carmen proibita/Siempre Carmen</i> (1953)	<i>Die Liebe vom Zigeuner stammt</i>
<i>Muj prítel Fabián</i> (1953)	<i>My Friend the Gypsy</i>
<i>Hot Blood</i> (1956)	<i>L'ardente gitane</i>
<i>The Gypsy and the Gentleman</i> (1958)	<i>Das Teufelsweib</i>
<i>Skupljači perja</i> (1967) (The Feather Collectors)	<i>I Even Met Happy Gypsies</i>
<i>Isabella Duchessa dei Diavoli</i> (1969)	<i>Isabella the Gypsy Duchess</i>
Табор уходит в небо (1975) (The Camp Goes to the Skies)	<i>The Gypsy Camp Vanishes into the Blue / Gypsies Are Found Near Heaven Queen of the Gypsies / Das Zigeuner- lager zieht in den Himmel</i>
<i>Dom za vešanje</i> (1988) (Home for Hanging)	<i>Time of the Gypsies/ Die Zeit der Zigeuner</i>
<i>Duh Babe Ilonke</i> (2011) (Granny Ilonka's Spirit)	<i>The Little Gypsy Witch/ Manusha – Die kleine Romahexe</i>

we have seen from the works listed in Chapter Four, 'gypsy'-themed films often feature the ethnic slur "Gypsy" in the title (or in the title's translations), which is, by the way, very helpful when one is confronted with the task of identifying these works. As part of the film title, the disparaging exonym "Gypsy" shows itself to be a universally decodable sign for 'gypsy' spectacle; it serves as a linguistic shorthand for the fantasy of the exuberant 'gypsy' life associated with a liberating closeness to nature, orgiastic musicality, uninhibited sexuality, criminal

irrationality, paganism and medieval primitivism. Used as a generic noun or as an adjectival modifier, the exonym “Gypsy” imparts to the film title a meaning that is both de-individualising and homogenising: the advertised topic is ‘gypsiness’ as a universal dimension of human life, the title inviting a voyeuristic consumption of its radical Otherness. And since film titles are meant to promote sales, being an essential part of the film’s self-fashioning and marketing strategies, it is self-evident that the deployment of the denigratory ethnic label “Gypsy” is justified on account of its proven sales-enhancing effect. This is easy to see in the film title translations in other languages; here I have provided as an example several film titles, placing the original title with its literal translation next to the official translation into English, German or French.

In Table 1, I have provided a just small sample of film title translations and possible target/source languages, but it is sufficient to demonstrate the predilection of film promoters for adding the exonym “Gypsy” to the title translations. The ubiquity of this practice signals that ‘gypsy’ spectacle, or its mere evocation, is in high demand on the market and enjoys universal recognisability. Besides rendering a homogenised image of ‘gypsies’, the examples of title translations presented above take recourse to several other rhetorical strategies that draw, in turn, on the long literary tradition of fabricating the ‘gypsy’ personae, namely racialisation, exoticisation, sexualisation and demonisation. To examine the rhetorical or the sales-enhancing effect of the titles, I would suggest again that the reader conduct a mental test and substitute the exonym “Gypsy” in the above-listed examples with other ethnonyms, such as the French, Armenians, Serbians or Americans. Clearly, in relation to the ‘gypsy’ theme, the practice of translating and/or subtitling the film into other languages provides fertile ground for further investigation and comparative studies. At this point, however, we need to leave the “vestibule” formed by the film title and the other varieties of paratexts and step into the fictional storyworlds of ‘gypsy’-themed films, this time paying attention to the types of elements that are used to induce their audio-visual effect of authenticity.

8.2 The Audio-Visual Effect of Authenticity

There is a plethora of devices that produce or contribute to the audio-visual effect of ethnographic and/or documentary authenticity in ‘gypsy’-themed films. To navigate through this complexity, I group and

analyse the devices under the headings of art direction (or production design), sound design and cinematographic style. Art direction is responsible for the sets, props, costumes, hair and make-up; sound design is in charge of the music, human voices and sound effects; while the cinematographic style is characterised by the use of lighting and camera movement. To examine the emotive effect of reality in 'gypsy'-themed films, it is therefore necessary to consider first what is assembled in front of the camera and then how the camera frames and records that which stands in front of it.

Art direction, just like sound design and cinematographic style, makes a non-verbal claim to authenticity. There are various ways in which 'gypsy' costumes, make-up and hair styling, props, extras and sets, as well as their arrangement in overly familiar motifs, are deployed to induce the effect of ethnographic veracity. The language of costumes and décor in 'gypsy'-themed films is a vast and hardly explored area that calls for a sustained analysis on its own. In the descriptions of film sequences in Chapter Four and Chapter Six, I have paid ample attention to the elements of art direction, describing in minute detail 'gypsy' costumes, hairstyles, and colour schemes, motifs and frame compositions to highlight the various functions they perform in marking social hierarchies related to class, 'ethno-racial' alterity and gender while also suggesting character and advancing the plot. In the following section, I consider these same elements but from the perspective of the films' technology of truth production; my aim is to sketch out the main artistic strategies of authentication in the realm of art direction. The focus here is specifically on the calculated use of two elements – costumes and sets.

8.2.1 Art Direction: Costumes

Costuming is a key element of the *mise-en-scène* and therefore one of the key authentication devices in the art of filmmaking. Here, I first outline the main types of costumes that are most often seen in 'gypsy'-themed films, and then I proceed by highlighting the different qualities of authenticity that these costumes convey.

Broadly speaking, costume designs in 'gypsy'-themed films gravitate towards one of the following three types: (fantasy) folkloric 'gypsy' outfits, symbolic 'gypsy' costumes and shabby clothing. Some or all of these costume types may appear in the same film. The different costume types are usually combined in a way that sets the main 'gypsy' figures apart from the minor ones, whereby the latter are as a rule shown in crowd

scenes. In *The Bohemian Girl*, for example, Stan and Ollie wear clown costumes of paupers, whereas the band of ‘gypsies’ they travel with are in fantasy folkloric costumes. Belle in *The Gypsy and the Gentlemen* has expensive, well-cut dresses in bright red or in pitch black with red highlights (red shawl, red underskirt), whereas the troupe of ‘gypsies’ who set up camp on her land wear shapeless and worn-out clothes of subdued colour. While indicating the importance of the characters for the story’s dénouement, the three different types of costumes are also carefully deployed to affiliate ‘gypsy’ protagonists with a ‘gypsy’ crowd and thus to authenticate them as a representative figure. This visual message can be conveyed either through the frame composition, where the main ‘gypsy’ figure in the foreground is shown against the backdrop of a ‘gypsy’ crowd; or the same framing effect can be achieved through the editing, where a crowd of ‘gypsies’ shown in a long shot is edited together with a main ‘gypsy’ figure in a close-up. In both cases, it is communicated to the viewer that ‘gypsy’ protagonists, even if they happen to be exceptionally well dressed, are embellished signs of ‘gypsies’ in general, epitomes of a colourful, beggarly looking riffraff.

As to the aura of authenticity that comes with ‘gypsy’ costuming, it is helpful to take into account the fact that it may draw on one or more of the following sources of conviction: paratextual claims to ethnographic and/or historic accuracy, visual symbolism, emotional expressiveness, documentariness, and/or ideological input. There are no critical studies on ‘gypsy’ wardrobe in film productions, studies that scrupulously examine ‘gypsy’ costuming and its relation to historical realities, its specific sartorial language and functions in the medium, or its impact on Roma and non-Roma spectators. The paratexts quoted in the previous section, though, evidence that even in the early days of cinema, ‘gypsy’ costumes were already being deployed as commercially lucrative authenticity devices both on and off the big screen. Due to the scarcity of research, I consider briefly here the case of *Golden Earrings* to point to the paratextual devices that are used by the film industry to imbue the film with an aura of ethnographic authenticity, in particular through references to the costumes. In Frank Miller’s article published on *Turner Classic Movies*, we read that Marlene Dietrich “was researching gypsy life in the camps along the Seine” before shooting *Golden Earrings*. “When she got to the set, she brought an authentic costume with her and insisted on playing the role barefoot” (see also Chandler 169). Perusing *The American Film Institute Catalogue of Motion Pictures Produced in the United States: Feature Film, 1941–1950*, we learn that the

costume designer Mary Kay Dodson “collected three-hundred European coins from Hollywood antique shops for one of Dietrich’s costumes” (Hanson 914). In both cases, the authors appear to repeat information circulated by industry-created paratexts, coming either from the film distribution kit or from interviews with the film crew.

Even if the ‘gypsy’ costuming in *Golden Earrings* may contain ethnographically and/or historically accurate elements, a careful look at the film’s visual design shows that the clothing is specifically used to foreground sensuality, poverty and backwardness. Marlene Dietrich’s character, Lydia, is dressed in an embroidered white blouse with a big décolleté under her billowing rags; Denistoun’s ‘gypsy’ garb, too, includes an open-necked white shirt with intricate embroidery that is possibly suggestive of folklore traditions. Both characters’ clothes are tattered and visibly dirty, while the band of ‘gypsies’ – who, importantly, provide the collective backdrop for the main ‘gypsy’ figures – are costumed in a mixture of folkloric dress with floral or other patterns and ill-matched suit pieces: a black-and-white tartan-patterned jacket, a black vest worn over a naked chest, wide striped trousers, and so on. Toying with elements that could be deciphered as ethnographically truthful, the ‘gypsy’ clothes in the film come across at the same time as shabby, mismatched and well behind the times, while the camera’s focus is clearly set on their photogenic pattern-on-pattern look in crowd scenes.

Golden Earrings is a black-and-white film and therefore presents a good example of the extent to which ‘gypsy’ costuming is medium-dependent. As emphasised in Chapter Three, early black-and-white films regularly feature ‘gypsy’ characters in striped or otherwise photogenically patterned black-and-white garments (**Fig. 6**, **Fig. 7**, **Fig. 9**, **Fig. 11a** and **Fig. 11b**). With the advent of colour film, however, stripes disappear from ‘gypsy’ costuming to be replaced by other visual markers of alterity which are more reliant on chromatic colours. The disappearance of striped costuming makes an interesting case for the changeability of sartorial language in ‘gypsy’-themed films. It is not surprising that early filmmakers chose stripes to mark their ‘gypsy’ figures, because – unlike plain black – black-and-white stripes have a dynamic surface structure and can fix the viewers’ attention on the character while bringing rhythm to the film’s overall visual design. As the French medievalist Michel Pastoureau points out, what is striped is seen before what is plain, patterned or spotted (cf. 22–23). In his book *The Devil’s Cloth: A History of Stripes*, the scholar explains that stripy dress belongs to a

social code established in the medieval Western world, in which “the stripe often appears as the mark par excellence, the one that shows up the best and that emphasises most strongly the transgression (of one kind or another) against the social order” (14). Medieval literary texts ascribe striped emblems or clothing to characters conceived as evil or negative (cf. 14); the Scriptures, too, use striped clothes, together with red hair, as attributes of the traitor (cf. 16). Pastoureau traces the history of stripes through to modern times, arguing that the derogatory meaning of the medieval stripe continues to coexist together with its more positive significations developed later, during the Renaissance and the Romantic period. In the medieval Western world, stripes were often used as a visual marker for deviance and were thus reserved for social outcasts – bastards, serfs and the condemned, but also prostitutes, jugglers and clowns, hangmen, lepers, cripples, “bohemians”, heretics, Jews and non-Christians in general (cf. 13–14). In the modern period, as Pastoureau notes, “striped dress became the primary sign for all forms of exoticism or for life in the natural state”, “the obligatory mark of the people considered most removed from ‘civilisation.’” Even though stripes may be somewhat outdated nowadays, they “remain very present in films, cartoons, and comic strips” where the attributes of dress play a key role (40).

Bearing in mind the classifying function that clothing has in film iconography, and in an attempt to give a broad overview of costuming in ‘gypsy’-themed films, we can say ‘gypsy’ attire is deployed on the big screen as a visual sign of the time-space of radical Otherness, assigning bodies to pre-modernity and the past, to the bottom of social hierarchies, to the cultural periphery and to the underworld of suppressed energies. Pared down to its essence, ‘gypsy’ costuming signifies ‘non-whiteness’, destitution and/or uninhibited sexuality. Its perceived authenticity stems less from an accurate representation of historic lives and material conditions and more from its visual symbolism and emotional expressiveness.¹³⁴ The cinematic apparel of ‘gypsies’ has a stable

134 Sue Harper explains the great popularity of the Gainsborough cycle of period dramas in post-war Britain with the expressive costume designs. Accidentally or not, the Gainsborough series contains several ‘gypsy’-themed films: *Madonna of the Seven Moons* (1944) and *Caravan* (1946) are two prominent titles in the cycle that come under Harper’s historical scrutiny. Both films are based on successful novels by female authors of the time, in which, as Harper notes, the pleasure derives from placing ‘gentry’ and ‘gypsies’ “on the purity/danger axis”, linking aristocratic energy to the exotic, eccentric and distinctly sexual energy produced by ‘gypsies’ (103–104). This structure of feeling is altered in the film scripts and

colour scheme; it adheres to the non-white section of the colour spectrum, ranging from filthy white or black-and-white patterns, through a bright medley of colours to pitch black. The dark sexuality intimated through the colours is articulated also by the costume designs; 'gypsy' outfits tend to both envelope and expose the (fe)male body, offering voyeuristic glimpses of naked female shoulders, cleavage, belly or legs, or the male chest or upper torso. As already pointed out, most films stage a racialising spectacle of costumed identities juxtaposing 'gypsies' to representatives of the various social ranks in the 'white' majority society (**Fig. 46a**, **Fig. 46b**, **Fig. 47a** and **Fig. 47b**). Stan and Ollie's rags, for instance, are set against an aristocrat's stylish apparel; Belle's erotic, daringly low-cut bodices strongly contrast with Sarah's (Sir Deverill's sister) priggish, high-necked dresses in innocent white or to the modest earthly coloured apparel of the female peasants portrayed in the film (**Fig. 28**); Colonel Denistoun throws a real fashion show of the period, wearing, in addition to his 'gypsy' garb, an elegant suit and a Nazi uniform. In *Queen of the Gypsies*, the spectacle of Rada's numerous colourful skirts, which she alluringly removes one after the other, allowing the viewer to observe her naked upper body and breasts, is countered by a local *haute couture* display of Paris fashion (**Fig. 46a**). The examples of such oppositions present a long list. By the logic of these contrastive oppositions, the norm-setting costumes that are reserved for the representatives of mainstream society allocate bodies to present-day modernity, to the daytime of socially sanctioned behaviour, and to the normality of the dominant cultural norm.

Next to the ethnographic, expressive and/or symbolic sense of authenticity that 'gypsy' costuming ends up conveying, there is one more sense, which I call ideological authenticity. Ideological authenticity has to do with that which is generally experienced as reality, or, as the semiotician Yuri Lotman puts it, that world-picture which is radiated by the cultural centre and which "will be perceived by its contemporaries as reality" (*Universe* 129). The two sets of costumes described above – the 'gypsy' costumes and the norm-oriented costumes – are

simplified by the imposition of 'normative' morality on deviant females. So, it is the costume 'narrative' that secured the cycle's popularity in the 1940s because – in contradiction to the moralistic scripts – it represented female sexuality that was denied expression in the conventional signifying systems (cf. 115). One final detail that adds to our compendium of 'gypsy'-themed films: the last "official" Gainsborough melodrama *Jassy* (1947) also revolves around a love story between a 'gypsy' girl and a nobleman.



Fig. 46a and Fig. 46b. Screenshots from *Queen of the Gypsies* (1975, Dir. Emil Loteanu): the blonde-haired owner of a clothes shop welcoming his highness, the nobleman Antol Siladi (Ion Sandri Scurea) to inspect the latest Parisian fashion. Rada (Svetlana Tomá) and her female companions in 'gypsy' costumes characterised by multiple patterns, layers and frills.

opposed along many lines, including shape, design, material and so on, but the most crucial opposition is along the non-white:white colour divide. At the same time, the two sets of costumes are connected through the ritual of 'gypsy' masquerade, which is constitutive of 'whiteness'; the 'gypsy' costumes and the norm-oriented costumes are elements of an identity-constitutive masquerade that produces the most valuable asset in European culture – 'white' identity, the self-image of being a universal human being. As in blackface, the 'white' identity of European/Euro-American social and/or ethnic groups is claimed, negotiated, produced and re-affirmed by the initiatory ritual onto the terrain of 'non-whiteness' that involves cross-dressing and face-swapping. In nineteenth-century America, new emigrants with an ambivalently 'white' status were integrated into the 'white' body of the nation through the performative power of blackface. By the same paradoxical logic, 'gypsy' masquerade has the power to confer 'whiteness' on social and ethnic groups in the European cultural zone. The ritual conference of 'whiteness' has been reiterated in literary texts, on the stage, in films and in daily life.¹³⁵ Ideologically authentic then are those

135 Bogdal points out that since their arrival in Europe, Roma have been perceived as "black" and continually compared to other non-European (to wit 'non-white') groups, such as Africans, Moors, Indians, etc. The earliest example he gives is a record of Roma who appeared in Paris in 1427 and were described as "black" by the chronicler Sebastian Münster in his *Cosmographia*. Another example is a verse from the Brandenburg masquerade *Der Scheeren-Schleiffer* (1690), in which 'gypsies' are addressed as "black Indians" and advised to look for a washerwoman and use Venetian soap since their skin colour does not come off even after the tenth scrubbing (148). In a previous chapter, Bogdal notes that throughout the seventeenth century 'gypsy' masquerades were a popular form of entertain-



Fig. 47a and Fig. 47b. Screenshots from *Queen of the Gypsies* (1975, Dir. Emil Loteanu): Rada's blond-haired suitor, the landowner Antol Siladi, next to her dark-haired father Danilo (Vsevolod Gavrilov). Rada's 'gypsy' suitor Zobar (Grigore Grigoriu) accompanied by the clownish 'gypsy' pauper Bucha (Boryslav Brondukov).

'gypsy' costumes that articulate 'white' identity backwards, in negative terms,¹³⁶ being that crucial element of the cultural matrix that marks the boundary of European reality. To give one example, the costumes that the Serbian orchestra and the 'gypsy' orchestra wear during the final competition in *Gucha* (2006) are ideologically authentic (see also Section 7.1). Their narrative contradicts the film's proclaimed anti-racist plot-message; the Serbian musicians are styled in white folklore shirts, whereas their 'gypsy' counterparts perform in purple Italian suits with tiger-skin patterned lapels. Clearly, like all 'gypsy'-themed films, Dušan Milić's film addresses national 'white' audiences across Europe, not the Roma minority. His work stabilises the way viewers live out their sense of 'white' identity and national belonging, irrespective of their social status. In that sense, 'gypsy' costumes are both fictional and

ment for court societies and townsmen across Europe. The vogue originated in the French court in early seventeenth century (141). According to Bogdal, what comes to the fore in these 'gypsy' masquerades is the desire to hide one's identity with a typical costume (142). Here, I would argue, though, that there is more to this desire, and that is the claim to social 'whiteness'. The theatrical play of hiding and revealing one's social persona furnishes the basis for the production and enactment of 'white' identity. It is through the contrast with a 'black' persona that the 'white' social face can gain its visibility. If in the seventeenth century the black-and-white contrast underpinned social hierarchies where the pale skin of nobility was the aspirational model and the suntanned complexion of 'gypsies' was its antipode, in the age of modern science, the colour dichotomy transformed into a tool for racialisation, a scientific and an aesthetic discourse of which Bogdal gives ample evidence, too.

136 Sketching the physical and sartorial appearance of the 'gypsy' male in literary works, Brittnacher observes that the 'gypsy' represents the inverted image of the dandy, an imitation and a deconstruction of aristocratic appearance (*Leben* 132).

ideologically authentic; they are the site at which the reality of 'white' Eurocentric self-image has its fictional origins exposed.

That 'gypsy' costumes and the bodies they define are on the border of fiction and socio-historic reality is illustrated by one anecdotal story. It comes from the Swedish film photographer Gustaf Bengtsson, who describes the shooting of a film in the 1910s; the story is quoted by Tommy Gustafsson:

Bergrund was a powerful gypsy chief, and the Karlsson sisters played the sweet gypsy girls in colourful dresses. We had put up our tent among the ruins, but we had forgotten to apply for permission for filming. So, one fine day the mayor himself turned up in all his might, accompanied by a couple of police officers, and declared with a masterful voice that we should clear off instantly. You see, we played the part of gypsies so naturally that nobody could detect the difference. (99; see also "Zigenare")

Gustafsson explains that

[o]ne of the reasons that ethnic Swedes could portray travelers with such a verisimilitude was of course the fact that the so-called race differences did not exist in reality, and that the *tattare's* distinguishing traits, such as evilness, promiscuity, and criminality, were nothing but social constructions. (99)

Indeed, this story exposes the fact that the 'racial' difference between *tattare* and ethnic Swedes is an imaginary one, a question of costumes that, in spite of its fictional nature, rebounds in very palpable ways into the socio-historical world. However, it is not sufficient to say that plausible (realistic) portrayal of *tattare* in this and other silent films was easy to stage because, in the pro-filmic world, there is no marked difference between the minority and majority representatives as regards their external appearance. We should bear in mind that the effect of ethnographic authenticity in 'gypsy'-themed films is very much dependent both on the filmmaking technology and on the audience's familiarity with that technology. That is, in the silent film era, costumes were sufficient as a sole authentication device; gender, class and 'ethno-racial' identity were articulated exclusively on the level of clothes, because the medium was limited in its technical ability and could not render facial visibility in a wide spectrum of skin tones. At the same time,

contemporaneous audiences had a level of knowledge of and experience with the film medium that made them decipher costume portrayals as truthful and realistic. In the present-day era of video games and reality shows, the film industry has to resort to much more complex devices to achieve the same effect of credible authenticity. It takes a great deal more to create a captivating illusion of unmediated reality and draw viewers into the diegetic world of the film. As critically minded film (re)viewers, our exposure to advanced film technologies gives us one special advantage – it allows us to see with a naked eye the staged ‘ethno-racial’ masquerade in ‘gypsy’-themed films from earlier film epochs in a way that was inaccessible (invisible) to the spectators of the time.

The Swedish *tattare* film *The King of Trollebo* (1924, Dir. Gustaf Edgren) is another good example which evidences that costumes had a strong reality effect for contemporaneous audiences. The story in the film revolves around the character of Tattar-Ante (Ivar Kalling), who commits a robbery and murder, incited by the evil woman Stava (Signe Rydberg-Eklöf). Tattar-Ante then changes his name to a Swedish-sounding one and settles as a farmer. Visually, the identity swap involves shaving off his dark facial hair and replacing his old, dirty clothes with new and clean ones, after which he appears as a Swede and no one can recognise him as a *tattare* (cf. Gustafsson 100). Gustafsson reports that the film reviews focused entirely on the issue of truthfulness. A collective body of reviewers rated Signe Rydberg-Eklöf’s impersonation of Stava as “suggestively realistic” and Ivan Kalling’s portrayal of Tattar-Ante as “true and real”. “With great consciousness, he has tried to create the *tattare* type, who, even after he has reached a sound position, every so often unveils what kind of a man he truly is.” The reviewers did not object to the stereotyping; they complained rather that Tattar-Ante did not bring to the fore the “race trait” of his character and thus render him more credible. Gustafsson concludes that the stereotypical portraits of *tattare* were generally perceived by the contemporaneous audiences as truthful, while the main criticism addressed the failure of ethnic Swedish actors and actresses “to recreate the inner and outer image of the *tattare* according to the strong common notion in Sweden in the 1920s; that is, ‘inherently’ evil, dirty, promiscuous, and criminal” (101–102).

Finally, ‘gypsy’ costumes may convey a sense of documentariness. By and large, this effect is achieved in crowd scenes shot with Roma extras, often in identifiable, really existing Roma settings; in these cases, filmmakers have a predilection for city slums or run-down village

quarters and, as already pointed out, they are extremely selective during the stage of casting. Here, the implicit claim to truth is just as present, but it is of different nature as it relies on the indexical quality of the photographic image. The ‘truth’ about ‘gypsies’ and their habitual dress is sanctioned by the highly selective gaze of the camera, which toys with the evidentiary power of the photographic image and its purported objectivity.

To sum up, in ‘gypsy’-themed films, costumes are an essential element in the repertoire of devices used to impart an ideological sense of reality; ‘gypsy’ outfits draw their aura of authenticity from a number of very different sources: staged ethnographicity, archetypal symbolism, emotional expressivity and/or ‘racial’ ideology. It is hardly a surprise that the best part of ‘gypsy’-themed films falls within the genre category of costume (melo)dramas. At the same time, there are a number of films, although not many, the narrative and the visual design of which work counter to the racialising aesthetics of authentication by subtly subverting or by fully exposing the costume-like nature of the ‘gypsy’ phantasm. Among the better-made films in this group are *Golden Earrings* (1947, Dir. Mitchel Leisen), *Train of Life* (1998, Dir. Radu Mihăileanu), *Gypsy Woman* (2001, Dir. Sheree Folkson) and *Transylvania* (2006, Dir. Tony Gatlif). These works can also be read in more universal terms, as meta-narratives that provide a self-reflexive commentary on the fluid, performative nature of modern ‘ethno-racial’ identities.

8.2.2 Art Direction: Sets

The sets in ‘gypsy’-themed films are primed for conveying an ideological sense of reality. As already pointed out in the section above, through the paratexts an explicit claim is made that the fiction films feature “real gypsies”, “real encampments”, “real settlements”, “the real world of the gypsies” or “the real culture of gypsies”, so that the distinction between the pro-filmic reality and the film’s fictional world is removed. At the same time, the criteria for authenticity, for what is deemed truthful and realistic upon selecting settings, props or even character types, lie with the film’s crew and its (art) director. Art directors are commonly celebrated as the cinema’s “architects of illusion”, to quote the American film scholar Lucy Fischer, but in the case of ‘gypsy’-themed films the craft of art direction performs a less commendable task, for it panders to the dominant racialising discourse: the film constructs an illusory world designed to legitimate the hegemonic ideology.

In this section, I refrain from a thoroughgoing analysis of props and set decorations. Film sets need to be considered individually within the historical context of their production, because each film offers its own mix and match of the fictional and the historically truthful. And just as with ‘gypsy’ costuming, the selected objects and décors can derive their aura of authenticity from various sources of authority. In terms of set decoration, there is one element that distinguishes ‘gypsy’-themed films from most other fiction films and that is the recurrent use of Roma extras as human props, as indexical signs of ‘gypsy’ authenticity that are deciphered as pointing directly to the socio-historical world. What is more, human bodies and artefacts are often arranged in a stable repertoire of motifs, and this repertoire of ‘gypsy’ motifs is not only overfamiliar in the medium of film but has been continuously re-used in the various arts, starting from seventeenth-century literature, moving through painting, opera and theatre, and ending up with modern photography. The repetitive deployment of such legible, hypnotisingly familiar motifs is another way of inducing déjà-vu in the audience, bolstering the spectators’ predisposition to believe that what they are seeing is the ‘truth’. In his insightful article “History and Film: Public Memory in the Age of Electronic Dissemination”, the film scholar Anton Kaes superbly dissects the “reality effect” achieved in historical film, and although his observations relate to another film genre, they are valid in the same measure for ‘gypsy’-themed films, because there, too, “images of images circulate in an eternal cycle, an endless loop, in a Mobius strip of cliché images, validating and reconfirming each other” (112). The reality effect in ‘gypsy’-themed films is, in addition, heightened by its implicit ethnographicity. Not only is the assemblage of recurrent ‘gypsy’ topoi studiously recycled over the course of centuries in the various arts, but it also assumes the authoritative function of what the French-Nigerian anthropologist Olivier de Sardan calls “an ethnographic index” (23). In his article on “The Ethnographic Pact and Documentary Film”, the scholar draws attention to the silent evidentiary strategies employed in ethnographic film and argues that giving “the viewer the illusion of being introduced into ‘the interior’ of a world not his or her own, as a familiar guest, but also with a sense of separateness, is one of the ways in which documentaries create, imperceptibly, and without fanfare or words, their ethnographicness” (23). Needless to say, ‘gypsy’-themed films are neither documentaries nor are they made by anthropologists, but they act as if they are. Most of them purport to afford an insider’s view into ‘gypsy’ culture

and (under)world by including a fictional tableau of 'gypsy' customs and rites in documentary-inflected sequences. The camera mimics an anthropologist's gaze showing the 'gypsy' way of life segmented into daily routines, occupations and life-cycle rituals, and thus it makes a tacit claim to ethnographicity, endowing the 'gypsy'-themed fiction film with the authority of an ethnographic documentary. One good example in support of these observations comes straight from the script of *Golden Earrings* (1947), in which the para-ethnographic gaze of the camera is staged as that of the 'white' male protagonist. In the film script, we can read:

WAGON ENTRANCE – (DAWN) – Set & Plate – Transparency
(Metolius River)

Through entrance we see the tree-tops and a luminous dawn sky. CAMERA IS MOVING BACK into the INTERIOR OF WAGON: shows the Colonel awakening. He stretches, looks idly around, is momentarily startled, then grins faintly as he remembers where he is. KNOTTD TIGHTLY IN HIS HAIR is a small piece of ribbon.

The wagon is a riot of color. There are boxes and baskets: bottles and jars filled with shells, nuts, herbs. There is a bear's claw, a skeleton of a frog, the mummified remains of small animals, food, clothing, pots and pans. Bundles, sacks, and clothing hang from the walls. The floor is spread with clean straw. (Butler 31)

To recap, as our discussion so far has demonstrated, some or most of the following motifs come up with a predictable regularity in the films: carts, wagons or caravans moving thorough idyllic landscapes; tents or entire camps set up in fields or forests; wild night celebrations with dances around a big open fire; child-birth and baptism rites amidst nature, spectacular weddings and burials; acts of washing, shaving, dressing up, cooking or crafting objects in the open (next to the campfire, or in front of a wagon or a dilapidated shack); shanty houses or slums populated by crowds of dirty-looking, shabbily dressed people and their animals; gangs of dishevelled, semi-clad children running noisily around; voluptuous, dark-haired females smoking a cigarette or a pipe, the mothers among them often simultaneously breastfeeding a baby, and also obligingly putting a bare breast on display; beautiful young and/or old ugly witch-like women engaged in palm reading, with crystal balls and other clairvoyance objects; instances of disloyalty/adultery followed by angry acts of jealousy/revenge; zealous, dark

males, often naked to the waist, locked in knife fights, stabbing their opponent to death; swarthy men dealing with or stealing horses or old cars, peddling handcrafted wares, gambling with cards, getting drunk beyond measure, beating up their wives, playing the violin or other musical instruments, etc.

In a number of influential ‘gypsy’-themed films, this repertory of hackneyed tropes is staged against the backdrop of really existing, identifiable Roma neighbourhoods or settlements. Sudar reports that while shooting *I Even Met Happy Gypsies* (1967) Petrović scouted the region of Vojvodina with his crew, “painstakingly looking for locations, authentic clothes and authentic characters for the film” (126). In an interview, Svetlana Tomá says that *Queen of the Gypsies* (1975) was shot in the Carpathians, in the town of Vinogradovo on the border with Hungary, the director’s favourite place (*Queen*, DVD bonus material). In addition, *Pink Dreams* (1976) was shot on location at Trhovište, in a real Roma village and with all-Roma extras (Votruba). According to the press kit of *Angelo, My Love* (1983), Robert Duvall “became totally enraptured with the gypsy community after he met eight-year-old Angelo¹³⁷ in 1977 on the streets of Manhattan’s Upper West Side”; the director “scouted most of the locations – including St. Anna’s feast in Canada, – cajoled and cast the gypsies, shot the film and took major part in its editing” (9); “[t]he film has the look of a documentary, with locations shot entirely in and around the gypsy community – New York City’s Lower East Side” (13). The making-of

137 The film synopsis claims that “because of his personal involvement with gypsies, Duval was able to portray his leading characters as themselves” (3). The text stylises Angelo, among other things, as a sexually precocious child who leads an active night-life, flirts with adult women and sleeps late. “Attending public school is occasionally insisted upon, but rarely enforced by his family” (3). At the same time, Duval is presented as a benevolent benefactor who advises Angelo to learn to read and write. “Still”, Duval continues, “when you ask Angelo what he wants to do now, he says ‘I want to be a good gypsy’, and a good gypsy doesn’t necessarily learn to read and write” (12). In Duval’s film, Angelo is faced with the dilemma of choosing between his own people and mainstream society. Eventually, he swears “allegiance to his gypsy blood” (8). Interestingly enough, after the film’s release, Angelo Evans was invited as a guest on the Phil Donahue Show, where he was interrogated about Gypsies and their lifestyle. The boy gives examples of Gypsies having regular jobs, such as a policeman, Christian pastor or lawyer, all occupations that require professional training or university education. It cannot escape one’s attention that Angelo Evans’ testimony apparently goes against everybody’s expectations, because the show’s host is quick to retort with an ironic comment, inciting every time a wave of laughter from the audience (“Angelo” 2009).

story of Emir Kusturica's *Time of the Gypsies* (1989) is not any different. Bertellini reports that the film was shot "between 1987 and 1988 in Italy and Yugoslavia, and chiefly in Shutka, the Gypsy quarters on the outskirts of the Macedonian capital of Skopje" (51); "the director had many locations entirely rebuilt" (53). Here, a mention should also be made of *Gucha – Distant Trumpet* (2006), which was co-produced by Kusturica. In his interview for the online journal *Kino*, the director Dušan Milić explains:

Die Dreharbeiten zu *Gucha* dauerten insgesamt zweieinhalb Monate. Gedreht wurde in Serbien und Bulgarien. Einige der Locations – wie die Party-Boote mit Blick auf Belgrad – sind sehr bekannt, andere echte Entdeckungen. Der Bauernhof, der im Film als Zuhause von Julianas Familie dient, befindet sich tatsächlich nur ein paar Kilometer von Guča entfernt. Das Wohnhaus der Roma-Familie, in dem auch tatsächlich eine 14-köpfige Familie wohnt, ist die perfekte Filmkulisse: das oberste Stockwerk ein sympathisches Provisorium. Balkongitter gibt es nicht in dieser Villa Kunterbunt, die lebendig, bunt und gleichzeitig im Zustand des halbfertigen Übergangs den schwer überschaubaren – überwiegend männlichen Clan – beherbergt.

The shooting of *Gucha* took a total of two and a half months. The film was shot in Serbia and Bulgaria. Some of the venues – like the party boats overlooking Belgrade – are well known, others are real discoveries. The farm that is the home of Juliana's family in the film is actually only a few kilometres from Guča. The home of the Roma family, in which a family of fourteen actually lives, is the perfect setting for a movie: the top floor is a nice makeshift solution. There are no balcony railings in this Villa Villekulla, which is lively, colourful and at the same time in the state of half-finished transition, housing the hardly manageable and mostly male clan. [my translation, R.M.]

The last and most recent example is the children's feature film *Nelly's Adventure* (2016), a SWR production shot in a remote Roma village in Romania. In a series of video statements, published on SWR's website and later removed, the director Dominik Wessely explains his choice of setting and cast in a number of statements: "Es war uns immer klar, dass es ein echtes Romadorf sein muss"; "Mir war elementar wichtig,

dass diese beiden Kinder auch von Roma gespielt werden;” “Da ging es mir einfach auch um das Maß an Authentizität, das sehr wichtig war für die Gestaltung dieser Figuren.”

It was always clear to us that it has to be a real Roma village. It was important for me that both children are also performed by Roma. I was concerned about the degree of authenticity, which was very important for the construction of these figures. [my transcription and translation, R.M.]

From the widely circulated truth-claiming paratexts to the actual amount of work invested in the films' production design, all points to the importance laid upon the films' capacity to impart the commonly shared ideological sense of reality. In some cases, the camera fabricates the “real”, in other cases it captures the “real” on location, but the “real”, the “truth about gypsies” remain centre stage, the main commodity. When discussing ‘gypsy’ costuming, I already pointed out that the shared sense of reality, of what is perceived to be convincing and authentic in a film, can derive from difference sources of authority and is influenced by the development of the filmmaking technology. At the same time, there is no denying that some or many of the elements used in the above-mentioned films, such as artefacts, décors or cast, are authentic, in the sense that they belong to the socio-historical world of a given Roma community. The question rather is how and for what purpose are these elements employed within the fictional narrative of the films? For in a large number of ‘gypsy’-themed films, genuine artefacts, Roma extras and entire Roma villages have the sole purpose of furnishing an authenticating backdrop for the film's made-up story, which unfolds in the foreground. Bringing a degree of veracity, some sort of semi-documentary realism, the setting and all other props serve to substantiate – in a very literal sense of the word – the director's vision of the ‘gypsy’ universe. In other words, the aura of authenticity that comes with certain bodies, places and artefacts extends to envelop the entire film, its character portrayal and storyline. So, whenever a ‘gypsy’-themed film is praised for its convincing realism, it is always necessary to ask: Which of the film's numerous elements are endowed with authenticity? What type of authenticity is this? How do these signs of authenticity interact with the rest of the film? What meaning do they impart on the film's narrative, on the delineation of its ‘gypsy’ characters and on its bottom-line message?

The ideological effect of authenticity in ‘gypsy’-themed films often draws its power of conviction by nourishing the East-West divide, attesting to the perceived superiority of the West over whomever happens to be situated to the east of it (certainly, each film re-fashions the boundary between the West and the East in a manner that suits its story and target audience). This dividing mentality is well exemplified in *Nelly’s Adventure* (2016), a German fiction film for children and young people which revives with a new twist the age-old scare story of child-stealing ‘gypsies’¹³⁸ using an impoverished Roma village in Romania as its setting. It is instructive to see how the figure of its main ‘gypsy’ villain is portrayed. The child-kidnapper Hokus (Marcel Costea) is not only part of a shady world of petty criminals but turns out to be its main organising force. He arranges for Nelly and her parents’ plane to get stranded in a Romanian field in the middle of nowhere. Having offered a lift to the German family, he brings them to a roadhouse, where we see him add some drops into Nelly’s drink while exchanging a knowing look with the bartender (**Fig. 48a** and **Fig. 48b**). After some mishaps, he eventually manages to kidnap Nelly, a blonde and sweet-looking teenage girl, and having sedated her with a handkerchief soaked in chloroform, he brings her to a local ‘gypsy’ village (**Fig. 49a** and **Fig. 49b**). There are many scenes throughout the film which suggest that a good part of the villagers, if not the entire ‘gypsy’ village, works for Hokus, including the dancing and begging children on the street.

In terms of appearance and costume, Hokus is stylised as a fairy-tale-like villain; his ‘gypsy’ features are hyperbolised: framed by a black hat and long black hair, his dark-skinned, expressive face is overgrown with a thick bushy beard, flashing a big smile with a golden tooth. He

138 The producer of the film is the German company INDI Films; two of the co-producers are public television channels – Südwestrundfunk (SWR) and Saarländischer Rundfunk (SR). Over 930,000 euros from public funds were allocated to this production; the official funding institutions include MFG Filmförderung Baden-Württemberg, Mitteldeutsche Medienförderung, Deutscher Filmförderfonds, Filmförderungsanstalt, Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg, and BKM (for the script). According to the film’s official website, *Nellys Abenteuer* has received four festival awards and has been nominated for eight other festival awards (*Nellys*). The film was strongly criticised by the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma, which provoked a heated public debate in Germany in the autumn of 2017 and since then has spurred a series of statements released by organisations and scholars on both sides of the debate. For statements and other publications written in defence of the film, see Becker; INDI Film; and Götz. For statements that take a critical stance on the film, see Brunssen; Heftrich; and Josting.



Fig. 48a and Fig. 48b. Screenshots from *Nelly's Adventure* (2016): the black-haired 'gypsy' thug Hokus (Marcel Costea) offering the stranded Klabunt family a lift to Sibiu; Hokus mixing sleeping drops into Nelly's drink, with her blond-haired father Robert Klabund (Kai Lentrodt), wearing a beige jacket, sitting at the table in the background.

is clearly a bad character, but his malevolence is toned down through theatrical exaggeration and comedy, turning him into an endearing make-believe rogue. The name "Hokus" also points to his fictional nature; taken from the magic incantation "hocus pocus", it serves as a reminder that its bearer's main task is to perform for the sake of entertainment. At the same time, the 'gypsy' child-kidnapper is staged in a documentary-like setting surrounded by the inhabitants of a real Roma settlement in Romania. The effect is similar to that of films that mix live action with animation, like *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* (1988, Dir. Robert Zemeckis). Hokus is no different from a cartoon 'gypsy' character starring in a rundown settlement populated by real Roma. The extras in the crowd scenes, surly-looking men in the main, are used as set decoration, conferring by their presence another quality of realism on the 'gypsy' villain's personality and actions. The realness

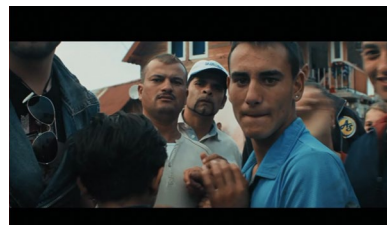


Fig. 49a and Fig. 49b. Screenshots from *Nelly's Adventure* (2016): the black-haired 'gypsy' thug Hokus (Marcel Costea) bringing kidnapped blonde Nelly (Flora Li Thiemann) into a Roma village. A crowd scene showing surly-looking, swarthy males who gather upon Nelly's arrival in the village.



Fig. 50a and Fig. 50b. Screenshots from *Nelly's Adventure* (2016): blonde Nelly (Flora Li Thiemann) on her mountain bike in her spotless, sunlit and radiantly whitewashed German neighbourhood. The shaded, colourful and bitterly impoverished Roma village in Romania where kidnapped Nelly is brought by the 'gypsy' thug Hokus.

of the Roma village transfers over to the entire film, tacitly attesting to its character portrayal and storyline. It is no wonder that for German children the moral of the story is summed up with the admonition that one should not get into strangers' cars and that one should not run away from one's parents ("nicht in fremde Autos einsteigen", "nicht von den Eltern davonlaufen") (Götz 2).

The contrasting images of middle-class urban Germany and under-class rural Romania that the film produces (**Fig. 50a** and **Fig. 50b**) clearly represent a continuity of the German 'gypsy' discourse that, as the historian Frank Reuter points out, relies for its empirical visual material predominantly on Eastern Europe. In a comprehensive study of the 'gypsy' as a photographic construct, Reuter develops the thesis that the photographic gaze towards 'gypsies' in the nineteenth and twentieth century reflects the superior if not disdainful view of Germans and Western Europeans towards the eastern part of the continent. The alleged primitivism of the 'gypsies' living there is meant to attest to the cultural backwardness of entire countries. Photography serves, in the words of Reuter, as a documentary validation of one's own domination and hegemonic aspirations (cf. *Bann* 17). In keeping with this tradition, *Nelly's Adventure* stages the 'gypsy' mask to portray people and cultures situated to the east of Germany, elegantly subsuming under documentary images of penury both the diverse groups of the Roma minority in Romania and the Romanian majority. The film imagery not only sustains the superior self-image of Germans and Western Europeans (its target audience), but it exports in the same breath flaws and problems, such as moral deprivation, destitution and petty criminality, in the direction of Eastern Europe, supplying them with the

ethnic tag of a stigmatised minority.¹³⁹ Certainly, this narrative can be analysed as a glaring example of Balkanism, a racist discourse Maria Todorova describes in her insightful book *Imagining the Balkans*. One more observation can be added to the discussion here: in some of the ‘gypsy’-themed films produced in the West, the ‘gypsy’ figures (and by extension the deviations they stand for) are not seen as part of the dominant national culture, as our own American or English ‘gypsies’, but are marked as outsiders who, as it happens, always come from the (south)east. In *King of the Gypsies* (USA), for example, the two ‘gypsy’ clans are said to have Greek and Russian background; in *Hot Blood* (USA), the ‘gypsies’ are said to have Serbian background; in *Madonna and the Seven Moons* (UK), the ‘gypsies’ are situated in Italy; while in *Golden Earrings* (USA), they are of Hungarian origin. In *Gipsy Magic* (MK), interestingly, it is strongly underlined that ‘gypsies’ come from India, which is also a way to position the film (and by implication its primary target audience, Macedonians) as more belonging to the West and Europe than to the East and Asia.

Let us return to *Nelly’s Adventure* and its authenticating documentary-inflected sequences: after all, what underpins the filmmakers’ urge towards verisimilitude is hardly the desire to give a voice and a

139 Originally, *Nelly’s Adventure* was meant to be used in German schools as resource material for intercultural education and was accompanied by a sixteen-page toolkit for third graders and above, written by Stefan Stiletto, published by Farbfilm Verleih and made freely available for download at the company’s website. After Roma self-organisations protested the antigypsy content in the film, the toolkit was removed from the internet. But it is instructive to consider the images and the messages that this educational material conveys. In one of the activity tasks, it describes the supporting characters Tibi and Roxana as Roma street children who earn their living by pickpocketing (cf. 4–5), while Hokus is presented as a man who commits crimes (cf. 5). According to the toolkit, Nelly gets an insider’s look into the lifestyle and culture of the Roma in the village (cf. 6), where the village furnishings are described as archaic and pre-modern (cf. 7). In the same breath, the toolkit explains that the film’s dramaturgy seeks to create a poignant contrast between the free-living Roma (whom we see living in dire poverty: in shanties, with one water source for the entire village, using outside toilets) and the somewhat stiff, narrow-minded Germans (who are in fact picture-perfect modern cosmopolitan people: we see them living in well-equipped whitewashed houses, working on laptops, flying in planes) (cf. 9). By presenting the said lifestyle of the Roma as colourful, exuberant and free (cf. 8–9), the toolkit overlays the documentary images from the strategically selected Romanian Roma village with an interpretation, in which dire poverty is sentimentalised, exoticised, presented as a cultural attribute of the Roma minority and “embedded in ‘culture of poverty’ ideology”, to quote Shohat and Stam (200), associated with a Balkan state, and thus conveniently exported east of Germany.

historically accurate portrayal of the Roma but the need to authenticate the ‘gypsy’ mask and its instructive story of human downfall. By staging the ‘gypsy’ mask and infusing it with reality, films perform many identity maintenance functions. We already mentioned the utility of the ‘gypsy’ mask in self-image maintenance; another important function it has is giving expression to aspects of human existence that are taboo in a given historical moment or generally in European/Euro-American culture. The essentialist racialising aesthetics of authentication is an artistic trick that filmmakers often and eagerly employ to avoid censorship and escape possible ostracism. The visual effect of authenticity achieved through the deployment of costumes, setting and human props is paired with and thus greatly enhanced by an aural effect of authenticity, as we are about to see in the next section, where the role of the alluring musical score can hardly be overestimated.

8.2.3 Sound Design: Romani Folklore/Gypsy Music

The visual effect of authenticity in ‘gypsy’-themed films is raised to a new level of quality through the sound design: without film sound, the moving images of “real gypsies”, their caravans, encampments or settlements (often uncannily similar to images of refugees and war-stricken regions) convey something of the desolation that comes with extreme poverty, its lethargic hopelessness and gloom; with film sound, however, the same sorry images attain in a number of films a surreal, almost orgiastic quality that is hard to resist.¹⁴⁰ This transformative effect of film sound, without doubt, owes much of its power to the musical score. When designing the music for their films, filmmakers turn to Romani folklore as well as to compositions in the universally recognisable and universally cherished style of Gypsy music. Romani/Gypsy music not only informs the fabric of ‘gypsy’-themed films, but it is also the element with the most powerful aura of ethnographic and emotional authenticity. It allows filmmakers to envelope the storyworld of their film with an auditory veil of emotive realness. The strong immersive effect of the musical score, its unmatched capacity to transport the audience emotionally into the throbbing, delirious underworld of ‘gypsies’, has

140 The transformative power of film sound, and of film art in general, which enables filmmakers to cast a poverty-stricken quarter as a compelling picture of ecstatic revelry in the mythic underworld becomes evident when one compares Stole Popov’s film *Gypsy Magic* (1996) with the footage from its making-of, available on *YouTube* under the title “Gypsy Magic – On the Set/The Making of (1996)”.

a lot to do with the (international) success of ‘gypsy’-themed films and their obsessive popularity.

It is not possible to do justice to film music in this section, to its significance or to the multiple functions it fulfils in the films under scrutiny. So, I limit myself to a few observations that highlight the deployment of Romani folklore/Gypsy music pieces as ethnographically loaded signifiers of authenticity. In addition, as a way of lifting the psychological divide between the national Self and the ‘gypsy’ Other, I suggest that Romani/Gypsy music should be viewed – in the context of these films – as an expression of the negated psychic energy of the national Self that can be fully voiced and better tolerated in the guise of the ‘gypsy’ Other; through Gypsy music, the viewers can get in touch, albeit temporarily, with their bacchanalian side without compromising their self-image as people of virtue. Like other music forms, Gypsy music has the important function of a psychological safety-valve. In light of these considerations and in the context of our discussion about the interplay between the visual and the aural markers of authenticity, there are many questions that await an answer: How is the musical score in ‘gypsy’-themed films deployed as a storytelling tool? How does it organise the storyworld of the film and how does it contribute to its narrative continuity? How does it function in films that pit the ‘white’ mask against the ‘gypsy’ mask and their mutually negating universes? As pointed out in Chapter Six, for instance, in the opening sequences of *The Bohemian Girl* (1936), the filmmakers use the “society of voices” device to organise and divide the different groups within the film’s narrative. The next logical question is how does the musical score function in those ‘gypsy’-themed films which eclipse the bigger picture and show the ‘gypsy’ world in complete isolation? As for Kusturica’s films, for example, Bertellini says that music and musical performances are not a poetic addendum, but inform the films’ very texture (cf. 7). Goran Gocić notes the importance of ‘live’ music performances in Kusturica’s works, describing *Time of the Gypsies* and *White Cat, Black Cat* as “all-singing, all-dancing films even apart from their long and copious weddings” (97). In Nevena Daković’s view, “[t]he multiple functions of music, particularly, of songs, open the possibility of regarding such films as Gypsy operettas or comic operas” (398). So, we need to ask further: What qualities does film music ascribe to the ‘gypsy’ world and its inhabitants? What kind of emotions does it overlay the images with and how do these emotions lend credence to the film’s claims to ethnographic truth? How is the emotive impact of

Romani folklore/Gypsy music related to its aural effect of (ethnographic) authenticity? It is also interesting to consider how the musical score of internationally successful 'gypsy'-themed films affects Romani music in the pro-filmic world. In relation to *I Even Met Happy Gypsies*, Sudar reports, for instance, that:

Petrović found authentic Gypsy music and orchestras to perform the film's score, often the roadside taverns – *kafana* – as they are called in Serbia. The song "Djelem, Djelem" (or "Gelem, Gelem" – as it is spelled sometimes), which he had already used in *Three* and *Record*, had become a famous Gypsy song across Europe, and is now recognised as the Roma anthem, thanks to the widespread distribution of this film. (143)

And last but not least, it is important to examine the political and economic conditions in which the musical score is produced: does it result from a dialogic exchange, in which Roma musicians are involved on equal terms with the rest of the filmmaking crew, or is Romani folklore exploited like raw material? The last question is addressed, albeit indirectly, in the final example I want to present here. It comes from the Mosfilm production *Queen of the Gypsies* (1975): in a long, filmed interview (with subtitles in English quoted here), the renowned Soviet-born Moldovan composer Eugene Doga recounts how the film's musical score was created, commenting with an element of self-criticism on his own approach:

Gypsies are Found Near Heaven, that was, for me personally, rather a risky theme, because I'd never really known Gypsies... And there were several songs in *Lautary*, I remember that they... well... It was Loteanu who'd chosen them, and I tried to ennoble them. (...) And here, the whole film was to be built on the Gypsy material, with real Gypsies participating besides the actors and with real music, as source material of course. (...) What is my input? Where does the composer come in and where does he let go? Where does folklore begin and where does it end? That was the most difficult task for me. (...) We had an actual Gypsy camp, the real Gypsies dressed as we always see them dress all around. (...) But they carried a great concentration of energy in them. Because we looked at thousands of people. I say we, because Loteanu went to one end of the then USSR and I went

to another, and each was picking talented people one by one. Then we recorded that folklore, listened to it, listened to various groups and recorded them. But this proved absolutely inadequate, because it has to be presented differently, on a different qualitative level, on a different professional level. What was it that we needed? I think we found a very interesting work formula – to have it all: folklore, composition, a big symphony orchestra, a big academic chorus, and the Gypsies as that special colouring, that tone, that very colour which helped us to make a Gypsy picture and not just a film about Gypsies. (...) What seemed especially interesting to me when we worked with that material... I thought that because the Gypsies did not know any musical parts when they sing in choruses. I thought that they just jumped from one voice to another. And with my conservatory background, I decided to bring that outrage [безобразие] as I thought it, to order and correct that voice exchange. And when I did it, we had lost that Gypsy flavour [цыганскость, простите за такое слово], that special colouring which always strikes us, which is so exciting, which is so interesting. [the insertions in Russian, added by me, come from the filmed interview, R.M.]

Eugene Doga's account is highly informative if we also consider it in the light of the parallel that we have drawn to blackface minstrelsy. As Saxton points out, blackface minstrelsy marked, on the one hand, the onset of a national American music and it brought spectacular success to its first purveyors, Northerners from old-stock American families and of a middle-class, urban background (cf. 6); on the other hand, these 'white' entertainers saw it as their task to collect slave musical pieces that "floated wildly" or "hummed in the breezes" and to knock them into shape, "to Europeanize them sufficiently so that they would not offend the refined ears" (6–7). Thus, Saxton concludes, the double task of exploiting and suppressing the African element defined the birth of nineteenth-century America's most popular mass entertainment. Michael Rogin observes here that the problem of theft was resolved by assigning labour to the 'whites' who, as the argument went, did the skilled work necessary to transform "black raw material into art" (1064).

Now, if we take a look at the 'gypsy'-themed films listed in Chapter Four, it is striking that in all of these works the musical score is written by non-Roma artists. To give some concrete examples: in *The*

Bohemian Girl (1936), the musical score is written by the American composer Nathaniel Shilkret; in *King of the Gypsies* (1978), the score is written by the Jewish-American mandolinist David Grisman, featuring mainly the French-Italian jazz violinist Stéphane Grappelli; Kusturica's music collaborator for *Time of the Gypsies* (1988) is the Yugoslavian musician Goran Bregović;¹⁴¹ while in *Gucha – Distant Trumpet*, except for one Serbian folksong, the film score is written by the Serbian composer Dejan Pejović. One paratext published by *Kino* informs us that Dejan Pejović had to work out the different styles of the two rival bands, which are then played by different orchestras. He closely cooperated with Marko Marković's band of Roma musicians in order to preserve its idiosyncratic sound, but he also had to find a musically independent language for the Serbian band of Satchmo, which was then performed by Dragan Ignjić's orchestra (cf. Redaktion). All these examples, together with Eugene Doga's account, show the extent to which film score musicians contribute to the characterisation and differentiation of the 'gypsy' mask by way of deploying Romani folklore and/or compositions in the idiom of Gypsy music. It will be also very advantageous to examine the notions of music, as well as the other criteria these artists adhere to in their creative work, that is, in the process of composing, selecting, re-fashioning or organising the score pieces, the main purpose of which is none other than to enhance the film's story.

Certainly, the multiple facets of Romani/Gypsy music and its functions in 'gypsy'-themed films need to be further explored in greater detail, but it seems fitting to conclude this section by briefly discussing Sasha Baron Cohen's mockumentary *Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan* (2006, Dir. Larry Charles). This highly controversial film demonstrates how the authenticity effect of setting and sound can be used by filmmakers to cast the stigma of 'gypsiness' upon a randomly chosen country (provided, of course, that the country is located far enough east from the film's target audience). For the film setting, Sasha Baron Cohen chose the Roma village of Glod in Romania; the quasi-documentary images of its dilapidated houses, its unpaved streets and destitute inhabitants (some of whom are introduced in the film as prostitutes,

141 See here Carol Silverman's circumstantial analysis of Goran Bregović's role in Kusturica's films in *Romani Routes: Cultural Politics and Balkan Music in Diaspora*, and more particularly in Chapter Thirteen: "Collaboration, Appropriation and Transnational Flows" (269–294).

abortionists, rapists or child-devouring Jews) are overlaid in addition with emotionally compelling Romani folklore/Gypsy music; among the music pieces used in the film are Esma Redžepova's song "Čhaje Shukarije" and Goran Bregović's interpretation of "Ederlezi" from *Time of the Gypsies* (cf. Silverman 289–291). In this film formula, the look of a really existing Roma village and the sound of worldwide popular Romani/Gypsy songs are transformed into non-verbal signifiers of 'gypsiness', supplying the film's fabricated portrayal of Kazakhstan with an audio-visual seal of authenticity. How difficult and expensive it is to protest against the stigmatising power of the big screen becomes palpable when one looks at the multi-million-dollar publicity campaigns that Kazakhstan's government launched in a frantic attempt to counter the "Borat effect". Erica Marat reports that, following the film's release, Kazakhstan's diplomats were actively involved in burnishing the country's international reputation; so, for instance, as part of the campaign "Heart of Eurasia", numerous 'infomercials' were broadcast in Western and Russian media, in which the country presented itself as "committed to freedom and democracy", while a follow-up campaign called "Road to Europe" sought to establish a firm link between Kazakhstan and Western states, and so on (1129–1131). Judging by the reaction of Kazakhstan's government, we can surmise that Cohen's film has persuasively switched on the antigypsy mode of seeing in relation to this Central Asian country. And even though the filmmaker's satirical intent was to expose the racism and ignorance of the Americans, laughing a bitter laugh at their readiness to presume true nearly any outrage about a people from the East, the burden of the 'gypsy' stigma weighed heavily upon Kazakhs and they were quick to dis-identify and distance themselves from it. Tellingly, the country's publicity campaigns are primly aligned with Europe's cultural force field, where the 'white' and the 'gypsy' mask constitute its two poles: while cleansing Kazakhstan of its ascribed 'gypsiness', the campaigns strive to 'whiten' the nation's image by affiliating it with the club of democratic nations and reaffirming its connection to the West and the USA. Unpalatable as it may be in an aesthetic and moral way, Cohen's mockumentary has brought international visibility to Kazakhstan on an undreamt-of scale, and many Kazakhs are able to see the positive irony of this development, which in turn is indicative of the powerful effect of 'gypsy' authenticity induced through the artful deployment of Roma settings, human props and Romani folklore/Gypsy music.

8.2.4 Sound Design: Voice and Romani Language

Another potent aural element deployed to heighten the effect of authenticity in ‘gypsy’-themed films is that of the human voice. Sitting in the cinema hall, we can hear ‘gypsy’ characters speak their mind, delivering soul-pouring monologues or engaging in revealing dialogues, the sound of their voices making us privy to intimate moments of introspection. In a number of films, the characters even use the language of the Roma minority, Romani. In theory, giving a voice to a silenced minority represents a powerful emancipatory technique, but in practice, as the examples to follow show, this technique is used in the films under scrutiny to relay the dominant racialising discourse. Most of these films feature scenes in which ‘gypsy’ figures make utterances containing self-denunciatory and/or self-disparaging remarks about ‘gypsies’ in confirmation of the hegemonic view that ‘gypsies’ are deviant creatures by nature. The utterances are made in the first person singular or plural, following the otherwise commendable formula “I/we speak for ourselves”, which is also highly authoritative in matters of self-knowledge and self-definition. Thus, wittingly or unwittingly, the films exploit both the authority of the first-person form as well as the predictability of the content of the utterances to consolidate the sense of realness that shrouds their imagined storyworlds. By the power of the grammatical form, the spoken lines suggest that ‘gypsies’ themselves agree with the hegemonic narrative of ‘gypsy’ deviance, the characters repeating and asserting – in their own voice and with all the weight of the first-person authority – that which the audience already knows and is willing to believe about the radically Otherised minority.

Here, I want to highlight several examples from *The Bohemian Girl* (1936) and *King of the Gypsies* (1978), all of which are described in minute detail in Chapter Six, as well as one example from *Papusza* (2013), discussed in Chapter Seven.

In the beginning of *The Bohemian Girl*, and more precisely in Sequence 2, we can hear the ‘gypsies’ sing in chorus:

Gypsy vagabonds are we
As free as anyone can be
Wandering on without a care today
We are so free! Without a care
Anywhere that we may roam
Is where we make our home

Be it on the road or sky
On high! In the sky!

Sequence 3 introduces the 'gypsy' queen, who rejoices at the prospect of robbing the townspeople in Count Arnheim's county, saying: "What we pick up here, we must pick up quickly." In Sequence 8, the 'gypsy' queen issues direct orders: "Off with the rogues, that they may fill their purses and replenish our coffers!", adding with a voice full of lament: "What wouldn't I give to go with them!"

In *King of the Gypsies* (1978), the viewer is ushered into the world of 'gypsies' by Dave's monologue, which is added in voiceover (see Sequence 1): "Maybe my life would have turned out quite different in the olden days, before private property. There was always a farm or land field to camp in. Gypsies were free to roam, they did not pay taxes, named with some damn computer I could not even find. It was better. Maybe I was born too late but who gets to pick when to be born or to pick the mother and the father. The biggest decision in your life and nobody gets to say anything about it. All the rest of your life you live with it, or you fight it." In Sequence 7, Dave's voice narrates the story of his sister's birth, informing the viewers about the relationship 'gypsies' have to childbirth in general: "We kept moving, living an independent life like gypsies have had for a couple of thousand years, taking care of ourselves. We didn't need nobody else, we didn't need doctors, not for the simple things like the birth of a child. We just pull over and wait so you got no birth certificate which ain't bad when there is a war on 'cause you only got the gypsy to swear when he was born." In the film's closing sequence, Dave meditates on the future of 'gypsies' (see Sequence 34): "Maybe I can lead them into the twentieth century, but I don't know if anybody could make them do anything except what they damn all wanna do. They'll go on, the gypsies."

As already quoted in Chapter Seven, in an intimate conversation with Jerzy Ficowski, sitting late at night by a campfire, Papusza voices the following thoughts: "I have black eyes; you have green eyes but we see the world just the same. Because the world is there. We see the world just the same, but we live differently. Your people are strong; mine are weak, because we have no science or memory. Maybe that's for the better. If Gypsies had memory, they would all die of worry" [my translation of the German subtitles, R.M.]

In all these examples, we are clearly dealing with forms of cultural ventriloquism: the non-Roma performers in gypsyface are used not only

to enact but also to enunciate the dominant set of codes. It is important to point out here that “real Gypsies” playing themselves are made instrumental in the same measure as non-Roma actors in gypsyface; in ‘gypsy’-themed films, it makes little difference whether the casting is “realist” or not. Regardless of whether the performers are selected on account of their name appeal and box office draw, because of their acting charisma and talent, or because of their unusual physiognomy and skin colour, all of them, Roma and non-Roma, are reduced to puppet-like entities that perpetuate racist views and thus serve to reinforce the film’s ideological scenario.

By the same token, the Romani language is used as a decorative element on account of its aural texture and strong aura of ethnographicity; its deployment is certainly not motivated by the desire to give a respectful linguistic representation of the Roma minority or give the latter a communitarian voice – quite the contrary. Even when enacted in a Romani translation, the fact remains that ‘gypsy’ roles are originally scripted in the language of the dominant culture and, significantly, in a way that relays its racialising perspective. There is more to it: in most of the films, the language spoken by the ‘gypsy’ figures is deliberately used as an aural signifier of alterity, portraying the characters as linguistically deviant; and since spectators expect ‘gypsies’ to be linguistically incompetent or deficient, the staged ‘gypsy’-speak is perceived as authentic. There are various ways in which films present the linguistic aberration of ‘gypsies’: they may show ‘gypsy’ figures who have a poor command of the dominant language or speak it with a strong foreign accent; they may show characters who speak in the language of the minority in a way that appears completely unintelligible, like Brad Pitt’s illustrious impersonation of a “pikey” in *Snatch* (2000, Dir. Guy Ritchie); or they may recruit so-called “naturals” who speak in intelligible Romani made accessible to the audience through subtitles, which Romani, however, is often perceived to be infused with a mythic alterity. This is at least what the analysis of the Serbian film scholar Nevena Daković points to. Discussing Yugoslav ‘gypsy’-themed films by Aleksandar Petrović and Emir Kusturica, Daković draws the following perplexing conclusion:

The nature of film and the Magic Realism of the Gypsy figure make the dreams believable and turn them into a possible part of everyday existence. Film is the factory of (fulfilled) dreams, just as the Gypsy figure is oneiric. *I Even Met Happy Gypsies*, *Time of the Gypsies*, and other films I have discussed [*Into the*

West; White Cat, Black Cat] could have been made only in Gypsy language. (398)

By all appearances, next to the 'gypsy' regime of seeing, the dominant culture sustains a 'gypsy' regime of hearing, in the ears of which commonplace (linguistic) differences ring in mythic tones.

8.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have touched upon the various types of elements harnessed in 'gypsy'-themed film with the purpose of producing the highly appealing and just as lucrative effect of authenticity; as such, these elements can be regarded as constitutive of the racialising aesthetics of authenticity that characterises 'gypsy'-themed films and sets them apart from other film forms and genres. Tellingly, these fiction feature-length films are sometimes mistakenly categorised by film reviewers as documentaries. When we consider their relation to the socio-historical world, we can see that 'gypsy'-themed films display a highly contradictory nature: discursively, narratively and visually, they are situated on the blurred boundary between fiction and fact, between the imagined and the documented, between the mythic and the scientific. If fiction films convey allegorical truths that bear an indirect relationship to the socio-historical world and if ethically sound documentary/ethnographic films convey factual/scientific truths that bear a direct relationship to the socio-historical world, 'gypsy'-themed films convey a mythic truth, in which the allegorical is compounded with the factual and the scientific; they purvey the myth of racial ideology within a realist-dramatic aesthetic and thus inaugurate it as a universal coordinate system, a coalescence of truths, in which the concrete, the typical and the universal are merged into one; the underlying aim of this endeavour is to authenticate the performance of the 'gypsy' mask, to render it ideologically real. In sum, the loudly advertised promise of 'gypsy'-themed films is to reveal the 'truth' about 'gypsies' in general, staging a fictional tableau of 'gypsy' customs and rites in line with the cultural expectation that the Roma minority is intrinsically, radically and irrevocably different. These fiction films turn 'gypsy' ways and lifestyle into their central point of appeal, creating their much-lauded authenticity effect through the concerted deployment of Roma extras, Romani folklore/Gypsy music, the Romani language, costumes, props,

setting, etc. Visually, 'gypsy'-themed films adhere to the conventions of realism as style,¹⁴² according additional authority to their truth claims by borrowing themes, motifs, stylistic devices and aesthetic techniques from the (ethnographic) documentary genre. The claim that these films are in a position to reveal the otherwise inaccessible 'truth' about 'gypsies' is also asserted and promoted through various paratexts: from DVD blurbs and advertisement posters to making-of films and interviews with the filmmakers.

142 The concept of realism is a famously vague, hard-to-pin-down one, associated with a broad spectrum of theoretical definitions, some of which are mutually exclusive, so a disambiguation note is required here. In *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, Shohat and Stam provide an illuminating discussion of the question of realism in filmic representations of subaltern groups, pointing out that the aesthetics of verisimilitude implicitly makes and is decoded as making claims to socio-historic truths (cf. 178). In reference to Brecht, the authors are careful to distinguish between realism as a style or a set of conventions used to produce "an illusionistic 'reality effect'" and realism as a goal, also called "progressive realism", the aim of which is to lay bare social hierarchies and hegemonic representations (180). Clearly, in my critique of 'gypsy'-themed films, I have in mind the first notion of realism. In their *Film Theory*, Elssaesser and Hagener consider 'classical' cinematic style through the metaphors of window and frame, pointing out the paradox that a maximum of technique and technology is required to create "the effect of an unmediated view (window)" (19, cf. 14–38). In *Hollywood Lighting*, Keating details the technical means and codified rules that define classical cinema, further distinguishing between realism of roundedness, of presence, of mood and of realist detail (cf. 5). The psychological "appetite for illusion", another important aspect of pseudo-realism in plastic arts, is addressed in Bazin's book *What is Cinema?* (11).

9

The Functions of the ‘Gypsy’ Masquerade Staged in Film

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It is a widely held view among film scholars that to be perceptive and precise, film analysis needs to consider films in their socio-historic embeddedness. A detailed contextual study is indispensable, especially when trying to understand how and why a film works; yet, in this chapter meant to bring to light the multiplicity of functions performed by ‘gypsy’-themed films, I will refrain from contextual reconstructions. This is not out of disregard for scientific rigour, for I am well aware what immense impact socio-political and cultural forces have on shaping a film product, and that they often offer the only way to access the filmmaker’s motives, his/her choice of a story and visual aesthetics, or the slant his/her film has taken on the topic. Nevertheless, in my research I had to bracket out to a great extent the contextual specifics in order to reduce the semiotic complexity at the level of individual film analysis and thus, hopefully, to open space to set up the methodological tools necessary for tackling the complexity of semiotic processes at another level: it has been my aim to sketch the contours of the largely ignored and unexplored phenomenon of ‘gypsy’-themed film on the vast map of European and American cinema, to pinpoint the significance of the ‘gypsy’ mask in the development of film grammar and its role in the complex dialogics within and among national narratives. Just as in a syntactic analysis one can describe any sentence, no matter how singularly unique and complex it is, by reducing it to the parts of speech that it is made of and explaining the rules that govern their internal relationships, so in my approach to films, themselves unique and infinitely complex texts, I hope to have reached a similar level of

analytical abstraction. It should help me demonstrate that the 'gypsy' mask is not an exchangeable decorative element that adds colour to the surface of the big screen, but that it represents an indispensable part of cinematic language, a core element of European cultural grammar without which it would be impossible to imagine ourselves the way we do today.

All the while, my essentially pluricentric approach to 'gypsy'-themed films does not eschew questions that probe into the film's socio-historical context or take an interest in the film's reception by popular and professional audiences; quite the contrary, for it is mandatory to ask: What functions does a 'gypsy'-themed film fulfil at a particular historical stage of development for a given national culture? Did 'gypsy'-themed films, for instance, play a specific role for fascist/communist/capitalist political regimes in Europe in the twentieth century and what is this role? (For the National Socialist regime in Germany, for Franco's dictatorship in Spain, for the Socialist Bloc during the Cold War, as well as for Western Europe, for the period of transition after the Fall of the Berlin Wall, and so on?) What is the unstated purpose of staging the 'gypsy' mask on the big screen? What unspoken needs of the national majority are met through the story, what socio-political anxieties are alleviated, what kind of identity crises are stabilised? The response of the various audiences is also symptomatic of the functions a film performs, so it is also necessary to ask: What is the general reception of the work? Who is praised in filmmaking circles and for what? Who profits directly from the film's success and who is excluded from that success?

It is obvious that a sustained contextual study, one that gives satisfying answers to all these questions while focusing on one film or a wave of 'gypsy'-themed film in a given national culture, will fill the pages of an entire book. And it is to be hoped that the current research would serve as an impetus for such future studies, in which film scholars pay close attention to concrete socio-political realities and the way 'gypsy'-themed films address and help shape these realities. In this final chapter, though, I will limit myself to an overview of the five broad functions that 'gypsy'-themed films perform within national cultures but also at the supranational level of the European semiosphere, in an attempt to refract, restructure and wrap up the findings presented in the preceding eight chapter through the lens of functionality. As we have already seen, the cinematic spectacle of the 'gypsy' mask fulfils an array of disparate functions and these are not dissimilar to the functions identified in relation to blackface minstrel shows (see here Saxton;

Roediger; and Rogin); we can distinguish the following five main types of functions: aesthetic, disciplining, carnival, subversive and socially integrative. The 'gypsy' mask is ubiquitous in film narratives and therefore it can endow figures and stories with a high level of visibility (aesthetic function). The enactment of the 'gypsy' mask, in turn, may be used in a way that stabilises the norm-setting 'white' mask by way of ostracising and punishing deviance (disciplining function); it may be used in a way that enables filmmakers to give vent to pent-up emotions and broach taboo topics (carnival/expressive function); or it may enable them to voice a critical view of the 'white' mask and put forward alternative models of social cohesion (subversive function). The subversive potential of the 'gypsy' figure may also add a measure of self-reflexivity and/or true originality to the film, two aspects of great cultural significance. Just as in blackface minstrel shows, the performance in 'gypsy' mask may have a strong uplifting effect on the professional career of the 'white' filmmaking crew, elevating the film director and the lead actors – and sometimes even the national cinema they represent – to the first ranks of the international film scene (socially integrative function). These are, in a nutshell, the five main functions that 'gypsy'-themed films may have and often simultaneously, which explains the complex aggregate of messages that could be contained within one film as well as its ability to address with equal success a broad variety of audiences.

9.1 Aesthetic Function

The fictive-discursive entity that, to facilitate the analysis of film images, we have called here the 'gypsy' mask is, from a filmmaker's perspective, a very economic and expedient visual storytelling tool: it is universally decipherable, it is easy to mark and stage on the big screen and it is unusually malleable, both in narrative and iconographic terms. The 'gypsy' mask is an ingrained part of the language of European art, having been instrumental in the development of European classist, racialising and nation-building discourses for the past five centuries, and as such it enjoys a truly universal recognisability. At the same time, not much artifice is needed to evoke this fictional phantasm in the spectator's mind: it is enough to bring into use the label 'gypsy' and furnish its disparaged dark-haired bearer with one or more clichéd accessories, such as a striped blanket, a pair of golden hoop earrings, a golden tooth flashing amid dark, bushy facial hair (for the men) or

while taking a pull at a pipe (for the women), darker than 'normal' skin, or some eye-catching facial feature (eyes of different colour, unusual physiognomy, missing front teeth, a crude body tattoo). This imaginary phantasm is so pliable that it can be juxtaposed, as the polar-opposite ethno-social bottom, to practically any dominant norm, be it the one embodied by European aristocrats, the bourgeois, or the heroic working class from the Eastern bloc, and, as a visual signifier of the ethno-social lowlife, the 'gypsy' mask can be assigned almost any expedient and generally deviant quality.

Furthermore, there is one more crucial stylistic advantage to the 'gypsy' construct: it is a universally recognisable figure with an ethnic tag that is colour coded as 'non-white'/'black' in such a way that its colouring conveys simultaneously at least four distinct meanings: an archetypal black where the colour signifies lack of light or darkness, a religious black which is a direct reference to the devil and the colour of its body (cf. Brittnacher, *Leben* 230–232), a psychological black where the colour stands for the unconscious, and a racialising, epidermal black where the colour is used to brand the entire minority,¹⁴³ and this in spite of the actual fact that Roma are phenotypically as diverse as most other European groups (see Sections 1.4.1 and 5.4.2). Of all groups with an ethnic tag in Europe, the Roma are the ones who are still scapegoated aesthetically in the arts today,¹⁴⁴ and importantly this is done via the language of the dominant medium of modernity, film, in both its black-and-white and colour stages of development; the Roma are aesthetically scapegoated in the sense that the entire

143 The Roma scholar Ian Hancock opens his book *The Pariah Syndrome* with an illuminating quotation from the work of Sam Beck, an American fellow scholar who has conducted extensive fieldwork in Romania: "Romanians who are in administrative government and political positions of authority, explain the Tsigani [a racial slur for the Roma] situation by referring to America. 'You know,' they say, 'The Tsigani are like your Negroes: foreign, lazy, shiftless, untrustworthy and black'" (2).

144 Two other Europe-based groups with an ethnic tag that have traditionally been seen as 'black' are the Irish and the Jews. Dyer points out that "[f]or much of British history, the Irish have been looked down upon as black", whereas the Jews have "constituted the limit case of whiteness" but were regarded as 'black' in Nazi Germany (52–57). On the ambivalent whiteness and racialisation of the Irish, see also Heinz Tellingly, while discussing the 'gypsy' romance of *Madonna of the Seven Moons* (1944), Sue Harper comments that it is mandatory for cultural historians to explore the role of marginal groups in popular cultural forms in Britain, because "[they] provide a way of exploring the limits of social pollution that is, of negotiating the boundary between the pure and the impure, the safe and the dangerous" ("Madonna" 51).

minority has been consistently linked to a fictional figure playacting the colour-coded role of the 'gypsy' mask. In symbolic terms, this means that as a group the Roma are fully assigned to the dark side of the black:white divide and thus limited to performing the 'black' role in 'black' stories or in stories which didactically juxtapose the 'gypsy' mask to the 'white' mask.

In purely pictorial terms, a local 'black' figure with an ethnic tag is indispensable for the cultural realm of the Old Continent, whose populace self-fashions itself as 'white' in 'ethno-racial' terms. Put in other words, it is impossible to create a realist image that compliments the European ruling elites or the dominant national cultures for their the 'social' or 'ethno-racial' 'whiteness' without making use of a local 'black' figure. Artistic language operates through value contrasts, and since there are no absolute values in the extra-diegetic world that it can draw upon, it creates its own values inside the semiotic system of the film. This is what makes the 'gypsy' mask – stylised as the quintessentially 'non-white' Europe-based figure – a ready-made, energy-saving 'black' construct of great storytelling power.¹⁴⁵ It is ideally suited to bringing the 'white' mask into relief and it can have this effect not only in visual terms as in the black-and-white aesthetics of early film but also narratively. Being a hybrid aggregate of visual and semantic attributes, the 'gypsy' mask is, thus, capable of furnishing a psychological *trompe l'oeil* of a shared reality.

This is the reason why the 'black' figure of the ubiquitous 'gypsy' has also become an indispensable element – narratively and stylistically – in the multi-directional flow of group identity narratives that compete on a metric of Europeanness and thus shape the dynamics of the European semiosphere. Notably, this flow of competitive narratives is paced asynchronously within and across its various, hierarchically structured zones, zones linked to the key organising concepts of modern life – social class, 'ethno-racial' group, nation, broader geopolitical

145 Paying critical attention to "the process of literarization" to which the Western imaginary has subjected 'gypsies', Katie Trumpener points out that over the course of the nineteenth century, 'gypsy' figures came to be used increasingly as a textual effect (849, cf. 869); stylised, exoticised and reduced to "generic" figures of mystery, adventure, and romance", they not only became "a mainstay of the new genre of the fantastic" but played an integral part in the formation of literary tradition itself, "acting as figurative keys to an array of literary genres and to the relations between them" (869, 873). Listing literary works on the 'gypsy' theme, the scholar drives her point home by observing that these works are "virtually synonymous with the modern European literary canon" (874).

formation. Since 'whiteness' cannot be pinned down to one valid-for-all skin tone, the instability of its boundary, the fact that is used as a movable criterion of in/exclusion creates conditions for a constant rivalry on the level of group identity fictions – classist, 'ethno-racial', national(ist), West vs. Central and East European/the Balkan, North vs. South European, etc.; these are narratives that, plainly said, find themselves in a constant competition to define and assert which group is 'white', which 'off-white', and which is 'whiter' than all. As Dyer pertinently points out:

If there are only two colours that really count, then which you belong to becomes a matter of the greatest significance. (...) Given the overwhelming advantage of being white, in terms of power, privilege and material well-being, who counts as white and who doesn't is worth fighting for – fighting to keep people out, to let strategic groups in, fighting to get in. (52)

Though providing an incredibly perceptive analysis in his book, Dyer cites only the Jews as constituting the boundary case of 'whiteness' (cf. 52), and surprisingly does not make a single mention of any of the numerous 'gypsy'-themed films in the history of cinema. Once again, such an omission is a clear indication that, as a subject of academic study, the 'gypsy' topic lies well below the threshold of cultural awareness, because the limit case of 'whiteness' cannot be exemplified better than by the cinematographic 'gypsy' construct. On European soil, the boundary that separates the symbolic realm of 'whiteness' (European-ness) from that of 'non-whiteness'/'blackness' (un-European-ness) is codified primarily by means of the 'gypsy' figure, which accounts also for the mercurial nature of this construct. The 'gypsy' is an oxymoronic construct that oscillates between white and black, as well as between the symbolic and real-world notions that these contrasting colours are associated with; its semantic fluidity results from the detachment maintained between signified and signifier. Its inherent ambivalence, which contains the oxymoronic tension between the polar opposites of black and white, is evoked in many ways: it is suggested in film titles such as *La gitana blanca* (1923), *Morena Clara* (1936/1954), translated into English as "Dark and Bright" or "The Fair-Skinned Gypsy", *La caraque blonde* (1953, Dir. Jacqueline Audry), *The Gypsy and the Gentleman* (1958), *Isabella the Gypsy Duchess* (1969, Dir. Bruno Corbucci), *Madonna of the Seven Moons* (1945), *Black Cat*, *White Cat* (1998), *The*

Black Swallow (1997);¹⁴⁶ it is hinted at by character names like Morena Clara (white/light brunette), or Beli Bora (White Bora), the swarthy villain in a white suit; it is present in the pattern of character costuming – impeccably white outfits for characters from the national culture vs. black or black-and-white outfits for the ‘gypsies’ if we focus on the black-and-white film era (see Chapter 3), a pattern that has been adapted to colour film, too (see Section 7.1 as well as Section 8.2.1); it is sustained visually by carefully crafted and often highly stylised montage sequences that recreate the symbolic play of black and white using different objects, mostly animals: a white rabbit and a black cat in *The Bohemian Girl*; a white and a black horse in *Queen of the Gypsies*; white geese set against mud or swarthy skin in *I Even Met Happy Gypsies*, a motif that is profusely exploited in both of Kusturica’s ‘gypsy’-themed films; a black and a white cat in *Black Cat, White Cat*; a ‘gypsy’ dressed in black dancing with a white doll in the opening sequence of *Gipsy Magic*; the ‘gypsy’ character Somáli in a white suit dancing with Death in black in *Roming* (2007, Dir. Jiří Vejdělek); Papsza’s pregnant mother, dressed in black rags, gazing at a stylish white doll displayed in a shop window, etc. As the examples show, the symbolic play with the colours black and white can be staged between the world of ‘white’ mask and the world of the ‘gypsy’ mask, or it can be contained within the world of the ‘gypsy’ mask.

The ‘gypsy’ tag denotes simultaneously an ‘ethno-racial’ group and stigmatised social strata, vacillating between the two notions; one intertitle in Lubitsch’s *Carmen* exemplifies this polyvalent meaning: it describes the tavern “Lillas Pastia’s” as a place frequented by “smugglers, gypsies, cutthroats”. All the while, the ‘gypsy’ mask can be impersonated by (inter)national celebrities, which gives filmmakers great freedom for subtle power games in the realm of the symbolic. Moreover, the ‘gypsy’ figure is traditionally contrasted to that of an aristocrat, the two figures representing the two opposite poles in the ‘ethno-social’ hierarchy. Originally, in Cervantes’ tale “La gitanilla”, this contrast was conceived as part of a game of fluid identities, as an irony-laden social masquerade, in which a child of noble birth (‘white’) is first stolen and raised by ‘gypsies’ (suntanned) and later found and reclaimed by its

146 In Bulgarian, taken on its own, the title of the film sounds redundant, because swallows are generally seen as black. However, the title alludes to the image of the ‘white swallow’, an expression used to describe something very rare; this expression has become widely popular through Iordan Iovkov’s canonical short story “The White Swallow”.

birth family. In its original conception, the 'gypsy' mask was designed as a foil to aristocrats: to expose the unnatural, artificial and fetishised nature of the ideal of 'white' skin (and the virginity of the noble female to which 'whiteness' implicitly refers), Cervantes mockingly juxtaposes his suntanned 'gypsies' to fair-skinned Esmeralda, whose complexion remains unchanged by the sun. Yet, contrary to Cervantes' clever ploy, the 'gypsy' figure has acquired the meaning of a misleading sign: 'gypsies' are said to be masters of false appearances; the 'gypsy' figure brings with itself the question of what is true and what is false. This is the way Terry Gilliam uses the minor 'gypsy' character in his latest film *The Man Who Killed Don Quixote* (2018): in the beginning of the story, the filmmaker Toby has a fateful encounter with a nameless 'gypsy' who, like a messenger of the past, brings him his long-lost first student film. Later, when Toby gets mired in a world in which it is hard to tell what is truthful and to separate fiction from reality, he comes across the nameless 'gypsy' again and asks him for a direction. Unsurprisingly, the friendly advice he is offered by the 'gypsy' turns out to be cruelly misleading.

The 'gypsy' mask is not only an indispensable element of European film language, but it is also remarkably prolific. By all appearances, 'gypsy'-themed films provide a safe ground for exploring and experimenting with the 'black', with the forbidden and the despised, but also with the radically alternative, and therefore the films seem to induce in everybody a powerful release of creative energy. Just like the *noir* mood, the 'gypsy' theme carries the rare potential of bringing out the creative streak in all involved: directors, cameramen, screenwriters and actors. Again and again, a 'gypsy'-themed film will mark a high, often turning point on an artist's career trajectory. What is more, 'gypsy'-themed films seem to have a horizon-widening effect that comes to bear not only on the artists involved but also on the national cinemas in the context of which these artists work. Over the preceding chapters, I have made a conscious effort to include, by way of short detours, examples of such striking developments, which I will now try to bundle together, as far as such an endeavour is possible. As we have seen, some cinematic works on the 'gypsy' theme enjoyed or still enjoy an obsessive popularity, turning their director and starring cast into true glocal celebrities. A prime example here is the Yugoslav "Black Wave" production *I Even Met Happy Gypsies* (1967), which was a springboard for its non-Roma cast, catapulting the director Aleksandar Petrović and the leading actors Bekim Fehmiu and Olivera Vučo out of their 'Balkan' obscurity

and into the international spotlight of film fame. Bekim Fehmiu, the Sarajevo-born actor of Albanian origin who playacts “the heart-throb” Beli Bora, even gained entrance to the US dream factory, becoming “the first Eastern European actor to star in Hollywood during the Cold War, appearing in over forty films alongside cinematic legends such as Dirk Bogarde, Ava Gardner, Claudia Cardinale, Robert Shaw and Olivia de Havilland” (“Bekim Fehmiu”). Astonishingly similar is the effect which the Mosfilm production *Queen of the Gypsies* (1975) has had on the professional career of its Moldavian director Emil Loteanu and its leading stars Svetlana Tomá and Grigore Grigoriu (see also Section 4.1). Further analogous examples are Florián Rey’s ‘españolada’ *The Fair-Skinned Gypsy* (1936), starring Imperio Argentina (see Section 5.2); Toivo Särkkä’s costume drama *The Vagabond’s Waltz* (1941), starring the number-one couple of Finnish cinema Ansa Ikonen and Tauno Palo (see Section 4.1); the Gainsborough costume melodrama *Madonna of the Seven Moons* (1944), “an immediate smash hit” in the words of Sue Harper (“Madonna” 47), featuring Phyllis Calvert, who, on account of her ‘gypsy’ impersonation, was recognised as one of the “genuinely glamorous British stars in the Hollywood mould” (Murphey 39) (see Section 5.2); or Emir Kusturica, hailed as “the most innovative filmmakers of his generation in Europe”, among others, for his crime drama *Time of the Gypsies* (1988) and for his romantic black comedy *Black Cat, White Cat* (1998) (Naficy 226). Here, we can invoke the assessment of Serbian film scholar Nevena Daković, as it places Kusturica’s works in the broader national context; thus, according to Daković, Yugoslav films about ‘gypsies’ “played a special role in the recognition of Yugoslav cinema abroad. The films were awarded the highest international prizes and became the trademarks of ‘quality’ Yugoslav cinema” (392). Just as intriguing is the case of the Czechoslovak film *Pink Dreams* (1976), starring the very young Juraj Nvota and Iva Bittová (roles which, as an exception, both artists do not seem to be proud to include in their professional biographies); however, during the repressive 1970s, the film became the only Slovak film to be shown abroad and has remained as Dušan Hanák’s most popular film (cf. Votruba).

It is also thought-provoking that some of the classic *noir* filmmakers who worked in a period that Paul Schrader describes as “probably the most creative in Hollywood’s history” (61) have a ‘gypsy’-themed film in their filmography, artists like Raoul Walsh, Ray Nichols, Joseph Losey or Charles Vidor (see Section 6.2.2); other artists made their directorial debut with a ‘gypsy’-themed film, like D.W. Griffith, dubbed

the “Father of Film” and the “Inventor of Hollywood” (Brownlow and Gill) (see Section 3.1); Rasmus Breistein, who brought about the emancipation of Norwegian national cinema with his *Gipsy Anne* (1920) (see Section 7.3.1); Valentin Vaala, one of the most significant filmmakers in the history of Finnish cinema, who made his directorial debut with *Dark Eyes* (1929), in which both he and his directing/acting partner Teuvo Tulio play the leading male ‘gypsy’ roles (see Section 4.1); or the Czech director Karel Anton, also credited for inaugurating the lyrical tradition in Czech cinema with his *Gypsies* (1921) and *The May Fairy* (1926) (Bock 15) (see Section 3.2). Here we should also recall Alexander Khanzhonkov’s first film production, *Drama in a Gypsy Camp near Moscow* (1908); released some two months after *Stenka Razin* (1908, Dir. Vladimir Romashkov), it failed only by a hair’s breadth to bring about the producer’s “dream of releasing Russia’s first picture on an everyday theme” and to herald the beginning of Russian film production (see Section 6.3) (Tsivian 50). A ‘gypsy’ story was also chosen for the first British production of Famous Pictures – *Betta the Gipsy* (1918), and also for the first Technicolor film shot on the British Isles – *Wings of the Morning* (1937).¹⁴⁷ As for the early British silent film *Rescued by Rover* (1905), we can turn to the film scholar Michael Brooke who argues that this is “possibly the only point in film history when British cinema unquestionably led the world”, because the film represents “a key stage in the medium’s development from an amusing novelty to the ‘seventh art.’” (see Section 3.2). That the ‘gypsy’ theme offers an extraordinarily fruitful ground for filmmakers is also reflected in the fact that the most frequently filmed narrative in the history of cinema is considered to be Prosper Mérimée’s tale “Carmen” (Davis ix), the text that created and introduced the prototypical figure of the *femme fatale* in the European imaginary (see Section 1.3.3). Many of the titles highlighted here have also been instrumental in introducing and/or invigorating the ‘gypsy’ genre in the respective national cinemas, bringing about a proliferation

147 Interestingly, the comedy *Carmen Comes Home* (1951, Dir. Kinoshita Keisuke), shot using Fujicolour, is Japan’s first domestic feature film in colour. This Japanese version of a *Heimatfilm* tells the story of Lily Carmen (Hideko Takamine), a star of Tokyo striptease shows made popular by the American occupation forces after World War II. The stripper Lily Carmen returns to the village of her birth together with her friend Maya (Toshiko Kobayashi). Flaunting colourful, body-revealing American-style dresses, the two girls put on a hypnotising show for the local farmers, bringing at the same time great embarrassment to the men they care for. The film’s success prompted its sequel *Carmen’s Pure Love/Karumen junjō su* (1952, Dir. Kinoshita Keisuke), again a story about a stripper (cf. Darr).

of further works on the theme. And these are just the more conspicuous examples, those that are easier to spot in this bird's-eye survey of the 'gypsy' theme in European and US American cinema; however, there is enough reason to expect that a research which sets itself the goal of examining the role of the 'gypsy' mask in the history of each of Europe's national cinemas will provide further evidence of its centrality in developments of an aesthetic, narrative and ideological nature.

9.2 Disciplining Function

Like the aesthetic function, the disciplinary function of the 'gypsy' mask and its emphatically realist spectacle gains its true scale and import when considered in the context of nation-building projects. To recap from the previous section, aesthetically, the 'gypsy' mask has a very flattering homogenising effect – designed as the limit case of 'whiteness', it has the capacity to ascribe 'white' identity in reverse, through contrastive juxtapositions and by implication. The simplistic black:white dichotomy blots out social differences and tensions: when contrasted to 'gypsies', all social strata, all subgroups and all individuals embraced by the narrative of the national project appear equally 'white' (and as virtuous as a virgin noblewoman); conversely, all those who are not 'gypsies' belong to the 'white' nation.

Although nowadays it is unquestionable that European nations are 'white' from the social top to the bottom, this was certainly not so self-evident for low-income strata in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The mass medium of black-and-white film facilitated the symbolic consolidation of modern nations, making it feasible for them to project a realist image of themselves as 'white'. The stories of 'gypsy' child-theft, for instance, which were especially virulent in the early days of cinema, set in place a symbolic structure of identification by the logic of which any visitor of the nickel odeons could identify emotionally with the virtuously white figure of the bereft mother (a visual symbol for the 'white' nation) and imagine themselves as her noble auxiliaries and righteous protectors; even the poorest factory worker could see him/herself in the face of the 'white' parents and vicariously suffer at the hands of the 'non-white' child-kidnappers.

The disciplinary aspect of the 'gypsy' mask goes beyond the flatness of surface appearances and addresses one question that contains in itself probably the greatest political challenge: How to create unity

of thought and feeling among thousands of heterogeneous and often conflict-ridden groups of people? How to make thousands, even millions of individuals fight wars under one banner or work for a higher common cause? Here, we can return to our discussion on punishment in Section 3.4.1 and reformulate this question so as to reflect the order that the King of Ou gave to his general Sun Tze: How to turn a sizeable group of frivolous high-born women into soldiers and train them to march as one? Reflecting on the order of the ancient Chinese king, Alexander Kiossev posits that we can think of socio-historical realities as symbolic conventions that are instilled in individuals and installed as common daily practices through brutal acts of violence. General Sun Tze establishes perfect discipline in the group of the giggling women by beheading two of the king's favourite wives. As I have pointed out in Chapter Three, this anecdotal story captures only halfway the cultural dynamics of violence, be it of symbolic or physical nature. So here, I want to complement Kiossev's explanatory model with another micro-story which illustrates the role allocated to the 'gypsy' figure in the self-regulatory dynamics of national narratives. It is a short scene that comes from Bulgaria's 1894 novel *Under the Joke* written by Ivan Vazov, the demiurge of the national literary project, who wrote many of his works with the explicitly didactic purpose of infusing a shared sense of national patriotism. In short, his novel tells the dramatic story of Boycho Ognyanov, a model figure of the revolution, who takes charge of the insurrection against the Turks. In Part 2, Chapter 28, entitled "The Spirit in the Fort", Ognyanov is informed that four of his men want to desert the battlefield. He talks to the soldiers and through the conversation we learn that these are decent Bulgarians in their forties, established merchants and heads of families who – and this is a truly endearing detail – have never used a gun and are afraid to kill a man. So, at this point of the story, the character Ognyanov, but more so the author Vazov, the mastermind of Bulgaria's national novel, is faced with an insolvable dilemma: for the sake of military discipline and order, the four rebels must be executed, yet such a bloody act would discredit the national cause. Vazov solves the difficulty with great ingenuity by resorting to the *deus ex machina* of the 'gypsy' figure. Just when Ognyanov is pondering on the inevitable death penalty, all of a sudden and out of nowhere, a 'gypsy' character runs into the story and rescues it, diverting everybody's attention from the rebels and their due punishment to his guilty self. The 'gypsy' male is nameless, described as a barefoot refugee, and he is soon captured by his pursuer Borimechka

(Bear Fighter). The omniscient narration strategically briefs us that by nature and by interest, ‘gypsies’ are Turkish allies, and that this one in particular has committed numerous crimes against Bulgarians and their struggle for national liberation. In the next chapter, entitled “One Baptism”, the military council condemns the four rebels to death; the council’s sentence is emphatically described as “death without delay”, but instead of being shot, the Bulgarian revolutionaries are ordered to shoot the ‘gypsy’, who is also tied to a tree. The episode ends with a voice which explains to the four that they have served their punishment by having been “baptised in the blood” of the ‘gypsy’, a mercy they owe to Ognyanov and the military council; the scene ends with a round of applause.

Vazov’s solution has some obvious advantages over the solution provided by the ancient Chinese general: by incorporating the scene with the bloody execution of the ‘gypsy’ – a figure traditionally perceived in European literary and legal documents as punishable by default – the author redesigns the dilemma that has faced the main character Ognyanov, enabling him to establish military discipline among the hesitant Bulgarians without sacrificing valuable soldiers of the in-group. The brutal violence necessary to transform a disorderly group of people into a disciplined unit (a nation) is averted – by means of a well-timed narrative stratagem – from the cultural centre of power (the favourite wives, the respectable Bulgarian merchants and heads of families) to its periphery (the ‘gypsy’ Other). With recourse to the micro-scene in which the ‘gypsy’ is exemplarily punished, the objective of group discipline is achieved in the most efficient manner: the law is successfully communicated to all in-group members (all the soldiers in the diegetic world of the novel but also the readers), making them aware of the grave, deadly consequences of non-compliance, while at the same time no one from the in-group has to be sacrificed.

Vazov’s narrative stratagem has nothing original about it; his deployment of the ‘gypsy’ figure diligently reproduces the narrative design of nation-building fictions across all Europe. The ritual expulsion of the ‘gypsy’ is an integral part of Europe’s national myths, an important micro-scene in their self-perpetuating dynamics and symbolic re-enactments. This can be particularly well observed in one episode from the history of Norway; it is detailed and critically scrutinised in Katie Trumpener’s article “The Time of the Gypsies: A ‘People without History’ in the Narratives of the West”, so I will only provide a brief summary of it to bring to light the invariable role of the ‘gypsy’ in the symbolic

spectacle of the national. As recounted by Trumpener, in 1904, one year before Norway declared its independence from Sweden, two days of official festivities took place in the town of Lillehammer. The local people gathered to celebrate the opening of the Maihaugen Open Air Museum and the precious collection of folkloric artefacts that it housed; the collection was gathered by Lillehammer's dentist Anders Sandvig during the 1880s, prompted by a surge of Norwegian patriotism. Trumpener describes the various features included in the celebration programme, all of them pointing to the proud ambition of the fledgling nation to take stock of itself: repeated singing of Norway's national anthem, a spectacle in which the Maihaugen people re-enact their daily chores, showcase their authentic accent and recite their sagas. At the end of the festivities, in the final hours, a family of 'gypsies' arrives and sets up camp on the grounds, performing a tableau of 'gypsy' life; their show includes an attempt to usurp a cradle prepared for the offspring of the Maihaugen people. Eventually, the notorious baby-thieves and interlopers are chased away. Thus, the ritualised expulsion of the 'gypsies', Trumpener concludes, comes to mark the high point of the nationalist celebration.

There is also one striking detail about the 'gypsy' spectacle performed in Lillehammer which holds special relevance for our discussion on the masquerade design of 'gypsy'-themed films, and it is that the roles of the 'gypsies' in the Lillehammer festivities are played by disguised Norwegians; on this point, Trumpener turns to Anders Sandvig's eye-witness account of the event in which the man reports:

Remarkably enough, there wasn't anyone except those in the know who realized that the whole thing was a staged feature of the evening festivities. Everybody believed that they were genuine gypsies [but they were in fact well-known townspeople]. They were costumed so well, and everyone played his role so brilliantly that thus the masquerade was carried out. (Sandvig, qdt. in Trumpener 845)

In Trumpener's words, the 'gypsy' episode "provides a final, piquantly transgressive illustration of how the whole museum, in assembling a national heritage, blurs the boundaries between literary, historical and 'representative' figures" (846). Moreover, perceiving the event through Sandvig's eyes, we can also see that at the turn of the twentieth century, that is, before the film era had truly set in, the staging of the 'gypsy' spectacle was already an integral part of the nationalist rhetoric. Not

only that, it followed a script that local audiences were very familiar with, it had the design of an ‘ethno-racial’ masquerade, and yet, even in its theatrical presentation, it exerted a powerful effect of authenticity. The perceived realness, at the time, of the ‘gypsy’ show allows us to gauge the extent to which the film industry has been able to further enhance the effect of authenticity that it has on the big screen: by shooting the staged ‘gypsy’ spectacle in a realist mode (with the mechanically objective eye of the camera) and marketing it as an ethnographic document, but also by distributing the films across great stretches of space and time, presenting the mediated para-ethnographic ‘gypsy’ shows to remote audiences on whom the underlying masquerade design of the films is entirely lost. Watching films made in the eastern parts of Europe, for example, Western audiences are unable to recognise the fact that it is local celebrity actors who perform in ‘gypsy’ garb. The theatrical set-up of the films is also obscured by the sheer lapse of time. Watching old and especially the very early films on the ‘gypsy’ theme, today’s audiences are less apt to recognise the ideological artifice that reifies ‘gypsies’ by situating them temporally further back in the past. Unable to discern the difference between the point in time when the films were shot and the imagined past into which the ‘gypsies’ are localised through the film’s art direction, present-day viewers¹⁴⁸ are inclined to take the film images at their face value, as simply truthful documents from an era long gone by.

Certainly, the strong reality effect of the ‘gypsy’ spectacle is of direct service to the film’s disciplining message and punctuates in turn the validity of this message in the pro-filmic world. Through the perceived realness of ‘gypsies’ and the punishment inflicted on their undisciplined bodies, the spectator is given to understand that the cultural norm – the imperative that all in-group members should train their bodies in emulation of the ‘white’ mask – has to be taken in all earnestness; or conversely,

148 Here I have in mind not only popular audiences but also professionals who work with film archives, such as film festival organisers or filmmakers. One example of a less felicitous recent film that makes uncritical use of early film material is Eike Besuden’s docudrama *Gipsy – Die Geschichte des Boxers Johann Rukeli Trollmann* (2012). Besuden’s film features scenes from László Moholy-Nagy’s short experimental film *Großstadt-Zigeuner* (1932), treating these scenes as if they were ethnographic documents. Indeed, Moholy-Nagy’s film is labelled a ‘documentary’, but a closer look at it shows that the protagonists and the events in it are artfully choreographed so as to provide the camera with a ‘gypsy’ spectacle. For a detailed, critical scrutiny of Moholy-Nagy’s film, see Frank Reuter’s article “Mediale Metamorphosen”.

that one should avoid at all costs the 'dance' of the 'gypsy' mask, no matter how dazzlingly tempting and seductive it may seem. If in purely fictional films the violation of the cultural norm and its concomitant punishment could be interpreted as confined within the boundaries of the diegetic world, in 'gypsy'-themed films, however – thanks to their reality effect – the disciplining message crosses over to the socio-historic reality of cinema audiences, waving a finger directly in their face.

With its realist spectacle, the 'gypsy' mask can be regarded as a storytelling tool used to form a culturally significant shared structure of feeling among the members of the in-group; this collective feeling can be described as a complex mix of fascination and repulsion enveloped in fear. While, on the one hand, the 'gypsy' evokes strong fascination and/or repulsion with its dark mystery, with the excessiveness of its self-expression and with its freedom beyond the confines of social requirements and laws, it is, on the other hand, codified as a figure punishable by default, a universal cultural sign meant to sober one up to the reality of punishment. No matter what slant a given film has taken on the 'gypsy' theme, whether the emphasis is on the alluring aspects of 'gypsy' lifestyle or on its moral and material baseness, the didactic storyline is in store to remind us that the 'gypsy' comes to a bad end.

What follows next is an overview of the three main ways in which 'gypsy'-themed films communicate their disciplining message. To start with, punishment can be visualised in a straightforward manner as part of the film's diegesis; in this case, we have sequences in which the transgressive 'gypsy' figure is chased away by the community, arrested by the police, locked in a prison cell, beaten, flogged or hanged. Examples of such sequences can be found, among others, in *The Adventures of Dollie, Notre-Dame de Paris* (1911, Dir. Albert Capellani), *Zigeuneren Raphael*, *Gypsy Wildcat* (1944, Dir. Roy William Neill), *The Bohemian Girl*, *The Gypsy and the Gentleman*, *Queen of the Gypsies*, *I Even Met Happy Gypsies*, *Devils, Devils* (1991, Dir. Dorota Kędzierzawska) and *Papusza*. Court trials are also a recurrent plot element of 'gypsy'-themed films; the two versions of *Morena Clara* (1936, 1954), for instance, feature very long and elaborate court trial sequences. Further examples of court scenes can also be found in *Gipsy Anne*, *King of the Gypsies*, and *The Pilgrimage of Students Peter and Jacob* (2000, Dir. Drahomíra Vihanová). Secondly, over and above the literal visualisations of punishment, the disciplining message is transmitted on a meta-level, through the film's plotline. The bulk of 'gypsy'-themed films and subplots tell 'black' stories about the moral and physical downfall of their protagonists and this, as we said,

is a way of conveying the film's disciplining message across the diegetic boundary, bringing its cautionary moral into the socio-historic reality of the spectator (see Section 6.3). Alternatively, the 'gypsy' figure may function as a sign of imminent danger, foreshadowing the demise, or even the death, of the 'white' hero, as in *A Romany Spy* (1912, Dir. Urban Gad), *Jánošík*, *The Gypsy and the Gentleman*, and *Guardian Angel*, as well as in most film adaptations of Mérimée's tale "Carmen". And thirdly, the 'gypsy' figure is conventionally treated as an object of ridicule and humiliation. Unlike typical war propaganda films, 'gypsy'-themed films seldom blacken up their protagonists in a crude, unequivocally defamatory manner; filmmakers resort instead to subtler methods and achieve their goal by inserting seemingly trifling particulars that evoke scorn and derision. The discrediting of the characters is suggested obliquely; it is as if tucked 'between the lines' and thus made significantly more effective: it may be a suggestive hint, a disparaging remark on the part of the authorities, a nauseating detail with reference to 'gypsies', and/or a contemptuous/jeering camera perspective.

With their explicit claims to truth and authenticity, 'gypsy'-themed films are in position to reinforce the disciplining message attached to their cautionary stories and, importantly, to confer a sense of reality to it that goes beyond the fictional world of the diegesis. The public spectacle of punishment is once recreated on the big screen, in the virtual realm of made-up images: rather than real bodies, it is the images of real bodies that are shown as objects of disciplining; but in a next step, this ritualised form of violence unproblematically enters the socio-historic world, claiming for itself the legitimacy of normality. Consider in this context the filmed spectacle of Mitko's public derogation, designed as a humiliating military drill and circulated on the internet by its frankly proud filmmaker (see Section 5.5). In essence, 'gypsy'-themed films and subplots replicate the narrative stratagem that re-directs violence from the in-group to the 'gypsy' Other, and as such they show themselves to be important artworks in the self-regulatory mechanism of the nation, that modern unit of docile 'white' bodies. Through the filmed stories on the 'gypsy' theme, all in-group members are indirectly instructed on the cultural injunction to adhere to the norm, to discipline their bodies and to make themselves acceptable for the workforce¹⁴⁹ and/or the army. The

149 Looking at the history of the first American working class and the tensions and anxieties that accompanied its formation, David Roediger shows that there is a direct link between the rise of racism in the urban North prior to the Civil War, expressed among other things by the huge popularity of minstrel shows,

punishment exercised exemplarily on the deviant 'gypsy' figure may take various forms in the films: from ridicule, via corporal punishment, jailing and social ostracism, to expulsion and genocide. As such, it is symptomatic of political and identity crises in the cultural core. That is to say, whenever we become witness to 'gypsy' bashing – be it on the symbolic plane of mediated images, or in real life – we need not bother examining 'gypsy' nature, culture or way of life but should rather gauge the kind of crisis that is taking place at the centre of symbolic and political power.

9.3 Carnival (Expressive) Function

With its black colour coding and its otherised ethnic tag, the 'gypsy' mask is a safe, tacitly sanctioned vehicle that enables artists to represent and thus give free expression to those aspects of human nature that the dominant norm has negated, rejected, criminalised, cast in contempt or altogether rendered taboo. In its transgressivity, the carnival function of the 'gypsy' mask is in no way different to that of a nineteenth-century performance in blackface:

In minstrelsy, a layer of blackness applied to the white face released it from law. Just as entertainers, through or by association with blackface, could render permissible topics that otherwise would have been taboo, so American writers were able to employ an imagined Africanist persona to articulate and imaginatively act out the forbidden in American culture. (Morrison 66)

Taken as a whole, the genre provided a kind of underground theatre where the blackface "convention" rendered permissible topics which would have been taboo on the legitimate stage or in the press. (Saxton 4)

However, like no other art form, film is capable of immersing the audience in the underworld of 'gypsies', a carnivalised world in Bakhtin's

and the imperative of capitalist competition and labour discipline, which forced workers to adopt a profoundly new ethos, one that was hostile to leisure, nature, sexuality, life-work integrity and immediate gratification (95–31). In the light of Roediger's insights, it will be interesting to examine if and how the popularity of 'gypsy'-themed films is linked to the growth of industrial discipline in the various European societies at the turn of the twentieth century.

sense, with an added ethnic tag. In this throbbing underworld, spectators can vicariously experience all that exceeds the restraints imposed by the normative model of self-control; they can live out in the imagination the *Sturm und Drang* of the undisciplined, naturally spontaneous body in the full gamut of its excessiveness – emotional, sexual, musical and so on (see Section 8.2.3). If the feelings of fear and aversion can be attributed to the disciplining message of the ‘gypsy’ spectacle, its carnival aspect is in turn responsible for evoking obsessive fascination and is also the source of the creative potential that the construct carries. This is probably the main reason why well-made ‘gypsy’-themed films gain inordinate international popularity, one that crosses effortlessly the boundaries of national cultures and lasts over time. As Sue Harper writes about *Madonna of the Seven Moons*, “some films contain elements which evoke residual, forgotten or repressed aspects of culture. The individual consciousness contains such aspects too. When there is match between an audience’s secret mind and a film’s inner landscape popular success will inevitably result.” (“Madonna” 51). Moreover, the spectators’ need to relive again and again that which is forbidden to them in daily life also makes these films an important cultural safety-valve, one that contributes to keeping social tensions in check. This in turn is also the reason why the emotional truth of the ‘gypsy’ spectacle is so crucial for its perceived authenticity.

Likewise, stereotypical and debasing portrayals of African Americans have long constituted an obsessive theme in American arts and life, as George Lipsitz discusses in his book *Time Passages*; he offers a psychoanalytical reading of minstrelsy shows which helps explain the popularity of ‘racial’ masquerades, be it in blackface or in our case gypsyface, with the severed relationship that spectators have to the emotions elicited by the staged spectacle:

The minstrel show “Negro” presented white society with a representation of the natural self at odds with the normative self of industrial culture. Uninhibited behavior could be savored by the id during the minstrel performance, but overruled afterward by the superego. The viewer could release tension by pointing to the minstrel show “darkie” and saying “It’s him, not me.” But the viewer came back, again and again. The desire to subjugate and degrade black people had political and economic imperatives of its own, but emotional and psychic reinforcement for that exploitation came from the ways in which racist

stereotypes enabled whites to accept the suppression of their natural selves. (64)

It has to be stressed, once again, that works on the 'gypsy' theme represent an approved, a culturally acceptable outlet for the suppressed energies of human nature. Due to its lowest-ranking position in the hierarchy of human beings, the figure of the 'gypsy' poses no threat to the dominant norm and this in turn also makes it a tolerable mouthpiece for giving voice to social taboos ranging from open (deviant) sexuality to harsh political criticism; let us not forget that in spite of all the liberties it is granted, the 'gypsy' figure gets its final verdict through the downward-pointing plotline.

When it comes to difficult or even diplomatically sensitive matters, the need to subject films to a context-sensitive analysis becomes more than obvious, because only a contextual study can provide insight into the unmentionable issues that troubled a given society at a given historical moment and can illuminate how these issues are addressed by a particular film. Thus, as Sue Harper demonstrates with her historical reconstructions, we cannot fully gauge the social impact of Gainsborough period dramas unless we understand that the films' sartorial language countered the post-war austerity imposed on British women in their daily life, giving vent to the negated female sexuality (see Section 8.2.1). One example of a film that screams for a contextualising study is Stole Popov's auteur work *Gipsy Magic* (1997); the film can hardly conceal the filmmaker's anger at the United Nations' peace-keeping operation in Macedonia in the aftermath of the Yugoslav war. Following the example of Cervantes, Stole Popov stages a grotesque spectacle of the 'gypsy' mask to voice and at the same time to disguise his rabid critique of the West. So far, to the best of my knowledge, his work *Gipsy Magic* has not been analysed through the prism of its circumvented political commentary. Further invaluable evidence that the 'gypsy' theme is considered a safe ploy for bypassing censorship comes from Alaina Lemon's field research:

One Russian director at the Moscow Romani Theatre claimed to me that under socialism he always had used Gypsy freedom to hide antisocialist themes, that Gypsies functioned rather like a "bourgeois white piano," a forbidden stage property signifying decadence. When a playwright feared the censors, said the director, he would throw something marked as being in bad socialist taste into the script, such as white piano or girls in bikinis. The

censor would hopefully be distracted, command only that the decoy piano or girls be deleted, and miss the more subversive subtext: “Gypsies work the same way. You can stage any social conflict you want, as long as you set it in a Gypsy camp.” Gypsies were for him no more than a trope for antistate and antimodern nostalgia. This was crystal clear in the way the director described how he actually chose elements of Gypsy tradition for his scripts: “The audience wants to see customs, superstitions, something miraculous. When I pick up a book, I read about customs in ancient France and in India, where people are yet unspoiled by civilisation.... I take a custom and gave it to the Gypsies.... Theatre is the means to reach another world, when we are talking to God, ... in any play, an exit to such a level is art” (interview from field notes 1991). Gypsies were his vehicle “to reach another world,” separate from mundane life, “unspoiled” and more essential. (42)

Putting all these individual cases aside, we can see that popular ‘gypsy’-themed films can serve as a litmus test for taboo topics and can thus aid researchers in identifying issues that were hard to broach openly at a given historical moment. With its topsy-turvy spectacle, the ‘gypsy’ mask has a subversive side to it, but this subversiveness works only as temporary release from the shackles of normality; it damps the energy of revolt and thus stabilises the racist status quo. The next section considers the subversive function of ‘gypsy’-themed films where subversiveness is understood to be either an expression of social and cultural criticism towards the world of the ‘white’ mask or it constitutes a challenge to the black-and-white racist paradigm altogether.

9.4 Subversive Function

*Writing has laws of perspective, of light and shade just as painting does,
 or music. If you are born knowing them, fine.
 If not, learn them. Then rearrange the rules to suit yourself.*

Truman Capote (22)

As laid out in Cervantes’ tale “La gitanilla”, the ‘gypsy’ theme presupposes a two-world narrative organisation of space: the ‘gypsy’ world serves as the negative foil against which, explicitly or by implication,

the world of the dominant norm gains psychological salience. In this split-in-two space, the 'gypsy' world represents a certain blind spot for the vigilant and violent gaze of the norm: it is the underworld in which the male 'white' hero – like the character Don Juan de Cárcamo/ Andrés Caballero in “La gitanilla” – can slip away from the controlling eye of society and disappear without a trace for a certain period of time. In a number of 'gypsy'-themed films, this dramatic ploy is preserved in the plot: persecuted by those in power, a 'white' male hero finds refuge among 'gypsies', becoming invisible in his 'gypsy' garb to his persecutors, and thus manages not only to save his life but also, at a later point, to stand up to injustice. Such a structure underpins, for example, the stories in *Gypsies* (1921, Dir. Karel Anton), *Gypsy Wildcat*, “The Gypsy” – Episode 8 from the Bulgarian television series *At Each Kilometer* (1969, Dir. Nedelcho Chernev and Lyubomir Sharlandzhiev), *The Bohemian Girl* (1922, Dir. Harley Knoles), *Golden Earrings*, and *Papusza*.

Importantly, the two-world design of the 'gypsy' narrative creates conditions for a subversive play with alternative perspectives and world models. Here, we can distinguish between two types of subversiveness: one that is encoded within the two-world design of the 'gypsy' theme and one that playfully revises, recodes and transcends that very two-world paradigm, exposing its insubstantiality and masquerade nature. In this subsection, I will elaborate more on the first type of subversiveness, since 'gypsy'-themed films and their aesthetics of authentication are our main object of study. In 'gypsy'-themed films, the two worlds are dominated by the two complementary regimes of seeing – the self-aggrandising (whitening/humanising) gaze towards the ethno-national Self, stabilised by the deprecating (blackening/dehumanising) gaze towards the 'gypsy' Other; these two modalities of the dominant gaze homogenise, essentialise, racialise and stratify people into hierarchical and therefore incompatible categories. Nevertheless, the 'gypsy' world can also offer a vantage point from which to critically scrutinise one's own world as if standing outside of it; it allows for an estranged view on the dominant culture and its mores. This narrative ploy is used especially in 'gypsy'-themed stories that retrospectively look at discredited political regimes, as in the six films mentioned above. Moreover, the 'gypsy' world offers a vantage point from which to envision new, future-oriented paradigms for social cohesion. As we have seen in our discussion of *Gucha* and *Gipsy Anne* (see Sections 7.1 and 7.3.1), this subversive potential is harnessed only piecemeal and, importantly, it

is contained within the two-world narrative paradigm; other examples include *Madonna of the Seven Moons* and *Pink Dreams*.

The film *Pink Dreams* (1976) presents something of a paradox case here, because its filmmakers resisted for a year the demands of the communist government in Czechoslovakia to give the story a happy ending and show a marriage between a Slovak and a Romni (cf. Hames). Set on conducting an integrative policy, the communist government requested a story that revises the nationalist spectacle and advances in its place a more progressive vision for social cohesion, one that allows for a harmonious relationship between the ethnic majority and the traditionally scapegoated ethnic minority. Yet, rebelling against socialist realism and its future-oriented utopia, the filmmakers felt that their task was to underline the impermeable lines of 'ethno-racial' division rather than to create a text that explores the possibility of togetherness. Thus, translated into Lotman's terms, their film *Pink Dreams* presents a plotless text whose function is that of classification – the main 'white' hero Jakub attempts to deviate from the established norms and temporarily forms a relationship with the 'gypsy' girl Jolanca, but then erases his boundary transgression by returning back to his community. The film has a circular structure: it starts and finishes with scenes of Jakub waking up in his bedroom. His heroic experience of transgression and transgression erasure is framed by identical waking-up sequences; as such, it is a phase of initiation that only solidifies his place in the majority society. The real event in the film is the courtship and marriage of the town hall administrator Irena (Sally Salingová), a 'gypsy', and the town hall maintenance man Ondro (Milan Kiš), a Slovak, two minor characters, yet this revolutionary plot remains on the periphery of the film.

It is also noteworthy that atmospherically the filmmakers resort to antigypsy elements to suggest the incompatibility of the two worlds; their film is a prime example of the split black-and-white vision: the world of 'white' Slovaks is presented through a lens of gentle humour and lyrical dreaminess, while the world of the 'gypsies' is seen through a lens of slum naturalism that borders on the oppressive. The Slovaks in the film are shown in a poetically humorous way; their predicaments always have a comic twist and are not overshadowed by a feeling of existential burden or imminent tragedy. Just the opposite: the anecdotes with Jakub's hypochondriac father, with his lonesome uncle who finds solace in fresh eggs, with his dreamy grandfather, who once tried to fly with an umbrella, with Mr. Babja, the post office employee who finds

his shoe in a mail bag and cannot recognise it, with his elderly neighbour, who never gets enough to eat and finds refuge in a bathtub full of provisions up a tree, etc. – all of them focus on the uniquely individual in a humorously benevolent manner. The viewers are introduced to the endearing quirks of the Slovak village inhabitants in a mode of looking that has a lightness, laughter and pure cinematic poetry to it.

The depiction of the 'gypsy' shantytown is, by contrast, marked by a naked and at times quite oppressive realism; there is no comic lightness or dreamy poetry to it. Through a number of socially diagnostic sequences, we are introduced to the existential dramas that plague life in the 'gypsy' quarter and from which Jolanca wants to flee: we see her, for instance, carrying two buckets of water down an unpaved street in the company of two small children, to one of whom she later gives a bath; we are shown a breastfeeding mother who asks Jolanca for a cigarette (a clichéd image overused in literature, painting and film), a lazy husband whom Jolanca tells off for not working, a prematurely old mother whom Jolanca criticises for giving birth to so many children, and so on. Moreover, through many details, the film suggests an identity between Jolanca and her blind, all-knowing grandmother who, in addition, has a disturbingly disfigured face. At the start of the film, we see Jolanca's grandmother peeling green peas in a huge pot, which is also when she prophesises that her granddaughter will leave and then come back. Near the end of the film, Jolanca is shown peeling green peas in a huge pot, at which moment she tells Jakub that she wants to go back to her people. The same method of portraiture is employed to suggest an identity between Jakub and his dreamy grandfather, the Umbrella Alois. In two rhyming sequences, we see each of them get drunk and then try to fly with an umbrella. Obviously, the film constructs on many levels a line of separation between the Slovak majority and Slovak 'gypsies', advancing the argument for the impossibility of social cohesion. And if the filmmakers may have felt proud for resisting the dictates of the communist government, the aesthetic and narrative solutions they have opted for are the opposite of rebellious, because they simply reproduce the age-old patterns of antigypsyism.

Pink Dreams is an example of a film that harnesses only partially the subversive potential of the 'gypsy' theme, upholding at the same time the colour-coded two-world narrative model. Now, we move on to the second type of subversiveness, where the split-world model itself is subjected to revision: this type of subversiveness is manifest in a different grouping of films that have been discussed here only marginally. As

outlined in Chapter Two, these are films that take a consciously playful stance towards the ‘gypsy’ mask and, while making a deliberate, even exaggerated use of it, they furnish it with a new content matrix and a new plotline. The development of this aesthetic tendency can be easily traced in Tony Gatlif’s prolific body of work. Other works that display this type of de-constructivist aesthetics, albeit in different measure, include *Golden Earrings* (1947, Dir. Mitchel Leisen), *Train of Life* (1998, Dir. Radu Mihăileanu), and *Gypsy Woman* (2001, Dir. Sheree Folkson). The narrative and the visual design of these works openly defy the racialising aesthetics of authentication and so they can also be read in more universal terms, as meta-narratives that provide a self-reflexive commentary on the fluid, performative nature of modern ‘ethno-racial’ identities. This type of films require separate study, together with the third type of films, the ones which entirely abandon the ‘gypsy’ mask and direct their critical gaze instead towards the dominant culture and its structures of power.

9.5 Socially Integrative Function

*Traube ist noch nicht der Wein –
Traube will gekeltert sein.
Wald und Flur ist Bild noch nicht –
Wirklichkeit noch nicht Gedicht.
Geist ist das was Leben leiht –
Kunst ist Geist der Wirklichkeit.*

Ernst von Wildenbruch (Bund deutscher Barbier 1)

The socially integrative effect of the ‘gypsy’ spectacle should have become clear to the reader by now, as it has been highlighted from various angles in the previous four subsections. To be certain, extrapolating five different functions in relation to the ‘gypsy’ mask is a heuristic device that aims to facilitate the analysis and present the complexity of the subject matter in an easily readable, logically structured way. In fact, it is much more sensible to think of these five functions as an organic bundle, inextricable from one another, which is what makes it impossible to discuss one function without involving the others. However, I find it important to isolate this last, fifth function and consider it separately, giving it a name of its own, on account of the paradoxical nature of its operation. To better grasp this function, we

can liken it to the psychotherapeutic tactic of paradoxical intervention, which involves the voluntary re-enactment of undesired symptomatic behaviour as a way of overcoming it and distancing oneself from it. The same paradoxical logic is manifest in initiation rites, where, as we have seen, the hero (or the heroine) is subjected to a phase of trials in the mirror-inverted world of darkness, the successful passage of which helps him distance himself from that darkness and secures him a place in the world of light. So, transposed to the symbolic spectacle of 'white' identity formation, we can see that the paradoxical logic of social integration requires the invocation and re-enactment of the 'non-white' 'ethno-racial' Other – routinely portrayed as an undesired symptom of the (pre-modern) past – in order for the 'white' Self to gain its full autonomy and its separate, superior 'ethno-racial' identity. We can then approach the production and obsessive consumption of 'gypsy'-themed films as symptomatic of the need of a given social/ethno-national group to symbolically re-cross the 'ethno-racial' boundary as a way of re-asserting and possibly re-configuring its 'white' (European) identity.

Here, once again, the parallel to blackface minstrelsy proves invaluable. In "Making America Home: Racial Masquerade and Ethnic Assimilation in the Transition to Talking Pictures", Michael Rogin draws on various Jewish newspaper articles and films at the turn of the twentieth century to elucidate the paradoxical effect of blackface minstrelsy, which, as he writes, "promoted identification with native peoples as a step in differentiation from them" (1052). Stressing the crucial role of film, Rogin describes element by element the complex symbolic technology mobilised in the process of creating American national identity. As he argues, the minstrel show "became the agent of Americanization", "the world-wide sign of American identity", the chief instrument of the melting pot that turned Europeans into Americans (1054–1055). Minstrelsy, according to Rogin, instructed new immigrants about the importance of 'race' in American life and had the power to stabilise "white ethnics from a racially liminal to a white identity" (1061). "Facing pressure that would assign them to the dark side of the racial divide, immigrants Americanized themselves by crossing and re-crossing the racial line. Their discovery of racial inequality propelled the United States beyond ethnicity" (1053). Thus, if 'racial' cross-dressing facilitated the removal of differences between 'whites' divided by ethnic lines in America and levelled out class and regional differences, democratising in effect one part of American

society, it did so at the expense of the excluded and racially stigmatised ‘non-whites’. Here, I want to draw special attention to the fact that the convention of ‘racial’ cross-dressing – which we have both in blackface minstrelsy and ‘gypsy’-themed films – operates through a *temporary* phase of identification with the stigmatised ‘ethno-racial’ Other and has a high emotional charge.

Similar observations can be found in Alexander Saxton’s article “Blackface Minstrelsy and Jacksonian Ideology”, in which the scholar examines the ideology of the minstrel show at the interface of form (racist) and content (social), stressing the ubiquity and pervasive influence of the blackface convention. To drive his point home, Saxton gives Mark Twain as an example: even this eminent man of letters, otherwise known for his caustic critique of American society, embraced uncritically the most popular form of American mass entertainment. Quoting several lines from one of Twain’s favourite minstrelsy songs, Saxton articulates the implicit message it conveyed as well as its emotional charge: “The black puppets are striving to be white, singing in white voice, while the white audience in the new city or the new West lingers through a moment of self-pity and regret for things past” (28). Like Rogin, Saxton explains that contemporary ‘white’ audiences identified emotionally with the blackface performers whose music and sketches appear to have “touched the central chords of white consciousness” (28). This is to say that the convention of blackface, or for that matter of the ‘gypsy’ film genre, does not preclude the spectator’s identification with the staged ‘ethno-racial’ Other. On the contrary, these works of art are often the only socially sanctioned outlet that enables the expression of rejected aspects of the ‘white’ Self; to wit, racist artworks are so popular precisely because they resonate strongly with the anxieties and emotional grievance of their audience; they are nothing but a form of autocommunication, if we resort to Lotman’s terms (*Universe* 21), an ‘I – I’ monologue, a split-personality dialogue, in which the second ‘I’ is artfully disguised as the stigmatised ‘ethno-racial’ Other (**Fig. 51** and **Fig. 52**; cf. Mladenova, “Imagined Gypsy” 18–19). We can hardly fail to recognise that the ideology of racism inflicts damage not only by creating impenetrable hierarchies among groups of human beings, denying the human status of those labelled as ‘non-whites’, but it also leads to a perverse stratification of human psychic phenomena, to a grave form of self-alienation which affects everybody.

A textbook example of the widespread art of ‘ethno-racial’ masquerade comes from a German make-up guide published around 1910 by

the Association of German Barber, Hairdresser and Wigmaker Guilds with the title *Das Schminken in Theorie und Praxis*¹⁵⁰ [Make-up in Theory and Practice, my translation R.M.]. The demand for this book was so high in its time that within two years of the first publication, it was republished in a revised and expanded version.

In a series of colour plates, the guide explains how a 'typical German' actor is to apply make-up and to dress up in order to impersonate different masks; the masks are grouped into four main categories: racial and folk types (e.g. Indian, Negro, Gypsy man, Gypsy woman, Jew: old, and Jew: young), age masks (e.g. student, artist, professor, old lady), historical masks (of really existing figures such as Friedrich the Great or Bismarck, or of phantasy figures such as King Lear, Faust or the Flying Dutchman), character masks and caricatures (e.g. clown, shoemaker, tailor, the King of Babylon) (cf. 21–24). Here, I show two colour plates that illustrate the theatrical convention of blackface (**Fig. 51**) and the theatrical convention of gypsyface (**Fig. 52**). It is notable that the model head used on the colour plates for racial types, both for male and female masks, is that of a blond, blue-eyed male in a suit. The plate on the left-hand side shows the model head with only complexion make-up applied. The plate on the right shows the same model head with complexion make-up, additional make-up, wig, accessories and costume. Underneath, all masks are supplied with a "physiological justification", a short description meant to justify the choice of materials, and this type of knowledge forms the core of the guide's theoretical rationale.¹⁵¹

150 I am thankful to Dr. Frank Reuter for this valuable find, which reached me in the final phase of my dissertation project. The print book is of remarkable quality and its pages bear the traces of the makeup-smearred fingers of the artists who have consulted it. The examples it provides fit also well here, in this concluding chapter, because they point, once again, to the pertinence of the term 'mask' in analysing film texts, and illustrate the relational nature of the coloured 'gypsy' mask to the blank 'white' mask (on page 3), leaving no room for doubt as to the racist subtext that underpins the 'gypsy' spectacle staged in virtually all arts, and thus make one aware of the normalcy of this spectacle, of its mind-boggling ubiquity.

151 See also Andreas Schwarz and André Karliczek's article "Mit Haut und Haar. Vom Merkmal zum Stigma – Farbbestimmungsmethoden am Menschen".

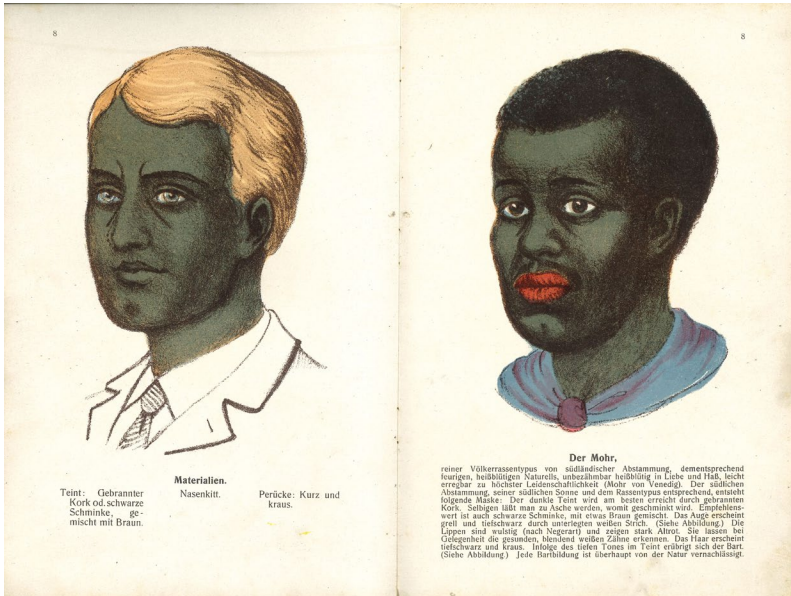


Fig. 51. Scanned page from the book *Das Schminken in Theorie und Praxis* (ca. 1910): Der Mohr.



Fig. 52. Scanned page from the book *Das Schminken in Theorie und Praxis* (ca. 1910): Zigeunerin.

Zigeunerin

Dieser bekannte Rassentyp ist fast auf jedem Masken- und Kostümball zu finden, wobei Trägerin zum Gaudium der Umstehenden und zu angenehmen Unterhaltung der Gäste ihr Wahrsagertalent entfalten muss mit verblüffender Virtuosität. Die unstillbare Wanderlust und das damit verbundene unstäte Leben, der ständige Aufenthalt in der freien Natur bei Tag und Nacht, bei Wind und Wetter und Sonnenschein, die berüchtigte Unreinlichkeit des Körpers, sowie Unsauberkeit in der eigentümlichen Kleidung und Haarhaltung geben der Zigeunerin ein wildromantisches Aussehen. Darum folgendermaßen zu schminken: Zu Teint verwende man No.16, schwach aufgetragen. Dieser braune Grundton wird mäßig jugendrot überhaucht. Das Auge ist lebhaft blitzend, in Leidenschaft erglühend, hinreißend und bezaubernd. Kräftige schwarze Augenbrauen, dunkle Striche unter dem Auge, einige Falten (nach Abbildung) erhöhen seinen Ausdruck. Ausschlaggebend für das phantastische Aussehen der Zigeunerin ist besonders das lange, starke, in natürlichen Wellen oder Locken herabfallende tiefschwarze Haar, das meistens mit Zierraten und Reifen verschiedener Art oder bunten Tüchern geschmückt ist. In natürlicher Umrahmung umschließt es das braune Gesicht und lässt es einnehmend und interessant erscheinen. (10)

Gypsy Woman

This well-known racial type can be found in almost every masquerade and costume ball, whereby the wearer must develop her fortune-telling talent with astounding virtuosity in order to delight bystanders and entertain guests. The insatiable wanderlust and the unstable life associated with it, the constant staying outdoors by day and night, in wind and weather and sunshine, the notorious impurity of the body, as well as uncleanness in the peculiar clothes and hairstyle, give the gypsy woman a wild, romantic look. Therefore, apply make-up as follows: For complexion use No.16, lightly applied. This basic brown shade is to be moderately overlaid with youth red. The eye is sparkling with liveliness, glowing in passion, ravishing and enchanting. Strong black eyebrows, dark lines under the eye, a few wrinkles (as shown in the picture) increase its expression. Critical for the fantastic appearance of the gypsy woman is especially the long,

strong, deep black hair falling in natural waves or curls, mostly decorated with ornaments and hoops of various kinds or colourful cloths. In a natural frame, it surrounds the brown face and makes it appear engaging and interesting. [my translation, R.M.]

In the preface to the first edition, Julius Pfeffer from the Federal Executive Board explains with pride and enthusiasm that the guide is meant for the various professionals from the guild, but that it can also be of use to theatre make-up artists and hair stylists, as well as to the specialised schools. Pfeffer underscores the need for the guide by referring to ‘reality’:

Wohl sind Lehrbücher für den Friseur- und Perückenmacherberuf vorhanden; aber der schnelle Fortschritt auf den Gebieten der modernen Mode und Technik bedingt naturgemäß, dass alles aufgeboten werden muss, um ein genaues Bild, die Wirklichkeit, wie sie die moderne Bühne erfordert, herzustellen. (3)

There are textbooks for the hairdressing and wig-making professions, but the rapid progress in the fields of modern fashion and technology naturally means that everything has to be done to create an accurate picture, the reality, as required by the modern stage. [my translation, R.M.]

Added to the considerations voiced above, this example should hopefully help understand the still-prevalent high level of acceptance, even admiration, of ‘gypsy’-themed films in academic and film circles. In the light of this discussion, it is opportune to revise the thesis of “projective identification” advanced by the film scholar Dina Iordanova in her often-quoted book *Cinema of Flames*, published in 2001 (216). According to Iordanova, ‘gypsy’-themed films from the ‘Balkans’ are not made to represent the Roma minority but to project concern about the ‘ethno-national’ Self, so that the projected image of the ‘gypsy’ conforms to the way the ‘Balkans’ want to be perceived by the West; the author asserts that “the compassion exhibited for the plight of the Roma is often a parabolical expression for the (suppressed) self-pitying attitude of the dominant group, who may be dominant in one context, but feels subservient in another” (216). Iordanova’s thesis has gained new currency and is assertively promoted in some recent publications, namely Jasmina Tumbas’s article “Countering Persecution,

Misconceptions, and Nationalism; Roma Identity and Contemporary Activist Art” (cf. 114), and Sunnie Rucker-Chang’s article “Roma Filmic Representation as Postcolonial ‘Object’” (cf. 855–856), while Goran Stanić details the scholarly debate on the term’s utility in his dissertation *The Roma Between the Self and the Other: Representations of the Roma in Yugoslavian and Serbian Narrative Film* (cf. 28–29).¹⁵² Undeniably, the thesis of “projective identification” contains an element of truth, yet Iordanova’s critical analysis stops halfway through, paying attention only to the phase of identification and ignoring the effect of dis-identification and distancing; what is more, her text takes up the perspective of the filmmakers and foregrounds the grievances of the dominant culture which they represent, a position that runs the risk of exonerating the antigypsy form/content of the said films. Let us not forget here that – as the case of Yugoslav ‘gypsy’-themed films has clearly demonstrated – it is the non-Roma filmmaking team, the director and the lead actors, who reap the benefits from staging the ‘gypsy’ spectacle; they might decry their marginal position in Europe and yet they are the ones who receive the prestigious awards and garner the lavish international attention, a personal artistic victory that has also raised the reputation of the entire Yugoslav national cinema, whereas the Roma lay actors are excluded from the success and altogether from the filmmaking industry (see also Section 5.4.1). As a conclusion to this subsection, we can say in a nutshell that the socially integrative function of ‘gypsy’-themed films manifests itself on various planes – its paradoxical workings can affect directly the non-Roma members of the film crew by integrating them into renowned film circles, and this type of career advancement is usually the most immediate and easily traceable outcome of the socially integrative function, but this function can also be studied in a broader context, as an ‘ethno-racially’ inflected paradox art intervention that engages local and foreign audiences in an intra-national and/or in an international ‘I – I’ dialogue over the issue of ‘whiteness’.

152 It is striking that in his corpus-based analysis of “Roma-themed films”, Goran Stanić does not make a single reference to racism as one possible reason for the stereotypical representations of the “Roma” characters (29).

In Chapter One, the pivotal question was raised as to which conditions enable a genuine dialogue between two (power-unequal) interlocutors, and so far, this question has not received an explicit answer. When discussing the mechanism of dialogic exchange within the hierarchically structured semiosphere, the Russian semiotician Yuri Lotman points to love, “however strange this may sound in this kind of textbook”, and asserts that “a necessary condition of dialogue is love, the mutual attraction of the participants” (*Universe* 143). Considering the problematic, often non-existent dialogue between dominant national cultures (in Europe and the USA) and their traditionally ostracised Roma minority groups, it is more productive to rephrase the notion of love by recalling Erich Fromm’s negatively formulated explanation in *The Art of Listening*: “To understand another means to love him – not in the erotic sense, but in the sense of reaching out to him and of overcoming the fear of losing oneself” (193). Now, the question as to what makes a genuine dialogue possible is connected to another, very practical question that must have formed in the meantime in the reader’s mind: namely, what is the artistic alternative to ‘gypsy’-themed films? Considering the critique levied at the films’ authentication strategies, is it at all possible to shoot a film about Roma? Is the study implicitly advancing the thesis that more Roma should be involved in the filmmaking process as a way of ensuring fair representation and film quality, and does this demand for increased participation of minority representatives not run the risk of becoming itself a fallacious, essentialising form of authentication? Again, the answers are complex and multifaceted, so I will outline a general direction in which to continue the query process. As to the involvement of Roma at all stages of filmmaking, this is without doubt a necessary condition for raising filmmaking standards, but it is not a sufficient condition, because it needs to be coupled with a paradigmatic shift of perspective towards the minority, towards the dominant culture and towards the medium of film. In its originally planned scope, the current book was meant to have two more parts, in which the remaining two segments of the film corpus were to be considered in detail: the group of films that re-write the ‘gypsy’ mask and the group of films that transcend the ‘gypsy’ mask and its racialising aesthetics. These two parts would have thus provided an insight into alternative strategies of representation that a number of exceptionally talented filmmakers have come up with. Due

to various constraints, these parts have not yet materialised, so I can instead offer the reader several film examples that can serve, for the time being, as a shortcut answer:

- Tony Gatlif's filmography
- *The Raggedy Rawney* (1988, Dir. Bob Hoskins)
- *Train of Life* (1998, Dir. Radu Mihăileanu)
- *Gypsy Woman* (2001, Dir. Sheree Folkson)
- *Brats* (2002, Dir. Zdeněk Tyc)
- *El Paso* (2009, Dir. Zdeněk Tyc)
- *Duh Babe Ilonke* (2011, Dir. Tomislav Zaja)
- *Just the Wind* (2012, Dir. Benedek Fliegauf)
- *Peaky Blinders* (2013, Script Steven Knight)
- *Aferim!* (2015, Dir. Radu Jude)
- *The Garbage Helicopter* (2015, Dir. Jonas Selberg Augustsén)
- *The Deathless Woman* (2019, Dir. Roz Mortimer).

9.6 The Phenomenon of 'Gypsy'-themed Films Viewed from Five Different Perspectives: An Overall Conclusion

The present study is dedicated to one largely disregarded phenomenon in the history of European and American cinema and this is the phenomenon of 'gypsy'-themed fiction films. Analysing a wide range of works, the study demonstrates that 'gypsy'-themed fiction films constitute a genre of their own and occupy a central place in the national cinemas on the Old Continent and in the USA since the birth of film. Specific to these films is their skeletal structure of an 'ethno-racial' masquerade, their inherent likeness to the cinema of attractions and film *noir*, as well as the instrumental use they make of the overfamiliar 'gypsy' figure – invariably portrayed as the 'non-white' Other – for the construction, (re-)negotiation and stabilisation of national 'white' identities across Europe and the USA. The research findings are presented in nine chapters, whereby each chapter throws light on the subject matter from a new angle, expanding the discussion with a new set of analytical tools and theoretical coordinates. This systematic change of perspective requires, in turn, readers to equip themselves with a new 'set of eyes' for each new chapter; thus, each of the nine chapters presupposes a substantial readjustment of the mental lens. It is important to stress here, once again, that in each film example, the analytical

focus is directed at one select aspect, so that the film analyses cannot and should not be read as evaluations of the works in their entirety.

The theoretical foundations of the study are outlined in Chapter One, which advances a novel approach to the analysis of screen images of 'gypsies', or in fact of any ethnicised/racialised identity, an approach based on Hans Belting's notion of the mask. This approach is led by the understanding that the human face is unrepresentable in itself; since it finds itself in a state of constant change, the human face in practice escapes all attempts to have it fixed on a material surface, which is to say that every attempt to capture the human face on canvas, on paper or on the silver screen is only partially successful and provides more information about the materials, techniques and traditions of representation than about the given face. Therefore, by opting for the notion of the mask, the study can highlight two important points: firstly, that the really existing Roma gain visibility in film, and generally in representational arts, exclusively via the visual regime imposed by the 'gypsy' mask, a practice that represents nothing less than a form of aesthetic scapegoating; and secondly, that the 'gypsy' mask can be attributed at will to any other individual or minority group in an act of symbolic violence, but also that it can be appropriated by artists in a symbolic act of rebellion or even for purely commercial reasons. Importantly, in the analysis of the films, the 'gypsy' mask is not considered in isolation, as is usually the case, but always in its relation to the national identity construct, that is in a dialogic exchange with the 'white' mask. Overall, it can be claimed that the spectacle of the 'gypsy' mask – regardless of whether it is coded in positive or in negative terms – is invariably deemed antithetical to the spectacle of the national Self.

The research findings presented here rest on extensive empirical material, a film corpus comprising 153 film titles released between the years 1897 and 2019, of which there are 118 fiction films and 35 documentaries (with some newer titles added after the final count). Chapter Two provides an overview of the process of corpus building, lists the sources of information, comments on the main selection criteria and gives insight into the corpus structure. Thematically, the film corpus consists of three main segments, of which fiction 'gypsy'-themed films represent the largest one. It should be made clear that the segment consisting of 'gypsy'-themed films exemplifies the dominant tendency in the staging of the 'gypsy' mask; this prevalent tendency is called here the racialising aesthetics of authentication. The other two comparatively smaller segments of the film corpus exemplify aesthetic

countertendencies which are not covered in detail by the study and remain to be examined.

As a kind of prologue to the topic of 'gypsy'-themed films, Chapter Three offers insight into the silent era via the motif of 'gypsy' child-theft. Chapter Four is a central element of the architecture of the book, as it outlines in summary form the methodology underpinning the entire study: the five-tiered analytical approach that has been developed specifically for the evaluation of 'gypsy'-themed fiction films and which offers a multi-perspective assessment of each film by examining its 1) production set-up, 2) content matrix, 3) visual design, 4) paratextual framing, and 5) functions. Following the algorithm established by this approach, the remaining five chapters take up and delve into each of these five aspects, offering insight into the films' racialising aesthetics of authentication by citing concrete examples, either entire works or select film sequences.

Subsequently, the focus in Chapter Five is exclusively on the politics of production. To expose the masquerade nature of 'gypsy'-themed films and to provide a certain distance from their emotional allure, a parallel is drawn between the films and blackface minstrel shows. Considering the asymmetrical distribution of roles at the phase of film production, it becomes plain to see that 'gypsy'-themed films are nothing other than ventriloquised cultural forms. With hardly any exceptions, these fictional works of art are scripted, directed and playacted by professionals from the dominant national culture, and in the cases when Roma lay actors are involved, this takes place after scrupulous casting based on dark skin colour and conformity to stereotype. Another recurrent feature of the films is the deployment of Roma extras who are used – together with their homes, music, language and artefacts – as authenticity props.

Introducing the next shift in focus, Chapter Six draws attention to the content matrix of the 'gypsy' mask. In the form of keywords, this content matrix abstracts the characterisation of the imaginary 'gypsy' figure – its distinctive qualities, personality traits, inner values and all other notable attributes ascribed to it over the length of a given film. As a way of pointing to the structural affinity that 'gypsy'-themed films have with the cinema of attractions, the choice for the first sample film fell on the US production *The Bohemian Girl* (1936). The second sample film subjected to a sequence-by-sequence content analysis in this chapter is *King of the Gypsies* (1978), again a US production, which, in addition, brings to light the affinity 'gypsy'-themed films have with

film *noir*. The comparative content analysis of the two US productions helps deepen the understanding of the functionality of the 'gypsy' mask, its subordination to the 'white' mask and the continuities and discontinuities in its fabrication. As for the dramaturgy, it should be noted that the plot structure in 'gypsy'-themed films unfolds vertically, as in melodramas and *noir* films, and is marked by the hero's inability to change his/her life circumstances through conscious effort or action.

In Chapter Seven, the focus of attention changes from narrative content to visual form. The formal analysis of 'gypsy'-themed films, in turn, foregrounds the colour symbolism of the 'gypsy' mask as well as its complex and often ambivalent relationship to film lighting, facial visibility and realist skin colour. Following the convention, the 'gypsy' mask is brought to life on the big screen as a universally recognisable sign that signifies absence of light. The meaning of this sign may be interpreted by filmmakers figuratively, to refer to darkness, that is, the shadowy side of human nature, and/or 'ethno-racially', to indicate the character's belonging to the 'non-white' part of the spectrum of human groupings. Subsequently, when characters from national majorities in Europe and the USA are visualised in juxtaposition to 'gypsies', they tend to be markedly blond. As such, the black-and-white aesthetics in 'gypsy'-themed films is fraught with many intricacies, which are discussed in further detail in relation to three very different works: the Serbian romantic musical *Gucha – Distant Trumpet* (2006), the Norwegian silent rural drama *Gipsy Anne* (1920) and the Polish black-and-white biographical film *Papusza* (2013).

The cinematic effect of documentary (ethnographic) authenticity forms the aesthetic core of 'gypsy'-themed fiction films. Not only that but 'gypsy' authenticity appears to be the yardstick by which the films' artistic merit is generally measured and it also seems to be their main selling point. Elusive, multifaceted and continually shifting with technological advancement, the aesthetic quality of authenticity specific to 'gypsy'-themed fiction films is, however, meticulously scripted, directed and staged. The power of its aura rests in the ability to transpose the purely fictional into 'a slice of reality'. Chapter Eight scrutinises the various elements and strategies of authentication deployed in 'gypsy'-themed films, focusing specifically on paratexts, visual style and sound design.

The final Chapter Nine outlines the main five functions performed by 'gypsy'-themed films. Similar to blackface minstrel shows, the cinematic spectacle of the 'gypsy' mask fulfils an array of disparate functions,

among which we should distinguish an aesthetic, a disciplining, a carnival, a subversive and a socially integrative one. The 'gypsy' mask is ubiquitous in film narratives and therefore it can endow figures and stories with a high level of visibility (aesthetic function). The enactment of the 'gypsy' mask may be used in a way that stabilises the norm-setting 'white' mask by ostracising and punishing deviance (disciplining function); it may be used in a way that enables filmmakers to give vent to pent-up emotions and broach taboo topics (carnival function); or it may enable them to voice a critical view of the 'white' mask and put forward alternative models of social cohesion (subversive function). The subversive potential of the 'gypsy' figure may also add a measure of self-reflexivity and/or true originality to the film, two aspects of great cultural significance. Just as in blackface minstrel shows, the performance in 'gypsy' mask may have a strong uplifting effect on the professional career of the 'white' filmmaking crew, elevating the film director and the lead actors to the first ranks of the international film scene (socially integrative function). These are, in a nutshell, the five main functions that 'gypsy'-themed films may perform, often all at once, which in turn explains the complex aggregate of messages disseminated by a given film, as well as its ability to address with equal success a broad variety of audiences.

To conclude, with its tailor-made five-tiered analytical approach to fiction films on the 'gypsy' theme, the study sheds light on the interplay between their production set-up, content matrix, visual design, paratextual framing and functions. Drawing on a sizeable corpus of works from the European and US American cultural realm, it demonstrates that regardless of the place and time of origin, 'gypsy'-themed productions tend to share the skeletal frame of 'ethno-racial' masquerades. As such, they are akin to blackface minstrel shows and often enjoy similar levels of obsessive popularity. If the film industry mobilises its powerful apparatus to assert the authenticity of the works and advertise them as untampered 'slices of reality', the x-ray vision advanced here makes it plain to see that these films are but ventriloquised cultural forms.

10

Annexes

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10.1 Annex I – Online Film Catalogues, Archives and Heritage Platforms

American Film Institute: afi.com

British Film Institute: bfi.org.uk

Danish Film Institute: dfi.dk

Danish Silent Film Portal: stumfilm.dk

Deutsche Kinemathek – Museum für Film und Fernsehen: deutsche-kinemathek.de

DFF – Deutsches Filminstitut & Filmmuseum: dff.film

European Film Gateway: europeanfilmgateway.eu

Film and Audiovisual Collections of FIAF Affiliates Online:
www.fiafnet.org/filmsonline

Filmographie Pathé: filmographie.fondation-jeromeseydoux-pathe.com

Filmportal: filmportal.de

Gaumont Pathé Archives: www.gaumontpathearchives.com

Harvard Film Archive: hcl.harvard.edu/hfa/

Internet Archive: archive.org

Open Society Archives: osaarchivum.org

Pordenone Silent Film Festival: giornatedelcinemamuto.it

Silent Hall of Fame: silent-hall-of-fame.org

Silent Era: silentera.com

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: collections.ushmm.org

10.2 Annex II – Silent Films with the Motif of ‘Gypsy’ Child-theft

The information about the silent films presented here comes from various film archives and/or online databases. When the films are accompanied by a short synopsis or by keywords of content in the respective source databases, these are given here as direct quotations. Six of the synopses are provided by the author (R.M.). The specific emphasis in the study is on the black-and-white aesthetics that accompanies the ‘gypsy’ theme, hence the detailed summaries.

Stolen by Gypsies (1905): US, Dir. Edwin S. Porter and Wallace McCutcheon, 845 ft.

Keywords: “Babies – Birthmarks – Crime – Kidnapping – Gypsies” (The Silent Era).

Synopsis: In a spacious room, a maid dresses up a small fair-haired girl on her lap. While the child is still naked, we can see a huge dark mark on her back. The maid continues putting on the girl’s white clothes, adding finally a voluminous white dress. The parents come to kiss the child and then leave the room. The mother wears a billowing white dress; the father sports an elegant dark suit. In the next shot, the maid takes the child outside the house and both sit on the sunny lawn. She is then summoned by the mother and leaves the baby alone. A man runs across the lawn and gathers up the girl, taking her through a patch of dark bushes to a horse-drawn carriage. Another man helps him and both drive off. Upon her return, the maid sees the empty lawn, calls the mother – still wearing her voluminous white dress – and both start searching for the child. The women come across two thieves carrying a bulging sack and chase after them. More household members join the chase. During the pursuit, the chasing party comes across various obstacles: a man with a basket, another man with a string of balloons, a thicket and finally a sandy slope. At the bottom of the slope, the thieves are caught but it turns out that their sack contains stolen geese and hens. One year later, two ladies visit a ‘gypsy’ camp to get their fortunes told. A small girl with a scarf and a handful of sticks comes up to one of the ladies. The lady checks the child’s back for the mark and finds it. In the meantime, the parents sit at home and mourn in front of a portrait that shows their stolen girl in a white dress. The mother takes out a box and starts unfolding the child’s white clothes. One of the ladies visits the parents and informs them about the small girl in the ‘gypsy’ camp. The parents rush to the camp and while the mother acts like a client who wants her

fortune told, the father goes inside one of the tents, finds his daughter and comes out pointing his gun at the ‘gypsies’ (R.M.).

Rescued by Rover (1905): UK, Dir. Lewin Fitzhamon.

Synopsis: The film begins with an emblematic shot of a child, dressed in frilly white clothes, while it is watched over by the family’s collie that goes by the name of Rover. The nursemaid, in an elegant white outfit, takes the child for a walk in the park where she is accosted by a ‘gypsy’ woman in a tattered stripy shawl that covers her entire body. The ‘gypsy’ wraps her head with one end of the shawl and begs for alms, but the nursemaid walks past and the ‘gypsy’ raises an angry fist behind her back. The nursemaid meets a uniformed soldier and while the two are talking, the beggar woman sneaks out of the bushes, grabs the child from its pram and disappears in the wild vegetation. Almost swooning, the nursemaid reports the incident to the mother, the latter, too, in an elegant white outfit. Rover witnesses the scene and embarks on a rescue mission. The dog jumps through the window, races down a street and swims across a river to reach a terrace of simple houses; it goes from door to door in search of the child. In a shabby garret with exposed roof timbers and bare bricks, the ‘gypsy’ undresses the child, placing it on a jumble of rags directly on the floor. She takes several swigs from a bottle of liquor and then lies down next to the child. The dog discovers them and races back to fetch the father. He rushes in and saves the child, pushing the ‘gypsy’ away; left alone, she surveys the child’s clothes, takes another swig at the bottle and lays herself down again. The grieving mother is soon joined by the dog, the father and the child, the four happily reunited (R.M.).

Two Little Waifs (1905): UK, Dir. James Williamson, 505 ft.

Synopsis: Two children, a boy and a girl of five or six, in smart clothes, escape from their abusive ‘gypsy’ kidnappers. The children reach the boy’s parental mansion where – through a cut in the sequence – we are made to understand that boy is welcomed by his family, while the girl is left alone on the street. This act of unexplained insensitivity, conveniently omitted by the editing, allows the film to continue as a rescue story in which father and son – in an expensive horse-drawn carriage upholstered with leather and steered by a coachman in livery and a top hat – search for the girl among the ‘gypsies’ and save her from a house fire, all the while allowing the viewers to evaluate the difference in quality of attire and mode of transportation. The father

Annexes

wears an expensive tailor-made suit, his son, a sailor suit and a straw hat, while the 'gypsies' they meet have shapeless, shabby clothes on and use wagons. The 'gypsy' woman, who hides the girl and who tries to obstruct her rescuers by setting the house on fire, has an old blanket over her head, so instead of her face, we can only see a black hollow. The film ends with an idyllic picture of the girl and the boy reading a huge children's book, both being taken care of by the elegant mother and father (R.M.).

The Gypsies; or The Abduction (1907): FR or UK, 447 ft.

Kidnapped by Gypsies (1908): FR or UK, 574 ft.

The Peachbasket Hat (1909): US, Dir. D.W. Griffith, 609 ft.

Synopsis: "Mr. Jones reads an item in the morning paper about a kidnapping by gypsies but Mrs. Jones is interested only in the advertisement for hats. On leaving home, he spots gypsies on the street and returns to warn their maid. Mrs. Jones goes hat shopping and leaves her infant with the maid, who invites the gypsies in to read her palm. When Mrs. Jones returns triumphant with her purchase, the maid hustles the gypsies out, and in the excitement the large hatbox falls over the Jones' child. Everyone assumes that the child has been stolen by the gypsies but, after a chase, they are found innocent. Back home, the missing child is located under the hatbox and all is again well at the Joneses. -SS [DWG Project # 146]" (Pordenone).

Jessie, the Stolen Child (1909): US, Dir. Van Dyke Brooke.

Synopsis: "Gypsies steal a child. She grows up with them and causes jealousy among them, and a gypsy woman restores her to her home" (BFI).

Billy's Bulldog (1910): UK, Dir. A.E. Coleby.

Synopsis: "A bulldog leads police to the gypsies who have kidnapped its owner" (BFI).

The Little Blue Cap (1910): UK, Dir. Lewin Fitzhamon.

Synopsis: "A boy saves a young girl from gypsy kidnappers" (BFI).

Her Mother's Image (1911): UK, Dir. George Bellamy.

Synopsis: "An artist who has been adopted by a lord discovers that a gypsy is the lord's kidnapped daughter" (BFI).

The Portrait [Zillah, a Gypsy Romance] (1911): UK, Dir. A.E. Coleby.

Synopsis: “Gypsies adopt a lost child who is later recognised by her real parents when they see her portrait” (BFI).

Notre-Dame de Paris (1911): FR, Dir. Albert Capellani.

Synopsis: “Esmeralda, a beautiful gypsy street dancer, arouses the desire of men, especially of Claude Frollo, the archdeacon of Notre-Dame. The latter asks Quasimodo, the deaf and deformed bell-ringer of the cathedral, to kidnap the girl. Quasimodo, who has been adopted by Frollo and obeys his every word, captures the gypsy but she is saved thanks to Phoebus, a handsome captain, and his archers. Arrested by Phoebus, the hunchback is condemned to be flogged at the pillory. When Esmeralda, moved to pity by his lot, gives him water to drink, Quasimodo falls in love with her. Later, Phoebus is stabbed to death and Esmeralda is wrongly accused of the murder. Sentenced to hang she is saved by Quasimodo who offers her asylum and... the love of his heart...” (Gaumont Pathé Archives).

Children of the Forest (1912): UK, Dir. Lewin Fitzhamon.

Synopsis: “A boy and his dog trail a gypsy who has kidnapped his sister” (BFI).

Kidnapped for Revenge (1913): UK, Dir. Ernest G. Batley.

Synopsis: “A dog saves a farmer’s baby from being kidnapped by a gypsy” (BFI).

The Firefly [Ildfluen] (1913): Denmark, Dir. Einar Zangenberg,
47 mins.

Synopsis: A ‘gypsy’ couple has encamped on the estate of Countess Barri. The ‘gypsy’ husband, Michael, wears a broad brimmed hat, a golden earring, a striped vest, a striped pair of trousers and a black cloak. His wife has a black scarf over her head and is wrapped in a striped piece of cloth, her chest decorated with masses of jewellery. Countess Barri – in an immaculate and highly elegant white dress – plays with her daughter Lilian and the son of her estate’s manager, Ralph, in front of her white mansion. The two children go to a nearby tower and on their way back, they bump into Michael who has a performing monkey on a leash. The children start playing with the animal; they themselves have a toy monkey. The worried countess finds them in the fields and is persuaded by Michael to come and visit his sick child. The camera cuts

to the 'gypsy' wife, who treats a baby bear with visible cruelty as well as her sick daughter; she starts lashing the child, until the countess arrives to stop her. The sick girl is put to bed. Countess Barri gives Michael some money and orders the 'gypsies' to leave her estate immediately; she is enraged by their cruel treatment of the sick child. At home, fair-haired Lilian dreams of monkeys and when she wakes up, she crawls out of her room's window and goes in her white nightgown to the 'gypsies', asking to play with the animal. While she is inside the wagon, the sick 'gypsy' child – with a head full of unruly pitch-black hair – dies. The 'gypsies' decide to drive off with Lilian. Ralph starts searching for his friend, catches up with the 'gypsy' wagon and for lack of other options asks if he can join them, demonstrating he can do a cartwheel. Lilian is to take the place of the dead 'gypsy' child and is trained as a performer. Twelve years later, the 'gypsies' are back on Countess Barri's estate. An agent offers to take Lilian to the town circus. As a 'gypsy', Lilian wears a striped head scarf and a garish dark dress. Ralph has a tartan-patterned cap and a striped shirt. While Lilian is in town, Ralph helps Count Silver to repair his car and gets a job as his chauffeur. During the performance, Lilian is suspended from the circus dome as a firefly in a spectacular white costume. Due to her success, Michael can obtain an advance from the circus manager and immediately loses all the money to alcohol and cards. While watching Lilian's performance, Count Silver falls in love with her. He sends Lilian a bouquet with flowers and a note, in which he confesses his love. Michael uses the man's feelings to get more money. Count Silver takes Lilian out for a ride in his car, driven by Ralph, and when he tries to force himself on the girl, Ralph stops the car, acting as if there is a technical problem and then suddenly drives off, leaving the count on the dusty road. Lilian and Ralph go back to the mansion of their childhood and reunite with Countess Barri, who is still mourning in a black dress. The three climb up the old ruined tower, where vengeful 'gypsy' Michael locks them up and lights a bomb fuse at the foot of the building. However, Ralph shows up again as the brave hero and saves them all (R.M.).

The Exploits of Elaine, Ep. 8. "The Reptile Under the Flowers" (1914):

US, Dir. Louis J. Gasnier/George B. Seitz.

Synopsis: Elaine is kidnapped just as a gypsy tells her fortune. She is discovered by Singoalla, the gypsy's wife. The husband shoots at his wife. Singoalla meets Harry and helps him escape from captivity. But the gypsy is wounded in the fight, so Singoalla tries to avenge him. She

brings a bouquet of flowers to Elaine, yet Harry, suspicious, discovers a snake in the middle of the bouquet and kills it. A few weeks later, Elaine wants to participate in a steeplechase. She climbs onto Firefly, but the horse rolls on the ground. Fortunately, Elaine has only minor bruises. (Gaumont Pathé Archives) [my translation, R.M.].

The Adventures of a Madcap (1915): US, Prod. Balboa Films,
1135 m/1014 in colour.

Synopsis: “Jean, a waif, is adopted by old Jason, and acts as an assistant to him in the culture and sale of his flowers. She is loved by Owen, a country swain, who hesitates asking her to be his wife because of her erratic, irresponsible gaiety. One day she returns home to find old Jason dead in the garden. Her grief knows no bounds, and she knows not what to do. However, the Gordons, a childless couple, take a fancy to the child and bring her to live with them. But her wild life is poor preparation for the conventional drawing rooms of the rich, and tired of the life, she runs away. Attired in the garb of a boy, she joins a gypsy camp. Carlos, one of the men, engaged to Carmio, falls in love with her, and one night, to escape his attentions, she hides in a deserted shack. He follows her, and Carmio, seeing him, runs back to the camp for help. She comes across the Gordons and Owen, and with them arrives back at the shack in time to save Jean from an awful fate. The picture ends charmingly with Jean and Owen in the roles that ‘all the world loves’” (Moving Picture World, IMDb), see also the synopsis in Filmographie Pathé.

The Twin Triangle (1916): US, Dir. Harry Harvey, 5 reels.

Keywords: “Artists – Children: Waifs – Crime: Kidnapping, Rape (Attempted) – Gypsies – Revenge – Self-defense – USA: New York” (AFI).

The Vagabond (1916): US, Dir. Charlie Chaplin, 24 mins.

Synopsis: A Victorian tale of the Tramp (Charlie Chaplin) rescuing a drudge (Edna Purviance) from a cruel ‘gypsy’ gang. The gang consists of a corpulent leader (Eric Campbell) who whips the girl mercilessly, some men without any distinguishing marks, and an ugly old hag (Leo White in drag). After riding off with the girl in a commandeered wagon, the Tramp hands her a rake to use on her flea-infested hair and diligently washes her face in water and suds. A passing artist (Lloyd Bacon), inspired by the freshened-up girl, paints a portrait of her and displays his work in a gallery. The girl’s patrician mother recognises her

daughter's birthmark on the painting and with the artist's assistance finds her whereabouts. Mother and daughter reunite and drive off in the family's automobile, leaving the Tramp behind. Later, the family chauffeur returns and collects the Tramp as well (R.M.).

Runaway Romany (1917): US. Dir. George W. Lederer, 1340 m.

Synopsis: To promote Anitra, a rising star, the theatrical agent Ink Ames comes up with the idea to make people believe that Anitra is the long-lost daughter of Théodore Harrisson, the copper king, who disappeared fifteen years ago. Mr. Harrisson really believes that he has found his missing daughter and takes Anitra to him. But in the West, Harrisson's mine supervisor, Bud Haskel, falls in love with a young 'gypsy', Romany, who is destined for the son of the 'gypsy' chief. She runs away and, thanks to Bud, manages to reach New York. Jealous Anitra wants to throw the suspicion of a robbery on Romany, but Ink reveals the truth. Shortly after, we realise that Romany is the daughter of the copper king, because she has a heart-shaped mark on her shoulder. And Mr. Harrisson wins a daughter and a son-in-law who, he hopes, will give him grandchildren (Filmographie Pathé) [my translation, R.M.].

Betta the Gypsy [*Betta la Bohémienne*] (1918): UK, Dir. Charles Raymond, 48 mins.

Synopsis: The film is an adaptation of an operetta by Edward Waltyre. Betta (Marga Rubia Levy), the daughter of the queen of the 'gypsies' Aleska (Malvian Longfellow), is an object of rivalry between the king of the 'gypsies' Tempestro (George Foley), a brutal man wearing a pirate's hat trimmed with long feathers, and the young 'gypsy' Hubert (Edward Combermere). Betta and Hubert love each other; their bond is emphasised by the similarity of their black-and-white striped costumes. Blackmailing Aleska with a secret, Tempestro obtains her permission to marry Betta. Hubert is forced to leave the 'gypsy' camp, and he finds a job at the Merchant Marine, changing his 'gypsy' garb with a smart uniform. Betta runs away from the camp, too, to join Hubert, and the two start a family in a nice house. Six years later, Tempestro tracks them down and steals their blond-haired boy. Betta returns to the 'gypsy' camp, where she reunites with her son. Finding the house empty, Hubert also enters into a search for his family. On his way, he meets an old 'gypsy' (Barbara Gott) who reveals to him the secret of his noble origin. In a flashback, another story involving a child-theft committed by 'gypsies' is embedded. Queen Aleska's only sister Hazla,

costumed in a black-and-white striped dress, had a love affair with an English lord. To pay off his gambling debts, the lord abandoned Hazla and married a rich heiress, dressed in white, who gave him a son. Hazla also gave him a son, but she and the child died soon after. As revenge, Aleska replaced the lord’s son with the corpse of her sister’s baby. This is the story that Tempestro uses to put pressure on Queen Aleska. The old ‘gypsy’ reveals the secret not only to Hubert but also to the lord, his father. The old lord comes to the ‘gypsy’ camp to talk to Queen Aleska and there he meets his kidnapped son. The final scene shows the lord welcoming Hubert and Betta into his affluent dining room and entertaining his blond, curly-haired grandson on his lap (R.M.).

Gypsies [Cikáni] (1921): Czech Republic, Dir. Karel Anton, 118 mins.
Synopsis: The film is based on Karel Hynek Mácha’s novel of the same name. It tells the story of the Venetian gondolier Giacomo (Hugo Svoboda) and his beloved Angelina (Olga Augustová). Angelina and Giacomo live in a bubble of happiness until the clawed fingers of fate shatter it to pieces. Angelina betrays Giacomo’s love and runs away with Count Lomecky (Theodor Pištěk). The count betrays Angelina in turn. He is married and suspects his pregnant wife of infidelity. The countess denies being unfaithful to him and pledges that her child will be born with a birthmark if this were to be true. Her son indeed comes into the world with a birthmark. She dies during childbirth and the count gives the baby to Angelina, who has just lost her own child at birth. Angelina abandons the boy in the forest, where he is picked up and raised by Giacomo, who has taken the road of revenge and roams in the world disguised as a ‘gypsy’. In the meantime, banished in a cave, Angelina goes mad. Giacomo and his adopted son, both in ‘gypsy’ disguise, appear at the count’s estate. Learning about Angelina’s fate, Giacomo kills the count, receives a death sentence and is executed at the gallows. The son (Alfons Rasp) falls in love with Lea, a pale and sad Jewish girl who harbours a shameful secret. She was taken by Angelina to the castle, where the count raped her. Feeling his pride hurt, the young man deserts Lea, who dies of a broken heart, soon followed by her father. The young nameless ‘gypsy’ discovers his true identity – he is Count Lomecky’s son and the sole heir of his estate – and the identities of the people around him. Robbed of all the loved ones in his life, he leaves the place, never to return (R.M.).

10.3 Annex III – Film Directors of ‘Gypsy’-themed Films

A non-exhaustive list of acclaimed filmmakers, in alphabetical order, with one or more fiction ‘gypsy’-themed films in their filmography:

Ivan Andonov | Bulgaria
Jacqueline Audry | France
Vicente Aranda (direction and script) | Spain
Géza von Bolváry | Hungary
Rasmus Breistein (direction and script) | Norway
René Clément | France
Arthur Crabtree | UK
Robert Duvall (production, direction and script) | USA
Lewin Fitzhamon (direction and script) | UK
Urban Gad (direction and script) | Denmark
José Giovanni | France/Sweden
D.W. Griffith (direction and script) | USA
Dušan Hanák (direction and script) | Czechoslovakia
Bernard Knowles | UK
Joanna Kos-Krauze and Krzysztof Krauze (direction and script) | Poland
Emir Kusturica (direction and script) | Serbia
Mitchell Leisen | USA
Joseph Losey | USA
Emil Loteanu (direction and script) | Moldova
Ernst Lubitsch | Germany
Luis Lucia (direction and script) | Spain
Dušan Milić (direction and script) | Serbia
Roy William Neill | USA
Aleksandar Petrović (direction, script and music) | Serbia
Stole Popov (direction and script) | Macedonia
Nicholas Ray | USA
Charles Raymond | UK
Florián Rey (direction and script) | Spain
Leni Riefenstahl (direction and script) | Germany
Alexander Siversen (direction, camera and script) | Russia
Carlos Saura (direction and script) | Spain
Ernst Ritter von Theumer | Germany
Valentin Vaala (direction and script) | Finland
Charles Vidor | USA

10.4 Annex IV – Literary Sources of ‘Gypsy’-themed Films

A non-exhaustive list of the literary works written by representatives of the dominant culture that have served as a source material for fiction ‘gypsy’-themed films. Some of the entries are supplemented with references to perceptive articles and books as a way of underscoring the paradoxical centrality that ‘gypsy’ figures have in the construction of national narratives across Europe and the USA.

Carmen/Gypsy Blood: A Love Tale of Old Spain (1918) is based on Prosper Mérimée’s tale of the same name, first published in 1845. The opera version by George Bizet (1875) turned Mérimée’s tale into a worldwide success, subsequently giving rise to more than eighty screen adaptations (between 1894 and 2005), which makes “Carmen” the most frequently adapted narrative in the medium of film (Davies ix). Martin Holler and Kirsten von Hagen develop an intertextual and intermedia perspective on Carmen’s myth, tracing its transformations from literature through opera to modern film. In the collective volume *Carmen: from Silent Movie to MTV* that focuses on the large body of Carmen films, Colmeiro discusses the centrality of the mythic ‘gypsy’ female in the process of reconfiguring Spanish national identity (91–106).

Gipsy Anne [Fante-Anne] (1920) is the first Norwegian film adapted from literature, being based on an 1879 novel by the New Norwegian writer Kristofer Janson. As pointed in Chapter Two, film scholars consider Rasmus Breinstein’s silent film to be a vital turning point for the national breakthrough of Norwegian film, noting that the director was “among those who felt that Norwegians should film their own national literature” (Myrstad and Diesen 19). The newspaper reviews published at the time of the film’s release in *Morgenbladet* and *Dagbladet* praise *Gipsy Anne* for arousing the sense of community and patriotism and for depicting “authentic Norwegian rural life” (25) (see also Section 2.2 and Section 7.2.1).

The Bohemian Girl (1936) takes its inspiration from the ballad opera *The Bohemian Girl* that Michael William Balfe composed in 1843, drawing on “The Gypsy Girl” (“La gitana”) (1613), a seminal tale by the Spanish writer Miguel de Cervantes (see also Section 3.3).

Annexes

Dark and Bright [*Morena Clara*] (1936 and 1954) is based on the popular Spanish theatre comedy *Morena Clara* by Antonio Quintero and Pascual Guillén, first staged in Madrid in 1935 (Claver Esteban 481).

Flower of the Tisza [*Tiszavirág/Zwischen Strom und Steppe*] is based on the novel *Zwischen Strom und Steppe* by the German author Michael Zorn (IMDb).

Madonna of the Seven Moons (1944) is based on the 1931 novel of the same name by the British writer of popular fiction Margery Lawrence (Harper 118).

The Technicolor melodrama *Jassy* (1947) is based on the 1944 novel of the same name by the best-selling British writer Nora Lofts (IMDb).

Lowlands [*Tiefland*] (1954) is an adaptation of the popular opera of the same name by Eugen d'Albert, first performed in 1903. The opera's libretto, written by Rudolph Lothar, is based on the theatre play *Terra baixa* (1896) by the Catalan poet and playwright Àngel Guimerà. *Tiefland* is also known for being one of Hitler's favourite operas (Uerlings 69–70). In his opening article to the collective volume *'Zigeuner' und Nation*, Herbert Uerlings appraises Leni Riefenstahl's film with incisive scrutiny. At the same time, the German scholar grapples with the paradox of how to come to terms with the fact that the third most expensive film in the Nazis' film production stages a 'gypsy' female as its central character, who is not only idealised but also impersonated by Hitler's favourite film director (71).

Lola, the Coalgirl [*Lola, la piconera*] (1951 and 1969) draws on the historical drama *Cuando las Cortés de Cádiz* (1934) by the Spanish author José María Pemán (IMDb).

The Hunchback of Notre-Dame (1956) is one of the nine films and TV adaptations based on the Romanic Gothic novel of the same name by the French writer Victor Hugo, first published in 1831 (see also Section 1.3.3 and Section 3.5).

The Gypsy and the Gentleman (1958) is based on the 1956 novel *Darkness I Leave You* by the British author Nina Warner Hooke (Gifford 659).

Queen of the Gypsies [Табор уходит в небо] (1975) is based on Maxim Gorky's maiden work, the short story "Makar Chudra", first published in Russia in 1892.

Koštana [Ковчана] (1976) is one of the five TV adaptations of Bora Stanković's theatre drama of the same name. The latter is itself one of the most staged plays in the history of Serbian theatre and the audience's favourite, first published in 1900 (Zlatanovic 54).

King of the Gypsies (1978) is adapted from the 1975 novel *King of the Gypsies* by the American writer Peter Maas (Lee 217).

10.5 Annex V – (Inter-)National Celebrity Actors in Gypsyface

A non-exhaustive list of (inter)national actors and actresses, in alphabetical order, with performances in gypsyface in the films included in the film corpus:

Imperio Argentina | Argentina/Spain
Boryslav Brondukov | Ukraine
Jowita Budnik | Poland
Alain Delon | France
Johnny Depp | USA
Marlene Dietrich | Germany
Davor Dujmović | Bosnia
Bekim Fehmiu | Kosovo
Lola Flores | Spain
Ava Gardner | USA
Grigore Grigoriu | Moldova
Oliver Hardy | UK
Rita Hayworth | USA
Katharine Hepburn | USA
Anthony Hopkins | UK
Elma Karlowa | Yugoslavia
Stan Laurel | UK
Margaret Lockwood | UK
Gina Lollobrigida | Italy
Miki Manojlović | Serbia
Melina Mercouri | Greece

Annexes

María Montez, the Queen of Technicolour | Dominican Republic

Pola Negri | Poland

Aasta Nielsen | Norway

Asta Nielsen | Denmark

Pepa Nikolova | Bulgaria

Brad Pitt | USA

Anthony Quinn | Mexico/USA

Leni Riefenstahl | Germany

Dolores del Río | Mexico

Eric Roberts | USA

Marga Rubia Levy, aka Marga La Rubia | UK

Margit Symo | Hungary/Austria

Tilda Thamar | Argentina

Thelma Todd | USA

Borivoje Todorović | Serbia

Srdjan Todorović | Serbia

Svetlana Tomá | Moldova

Teuvo Tulio | Finland

Valentin Vaala | Finland

Grigor Vachkov | Bulgaria

Paz Vega | Spain

Olivera Vučo | Serbia

Leo White | Germany/USA

Greguss Zoltán | Hungary

11

List of Illustrations

— ※ —

Chapter One

- Fig. 1. Assembled screenshots from *Time of the Gypsies* (1988, Dir. Emir Kusturica): the ‘gypsy’ character Merdžan (Husnija Hasimović) in conversation with God; a visual metaphor that conveys the symbolic position of the ‘gypsy’ in relation to the Christian deity.
- Fig. 2. Screenshot from *Drei Birken auf der Heide* (1956, Dir. Ulrich Erfurth): at the film’s start, the ‘gypsy’ characters Mirko (Hubert Hilten) and Susanna (Margit Saas) are introduced for the first time to the viewers as inverted reflections of human beings.
- Fig. 3. Screenshot from *I Even Met Happy Gypsies* (1967, Dir. Aleksandar Petrović): Beli Bora (Bekim Fehmiu) and Pavle (Milosav Aleksić) take care of drunken Mirta (Velimir Živojinović), who is loaded head down into Pavle’s cart with the following exclamation: “Into the garbage cart, you Gypsy bastard!”

Chapter Two

- Fig. 4a and Fig. 4b. Screenshots from *Gipsy Anne* (1920, Dir. Rasmus Breistein): Gipsy Anne (Aasta Nielsen) working as a milkmaid at the summer farm in Storlien.

Chapter Three

- Fig. 5. Screenshot from *The Adventures of Dollie* (1908, Dir. D.W. Griffith): clad in a radiant white dress, little Dollie (Gladys Egan) is contrasted to her 'gypsy' abductor (Charles Inslee), whose shady figure looms threateningly behind her.
- Fig. 6. Film still from *Zigeuneren Raphael* (1914, Dir. unknown): the 'gypsy' interlopers posing a threat to the unity of Baron Wilhelm's family. Film still courtesy of the Danish Film Institute.
- Fig. 7. Film still from *Zigeuneren Raphael* (1914, Dir. unknown): the once stolen-child Raphael (Emanuel Gregers) participates in a dangerous circus act in which the 'gypsy' princess Zelma (Emilie Sannom) plays a knife-thrower, aiming at him, while the 'white' lady Inger (Zanny Petersen) acts as his protectress. Film still courtesy of the Danish Film Institute.
- Fig. 8. Film still from *Zigeuneren Raphael* (1914, Dir. unknown): the 'gypsy' king (Valdemar Møller) leaves the stolen count's heir on the ground, which leads to the incident with the snake-bite. In the still, the 'gypsy' king, who blends in with nature, is even shown to hold a writhing snake directly above the child's head. Film still courtesy of the Danish Film Institute.
- Fig. 9. Screenshot from *Betta the Gypsy* (1918, Dir. Charles Raymond): Betta (Marga Rubia Levy) and her beloved Hubert (Edward Combermere), both dressed in photogenic striped clothing, take a love pledge by making a small cut on the wrist and mixing their blood.
- Fig. 10a and Fig. 10b. Screenshots from *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* (1939, Dir. William Dieterle): two-shots of Maureen O'Hara as Esmeralda and Edmond O'Brien as Pierre Gringoire: both characters share the same skin colour, 'white'.
- Fig. 11a and Fig. 11b. Screenshots from *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* (1939, Dir. William Dieterle): Esmeralda's and Gringoire's black-and-white costumes mark their lower social rank, their social 'non-whiteness'.
- Fig. 12a and Fig. 12b. Screenshots from *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* (1939, Dir. William Dieterle): the white costumes of Phoebus (Alan Marshal) and his blonde fiancée Fleur de Lys (Helene Whitney) mark their high social station, their social 'whiteness'.
- Fig. 13a and Fig. 13b. Screenshots from *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* (1982, Dir. Michael Tuchner): a medium shot of Lesley-Anne

Down as Esmeralda and a two-shot of her and Gerry Sundquist as Pierre Gringoire: the characters share the same light brown hair and skin colour, both are 'white'.

Fig. 14a and Fig. 14b. Screenshots from *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* (1956, Dir. Jean Delannoy): a medium shot of Gina Lollobrigida as Esmeralda; a two-shot of Phoebus (Jean Danet) and his fiancée Fleur de Lys (Danielle Dumont).

Fig. 15. Screenshots from *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* (1956, Dir. Jean Delannoy): a two-shot of Esmeralda and the 'gypsy' musician who accompanies her. The man has a very dark complexion that serves as a visual cue to suggest that Esmeralda's Southern beauty should be interpreted in the film's diegesis as 'non-white' in 'ethno-racial' terms.

Fig. 16a and Fig. 16b. Screenshots from *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* (1996, Dir. Gary Trousdale, and Kirk Wise): black-haired Esmeralda, whose snow-white blouse aids the viewer to perceive her as 'non-white', and yellow-blond Phoebus.

Chapter Four

Fig. 17. Screenshot from the website of Harvard Film Archive. Film Series/Events. *Nicholas Ray: Hollywood's Last Romantic*. Short announcement of his film *Hot Blood* (1956). Web. 24 Apr 2020.

Chapter Five

Fig. 18. Assembled screenshots from the documentary film *Vaudeville* (1997, Dir. Greg Palmer), a film quote from *Minstrel Days* (1941, Dir. Bobby Connolly) recreating the 'birth' of blackface minstrel shown as a dialogic situation.

Chapter Six

Fig. 19. Screenshot from *The Bohemian Girl* (1936, Dir. James W. Horne and Charley Rogers): the 'gypsy' queen (Zeffie Tilbury) giving her orders to Salinas (Mitchell Lewis), the leader of the 'gypsy' rogues.

List of Illustrations

- Fig. 20. Screenshot from *The Bohemian Girl* (1936, Dir. James W. Horne and Charley Rogers): a 'gypsy' mother telling her children to keep quiet.
- Fig. 21. Screenshot from *The Bohemian Girl* (1936, Dir. James W. Horne and Charley Rogers): Stan and Ollie in gypsyface gesturing to the spectators to keep quiet.
- Fig. 22a and Fig. 22b. Screenshots from *King of the Gypsies* (1978, Dir. Frank Pierson): Spiro Giorgio (Michael Gazzo) and his wife Danitza (Antonia Rey) (left) receive a sudden visit by king Zharko Stepanowicz (Sterling Hayden) and queen Rachel (Shelley Winters) (right), who have come to ask for the hand of their daughter in marriage.
- Fig. 23a and Fig. 23b. Screenshots from *King of the Gypsies* (1978, Dir. Frank Pierson): with a black scarf on her head and a pipe in her mouth, queen Rachel (Shelley Winters) visits the bed-ridden king (Sterling Hayden) in the hospital.
- Fig. 24a and Fig. 24b. Screenshots from *King of the Gypsies* (1978, Dir. Frank Pierson): blonde-haired Sharon in a white sports outfit moving nimbly around Dave, whose stooping posture and stiff movements are in turn accentuated by a long black leather coat.
- Fig. 25a and Fig. 25b. Screenshots from *King of the Gypsies* (1978, Dir. Frank Pierson): classic two-shots of the handsome 'gypsy' Dave (Eric Roberts) and the girl of his dreams, the pale-skinned, blonde Sharon (Annette O'Toole).
- Fig. 26. Screenshots from *King of the Gypsies* (1978, Dir. Frank Pierson): costumed in a flamboyant red suit and a yellow shirt, Groffo (Judd Hirsch) lies in a drunken stupor over the huge roasted pig served on the table.
- Fig. 27. Assembled screenshots from *The Gypsy and the Gentleman* (1958, Dir. Joseph Losey): Sir Paul Deverill (Keith Michell) trying in vain to hold on to Mademoiselle, a small pig smeared with white grease.
- Fig. 28. Assembled screenshots from *The Gypsy and the Gentleman* (1958, Dir. Joseph Losey): by pretending to be lost on a rainy night in the forest, Belle (Melina Mercouri) manages to enter the carriage of Sir Paul Deverill (Keith Michell); infatuated with her, Deverill marries Belle, sinks into alcoholism and eventually drowns together with her. Sir Deverill's sister Sarah (June Laverick) is the moral, social and 'ethno-racial' opposite of Belle.

Fig. 29a and Fig. 29b. Screenshots from *Black Cat, White Cat* (1998, Dir. Emir Kusturica): two visual metaphors of disintegration and downfall – a Trabant being devoured by a swine, and the fall of Dadan (Srđan Todorović).

Chapter Seven

Fig. 30a and Fig. 30b. Screenshots from *Gucha – Distant Trumpet* (2006, Dir. Dušan Milić): the Serbian orchestra Vladisho Trandafilović – Satchmo marked by the colours of bright daylight, and the ‘gypsy’ orchestra the Sandokan Tigers marked by the colours of night’s darkness.

Fig. 31a and Fig. 31b. Screenshots from *Gucha – Distant Trumpet* (2006, Dir. Dušan Milić): Juliana (Aleksandra Manasijević), the blue-eyed, blonde-haired beauty who serves as a cue, prompting the viewers to perceive her fellow people in the modus of the ‘white’ mask. Sandokan (Slavoljub Pesić), the leader of the Sandokan Tigers, has a distinctly darker face that serves as visual cue, prompting the viewers to perceive his fellows in the modus of the ‘gypsy’ mask.

Fig. 32a and Fig. 32b. Screenshots from *Gucha – Distant Trumpet* (2006, Dir. Dušan Milić): Satchmo’s brass band in traditional Serbian dress, in sharp contrast to the Sandokan Tigers, who wear Italian purple suits with large tiger-patterned lapels.

Fig. 33. Screenshot from *Gucha – Distant Trumpet* (2006, Dir. Dušan Milić): a medium two-shot of golden-blonde Juliana (Aleksandra Manasijević) and her black-haired Romeo (Marko Marković); the forbidden love between the Serbian ‘white’ nation and its ‘non-white’ minority triumphs.

Fig. 34. Screenshot from the short film *Remember* (2017, Dir. Igor Kachur): a two-shot of the persecuted black-haired Romni Lyalya (Serine Sianosyan), who finds a temporary hiding place in the house of blonde Maria (Anastasiya Pustovit).

Fig. 35a and Fig. 35b. Screenshots from the short animation *Bango Vassil* (2016, Dir. Milen Vitanov, and Vera Trajanova), in which the ‘gypsy’ girl Ati is portrayed with waist-long black hair and thick black eyebrows. Following the logic of racialisation, Emil, the ‘white’ Bulgarian boy, who undergoes a cathartic ordeal

together with Ati, is yellow-haired. Ati is also the only child to wear a brown knit hat with bear ears.

- Fig. 36. Screenshot from *Gipsy Anne* (1920, Dir. Rasmus Breistein): Gipsy Anne (Aasta Nielsen) in her new role as a nanny taking care of two town's children; notably, the three of them are clad in impeccable white from head to toe.
- Fig. 37a and Fig. 37b. Screenshots from *Gipsy Anne* (1920, Dir. Rasmus Breistein): two-shots of Gipsy Anne (Aasta Nielsen) with Haldor (Lars Tvinde) and with Jon (Einar Tveito); it is plain to see that due to the lack of white make-up, Haldor's bandaged hand appears almost black, strongly contrasting with his and Anne's faces.
- Fig. 38. Screenshot from *Gipsy Anne* (1920, Dir. Rasmus Breistein): Haldor (Lars Tvinde), his fiancée Margit Moen (Kristine Ullmo) and mother (Johanne Bruhn) sit in the first row during the court hearing. They wear a thick layer of white make-up, which renders their faces visible; in the film, being visible equals being white. The extras in the background, by contrast, wear no make-up and their flesh tones come off much darker, so that their faces appear both non-white and less clear to see.
- Fig. 39. Screenshot from *Gipsy Anne* (1920, Dir. Rasmus Breistein): Jon (Einar Tveito) before the judge (Edvard Drabløs) in court. The faces of the men in the background are without white make-up, looking distinctly darker.
- Fig. 40a and Fig. 40b. Screenshots from Papusza's introduction scene: an employee from the Ministry of Culture (Maja Meissner) and a peripheral character; the first close-up of the main character Papusza (Jowita Budnik) (*Papusza*, 2013, Dir. Joanna Kos-Krauze and Krzysztof Krauze).
- Fig. 41a and Fig. 41b. Screenshots from *Papusza* (2013): Jerzy Ficowski (Antoni Pawlicki) bringing Papusza a newspaper with her published poems and her pay; Papusza (Jowita Budnik) selling the pen that Jerzy Ficowski gave her as token of his friendship.
- Fig. 42a and Fig. 42b. Screenshots from *Papusza* (2013): young Papusza (Paloma Mirga) learning to read by the light of a self-made fire on a rainy night in the forest; a line drawing of a 'white' male, where the meaning of 'whiteness' can be decoded, all at once, as a social norm, as an 'ethno-racial' category and as a representational convention.

- Fig. 43a and Fig. 43b. Screenshots from *Papusza* (2013): Wanda Ficowska (Joanna Niemirska), a peripheral character, asking her husband if Papusza was in love with him; a ten-second take of Papusza's back (Jowita Budnik) after parting with Jerzy Ficowski and disclosing her feelings to him in an unreciprocated kiss [57'38:57'47].
- Fig. 44a and Fig. 44b. Screenshots from *Papusza* (2013): young Papusza (Paloma Mirga) talking about books and reading with an upper-class lady, a peripheral character; a close-up of young Papusza readied for her wedding, which takes place at night in a forest.
- Fig. 45a and Fig. 45b. Screenshots from *Papusza* (2013): Papusza (Jowita Budnik) next to a swarthy-faced 'gypsy' female, the three women secretly examining the contents of Jerzy Ficowski's bag; Papusza (Jowita Budnik) and Jerzy Ficowski (Antoni Pawlicki) standing shoulder to shoulder behind a thin curtain of rain.

Chapter Eight

- Fig. 46a and Fig. 46b. Screenshots from *Queen of the Gypsies* (1975, Dir. Emil Loteanu): the blonde-haired owner of a clothes shop welcoming his highness, the nobleman Antol Siladi (Ion Sandri Scurea) to inspect the latest Parisian fashion. Rada (Svetlana Tomá) and her female companions in 'gypsy' costumes characterised by multiple patterns, layers and frills.
- Fig. 47a and Fig. 47b. Screenshots from *Queen of the Gypsies* (1975, Dir. Emil Loteanu): Rada's blond-haired suitor, the landowner Antol Siladi, next to her dark-haired father Danilo (Vsevolod Gavrilov). Rada's 'gypsy' suitor Zobar (Grigore Grigoriu) accompanied by the clownish 'gypsy' pauper Bucha (Boryslav Brondukov).
- Fig. 48a and Fig. 48b. Screenshots from *Nelly's Adventure* (2016): the black-haired 'gypsy' thug Hokus (Marcel Costea) offering the stranded Klabunt family a lift to Sibiu. Hokus mixing sleeping drops into Nelly's drink, with her blond-haired father Robert Klabund (Kai Lentrodt), wearing a beige jacket, sitting at the table in the background.

List of Illustrations

Fig. 49a and Fig. 49b. Screenshots from *Nelly's Adventure* (2016): the black-haired 'gypsy' thug Hokus (Marcel Costea) bringing kidnapped blonde Nelly (Flora Li Thiemann) into a Roma village. A crowd scene showing surly-looking, swarthy males who gather upon Nelly's arrival in the village.

Fig. 50a and Fig. 50b. Screenshots from *Nelly's Adventure* (2016): blonde Nelly (Flora Li Thiemann) on her mountain bike in her spotless, sunlit and radiantly whitewashed German neighbourhood. The shaded, colourful and bitterly impoverished Roma village in Romania where kidnapped Nelly is brought by the 'gypsy' thug Hokus.

Chapter Nine

Fig. 51. Scanned page from the book *Das Schminken in Theorie und Praxis* (ca. 1910): Der Mohr.

Fig. 52. Scanned page from the book *Das Schminken in Theorie und Praxis* (ca. 1910): Zigeunerin.

12

Filmography

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- The Adventures of Dollie*. Screenplay by Stanner E.V. Taylor. Dir. D.W. Griffith. Perf. Arthur V. Johnson, and Linda Arvidson. Biograph Company, 1908. Film.
- Aferim!* Screenplay by Radu Jude, and Florin Lazarescu. Dir. Radu Jude. Perf. Teodor Corban, Mihai Comanoiu, and Toma Cuzin. Studiokanal, 2015. DVD.
- And Hope to Die* [*La course du lièvre à travers les champs*]. Screenplay by Sébastien Japrisot. Dir. René Clément. Perf. Jean-Louis Trintignant, Aldo Ray, and Robert Ryan. Prod. Greenwich Film Productions, 1972. Film.
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Filmography

- and Guy Saguez. Perf. Robert Etcheverry, Edwige Pierre, and Hela Gruel. ZDF, 1973–1974. Filmverlag Fernsehjuwelen, 2015. DVD.
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- Bango Vassil*. Dir. Milen Vitanov, and Vera Trajanova. Talking Animals, Vitanov Productions, 2016. Film.
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- Betta the Gypsy/Betta the Gipsy*. Dir. Raymond Charles. Perf. Marga Rubia Levy, Malvina Longfellow, George Foley, Edward Comb-ermere, Frank Dane, and Barbara Gott. Famous Pictures, 1918. Film.
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Filmography

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Filmography

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- Kidnapped for Revenge*. Screenplay by Ethyle Batley. Dir. Ernest G. Batley. Prod. All-British Films, 1913. Film.
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13

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14

Index of Persons and Works

— ※ —

- Accampamento di zingari* 253
Adler, Luther 114, 386
The Adventures of Dollie 28, 52, 53,
55–62, 64, 69, 71, 82, 100, 334, 372,
379, 402
The Adventures of a Madcap 363
Adžović, Ljubica 133, 136, 380, 392
Aferim! 88, 264, 352, 379
d'Albert, Eugen 368
Aleksić, Milosav 6, 254, 371, 386
Alimanović, Senada 133, 136, 383
Amato, Pio 133, 382
El amor brujo 99, 383
Amzić, Jakup 196, 208, 384
Andere, Jacqueline 103
And Hope to Die 100, 379
And the Violins Stopped Playing 88,
252, 379
Andonov, Ivan 366
Angelo, My Love 99, 133, 278–279, 301,
379, 396
Ántico, Sebastián 142, 393
*Antigypsyism: a film series about Sinti
and Roma and Antigypsyism* 45,
379
Anton, Karel 72, 328, 340, 365
Aranda, Vicente 366
Arentsz, Arent 253
Argentina, Imperio 128, 130, 327, 369,
381, 382
Arvidson, Linda 55, 379
Audry, Jacqueline 324, 366, 380
Augustová, Olga 365
Augustsén, Jonas Selberg 264, 352,
384
An Awful Moment 59, 380
Bacon, Lloyd 363
Baklava 84, 380
Balfe, Michael William 80, 151, 367
Bango Vassil 228–229, 375, 380
Baños, Ricardo de 149
Bara, Theda 196
The Barefoot Contessa 196, 380, 381
Batley, Ernest G. 361
*A Beech Wood with Gypsies Round a
Campfire* 253
Bellamy, George 360
Besuden, Eike 333, 384
Betta the Gypsy 46, 70, 100, 267–268,
364, 372, 380
Billy's Bulldog 360
The Birth of a Nation 60, 62
Bittová, Iva 132–134, 327, 390
Black Cat, White Cat xi, 4, 99,
123–124, 133–134, 137, 208–209,

Index of Persons and Works

- 213–214, 309, 317, 324, 325, 327,
375, 380, 405
- Black Swallow* 101, 325, 380
- Blank, Alexander 103
- Blood Wedding* 99, 381
- Bogarde, Dirk 327
- The Bohemian Girl* (1843), opera 80,
83, 151, 367
- The Bohemian Girl* (1922), film 151,
238, 340, 381
- The Bohemian Girl* (1936), film 83,
84–86, 100, 150–170, 189, 202, 287,
290, 309, 314, 325, 334, 354, 367,
373–374, 381, 397, 412
- von Bolváry, Géza 366
- Bor, Paulus 81
- Borat* 105, 138, 312–313, 381, 413
- Brats* 84, 88, 352, 381
- Bread and TV* 84, 141–142, 206, 411
- Breistein, Rasmus 45–46, 232,
234–236, 328, 366, 371, 376, 384
- The Brilliant Biograph: Earliest Moving
Images of Europe* (1897–1902) 44,
381
- Brondukov, Boryslav 295, 369, 377
- Brooke, Van Dyke 360
- Brueghel the Elder, Jan 253
- Bruhn, Johanne 233, 236, 376, 384
- Bruno, Corbucci 287, 324
- Budnik, Jowita 197, 239–241, 243,
247–249, 251, 369, 376, 377, 389
- Bunn, Alfred 83
- A Burlesque on Carmen* 125, 381
- Busch, Mae 155
- Cabanne, W. Christy 59
- Calvert, Phyllis 128, 327, 388
- A Camp of Zingaree Gypsies* 44
- Campbell, Eric 363, 392
- Campement de tziganes, Roumanie*
253
- Cano, Fanny 103
- Cansino, Antonio 132
- Cansino, Eduardo 132
- Capellani, Albert 334
- La caraque blonde* 324, 380
- Caravan* 292
- Cardinale, Claudia 327
- “Carmen” (1845), tale 18–20, 39, 80,
93, 102, 335, 367, 395, 398
- Carmen* (1915), film 196
- Carmen* (1918), film 70, 100, 287, 325,
367, 381
- Carmen* (1983), film 100, 381
- Carmen* (2003), film 101, 381
- Carmen Comes Home* 328, 382
- Carmen de la Triana* 100, 381
- Carmen proibita* 287, 382
- Carmen’s Pure Love* 328, 382
- Carpignano, Jonas 133, 382
- de Cervantes Saavedra, Miguel 52,
73–75, 79–81, 83, 85–86, 93, 96,
127, 151, 238, 325–326, 339, 367,
395, 411, 413
- Cevrevski, Jordanco 254
- “Chaje Shukarije” 313
- Chakraborty, Rahul 140, 384
- Chaplin, Charlie 1, 72, 125, 213, 234,
363–364, 381, 392, 401, 412
- Chernaya, Lala 133, 134, 270, 387
- Chernev, Nedelcho 340, 385
- The Child Stealers* 60
- Children of the Forest* 361
- Chocolat* 105, 382
- A Ciambra* 99, 133, 382
- “Cinderella” 28
- Clément, René 366
- Coca-Cozma, Miruna 88, 389
- Cohen, Sasha Baron 138, 312–313, 381
- Coleby, A.E. 72, 360, 361, 367, 380, 390
- Combermere, Edward 70, 364, 372
- Comedia ilamada medora* 73
- Connolly, Bobby 118–119, 373, 389
- Cooper, Gladys 151, 238, 381
- Coppola, Francis 213, 404
- Cortés, Joaquín 196, 385
- Costea, Marcel 133–134, 304–305,
377–378, 389
- Costner, Kevin 28
- The Counts of Svansta* 138–139

- Courbet, Jean Désiré Gustave 127
 Crabtree, Arthur 366
 Crevenna, Alfredo 102–103
Cuando las Cortés de Cádiz 128, 368
 Curtis, Michael 196
- Daddy Daycare* 105, 382
Dances with Wolves 28
 Danet, Jean 92, 373, 386
Dark and Bright (1936) 100, 127–128, 287, 324–325, 327, 334, 368, 382
Dark and Bright (1954) 100, 127–128, 324–325, 334, 368, 383
Dark Eyes 104, 328
Darkness I Leave You 368
 Dass, Angélica 26–27, 399
 Daumier, Honoré-Victorin 127
The Deathless Woman 44
 Deitch, Donna 28
 Delannoy, Jean 89, 92, 373, 386
 Dellal, Jasmine 206, 393
 Delon, Alain 369
 De Mill, Cecil B. 234
 Depp, Johnny 130, 369, 382, 389
Desert Hearts 28
 De Sica, Vittorio 213
Devils, Devils 101, 334, 383
 Dieterle, William 88, 90, 372
 Dietrich, Marlene 131, 196, 239–240, 290–291, 369, 384, 392, 398, 410
 “Djelem, Djelem” 310
 Dodevski, Goran 254
 Dodson, Mary Kay 291
The Dog Outwits the Kidnappers 71
 Doga, Eugene 276, 310–312
Don Álvaro; o la fuerza del sino 80
Don César de Bazan 80
 Dostoevsky, Fyodor 274, 396
Double Indemnity 195
 Down, Lesley-Anne 89, 91, 372–373
 Drabløs, Edvard 236, 376
Drama in a Gypsy Camp near Moscow 99, 123, 199, 265–267, 328, 383
Drei Birken auf der Heide 5, 20, 100, 371, 383
- Duh Babe Ilonke* 287, 352, 388
 Dujmović, Davor 129, 254, 369, 392
 Dulché, Yolanda Vargas 102
Dumb Sagacity 71
 Dumont, Danielle 92, 373
 Dušek, Dušan 276, 403
 Duvall, Robert 133, 141, 279, 301, 366, 379
- “Ederlezi” 313
 Edgren, Gustaf 297
 Egan, Gladys 55, 56, 372
El Paso 88, 352, 383
An Episode in the Life of an Iron Picker 45, 133, 134, 135–137, 384
 Erfurth, Ulrich 5, 371, 383
The Eternal Jew 264, 384
 Evans, Angelo 133, 278, 301, 379
 Evans, Jean 114, 272, 386
The Exploits of Elaine, Ep. 8. “The Reptile Under the Flowers” 362
- Das falsche Wort: Wiedergutmachung an Zigeunern (Sinti) in Deutschland?* 88, 383
Farbenlehre 29
Father 211
 Fehmiu, Bekim 6, 129, 196, 254, 326–327, 369, 371, 386, 396
 Feldmann, Maximilian 137, 392, 400
Fiddlers 102, 310
The Firefly 70, 361
 Fitzhamon, Lewin 71, 72, 122, 359, 360, 361, 366, 382, 388, 390
 Fliegauß, Benedek 47, 88, 352, 387
 Flores, Lola 129, 369, 382, 389
Flower of the Tisza 100, 368, 384
 Foley, George 364
 Folkson, Sheree 263, 298, 343, 352, 386
 Ford, John 213
La forza del destino 80
Frau Roggenschaubs Reise 140, 384
 Frič, Martin 42, 387

Index of Persons and Works

- Gad, Urban 335, 366
Gadjo dilo 8, 47, 252, 382
 Gainsborough, Thomas 253
The Garbage Helicopter 263–264, 352, 384
 Gardner, Ava 196, 327, 369, 380
 Gasnier, Louis J. 362
 Gatlif, Tony 8, 47, 49, 88, 125, 126, 298, 343, 352, 382, 387, 388, 392, 400
 Gavrilov, Vsevolod 295, 377
 Gazzo, Michael 172, 374
Ghetto No.1 206, 384
 Giancarli, Luigi 73
Gipsy – Die Geschichte des Boxers Johann Rukeli Trollmann 333, 384
Gilda 195, 196
 Gilliam, Terry 326
 Giovanni, José 366
 “Gypsies” (1815), poem 39
Gipsy Anne 45–46, 100, 229, 231–237, 267, 328, 334, 340, 355, 367, 371, 376, 384, 399, 405, 408
Gipsy Magic 99, 254, 307–308, 325, 338, 384
La gitana blanca 149, 324
 “La gitanilla” 52, 73–81, 88, 93, 127, 151, 238, 325, 339–340, 367
 Gladik, Ulli 88, 389
 Glaser, Matt 171
 de Gobineau, Joseph Arthur 170
The Godfather 187, 191, 213, 404
 von Goethe, Johann Wolfgang 30, 73
 van Gogh, Vincent Willem 127, 253
 Gogol Bordello 11
 Goldblat, Moisei 133, 387
Golden Earrings 131, 239, 240, 290–291, 298, 300, 307, 340, 343, 384, 398, 408
 Gorky, Maxim 101, 125, 369
 Gott, Barbara 364
 Grappelli, Stéphane 187, 312
 Griffith, David Wark 28, 52, 55–62, 71, 122, 327, 360, 366, 372, 379–380, 389, 397, 402
 Grigoriu, Grigore 25, 102, 295, 327, 369, 377, 390
 Grisman, David 187, 312
Großstadt-Zigeuner 333, 385
 Grunwalsky, Ferenc 206, 389
Gucha – Distant Trumpet 101, 134, 219–227, 229, 232, 234, 237, 283–284, 295, 302, 312, 340, 355, 375, 385, 408, 410
 Guillén, Pascual 127, 368
 Guimerá, Àngel 368
 Guthrie, James 253
 “The Gypsies” (1824), poem 40, 102, 126, 267, 407
The Gypsies; or The Abduction (1907), film 360
Gypsies (1921), film 72, 328, 340, 365
Gypsies (1935), film 269–272
La Gypsy (1839), ballet 80
The Gypsy (1967), film 102
 “The Gypsy.” *At Each Kilometer* (1969), TV series 105, 340, 385
Gypsy (1979), TV series 103
Gypsy (2000), film 99, 196, 385
The Gypsy and the Gentleman 100, 200–204, 211, 215, 287, 334, 368, 374
The Gypsy Charmer 104–105, 129, 386
The Gypsy Fires are Burning for Daylight’s Past and Gone 253
 “Gypsy Magic – On the Set/The Making of (1996)” 308
Gypsy Wildcat 334, 340, 386
Gypsy Woman 263, 298, 343, 352, 386
 Hajdú, Eszter 88, 387
The Halt at a Gypsy Camp 253
 Hanák, Dušan 132–133, 141, 276, 286, 327, 366, 390, 405
 Hansen, Harry Roeck 139
 Hardy, Oliver 83, 85, 151, 155–165, 167–169, 369, 381, 397, 403, 407
 Harlan, Veit 204
 Harvey, Harry 363
 Hasimović Husnija 1–2, 133, 371

- de Havilland, Olivia 237
 Hayden, Sterling 172, 179, 374, 387
 Hayworth, Rita 132, 196, 369, 388
 Hepburn, Katharine 369
 Hepworth, Cecil 71, 390
Her Mother's Image 360
 von der Heyde, Annette 24,
 Hilten, Hubert 5, 371
 Hippler, Fritz 264, 384
 Hopkins, Anthony 369
 Hirsch, Judd 190, 200, 274, 278
 Hoffmann, E.T.A. 73
 Hoger, Hannelore 140, 384
 Hood, Darla 154
 Hooke, Nina Warner 368
 Hopkins, Anthony 89, 369, 386
 Horne, James W. 151, 153, 157, 159,
 202, 373–374, 381
 von Hören, Andreas 45, 379
 Hoskins, Bob 88, 125, 126, 352, 390
Hot Blood 99, 114–115, 196, 227,
 272–273, 287, 307, 373, 386, 404
 Hugo, Victor 18–19, 39, 67, 80, 88–89,
 93–94, 125, 368, 395
The Hunchback of Notre-Dame,
 novel 18–20, 34, 39, 52, 67, 80, 88,
 94, 101, 368, 395
The Hunchback of Notre-Dame (1939),
 film 88–90, 93, 101, 368, 372, 386
The Hunchback of Notre-Dame (1956),
 film 89, 91–93, 101, 368, 373, 386
The Hunchback of Notre-Dame (1982),
 film 89, 91, 93, 101, 368, 372–373,
 386
The Hunchback of Notre-Dame (1996),
 film 93–94, 101, 227, 368, 373, 386
Humanæ 26–27
 Hütz, Eugene 11
I am a Gypsy 99, 268–269, 386
I Even Met Happy Gypsies xii, xv, 6,
 20, 42, 99, 129, 133, 187, 196, 206,
 254, 273–276, 287, 301, 310, 316,
 325, 326, 334, 371, 386, 408
 Ignjić, Dragan 312
 Ikonen, Ansa 104, 327, 392
In a Lonely Place 195
Intolerance 60
Into the West 316–317
 Iovkov, Iordan 325
 “Isabella von Ägypten” 39
Isabella the Gypsy Duchess 287, 324
 Inslee, Charles 55, 56, 372
It's my fault 103, 125
 Ivanova, Katina 254

¡Ja me maaten...! 101, 387
Jánošík 42, 70, 105, 335, 387
 Janson, Kristofer 45, 367
Jassy, novel 368
Jassy, film 100, 287, 293, 368, 387
 Jauch, Thomas xii
Jealous Fools 82
Jessie, the Stolen Child 360
 Jessop, Frank E. 15
 Johnson, Arthur V. 55, 59, 379
 Jovanović, Gordana 133, 386
 Jude, Radu 88, 264, 352, 379
Judgement in Hungary 88, 387
Jud Süß 204, 399
 “Jump Jim Crow” 119–120
Just the Wind 47, 88, 352, 387

 Kachur, Igor 227–228, 375, 390
 Kaleev, Angel 143–144
 Kalinin, A. 103
 Kalling, Ivar 297
Kampf-Geschwader 51 “Edelweiss” 24,
 405
 Kędzierawska, Dorota 334, 383
 Keisuke, Kinoshita 328, 381, 382
 Khanzhonkov, Alexander 123, 199,
 266–267, 328, 383
Kidnapped by Gypsies 360
Kidnapped for Revenge 360
*Kinder des Windes – Zigeuner in
 Europa* 206
King of the Gypsies, novel 171,
 277–278, 369

Index of Persons and Works

- King of the Gypsies*, film 99, 150, 171–197, 200, 215, 227, 231, 277–278, 307, 312, 314–315, 334, 354, 369, 374, 387, 400, 401, 407, 412
- The King of Trollebo* 297
- Kiš, Milan 341
- Knight, Steven 88, 263, 352, 386, 390
- Knoles, Harley 151, 238, 340, 381
- Knowles, Bernard 366
- Kobayashi, Toshiko 328, 381, 382
- Korkoro* 252, 387
- Koštana*, play 369
- Koštana*, TV film 101, 369, 387
- Kos-Krauze, Joanna 197, 237, 238, 240–241, 244, 248, 251, 285, 366, 376, 389
- Krauze, Krzysztof 197, 237, 238, 240–241, 244, 248, 251, 366, 376, 389
- Kusturica, Emir xi, 1–4, 20, 122–124, 133, 137–138, 141, 208–215, 254–255, 280–283, 302, 309, 312, 316, 325, 327, 366, 371, 375, 380, 392, 396–397, 400–405, 410
- Lăcătuș, Hagi 133, 389
- Laković, Predrag 254
- Lambert, George 253
- Landscape with Gypsies* 253
- Lang, Fritz 201
- The Last Camp* 99, 133, 287, 387
- Laughton, Charles 88–89, 386
- Laurel, Stan 83, 85, 151, 155–165, 167–169, 369, 381, 397, 403, 407
- Laverick, June 203
- Lawrence, Florence 59, 380, 389
- Lawrence, Margery 368
- Lederer, George W. 364
- Leisen, Mitchell 366, 384
- Lenau, Nikolaus 40
- Lentrodt, Kai 305, 377, 389
- Levinson, Barry 242
- Lewis, Mitchell 153, 373
- Lievens, Jan 81
- The Little Gypsy Witch* 287, 352, 388
- The Little Blue Cap* 360
- The Little Prince* xii
- Lockwood, Margaret 369
- Lofts, Nora 368
- Lola, the Coalgirl* 100, 128, 368, 388
- Lollobrigida, Gina 89, 92, 369, 373, 386
- Longfellow, Malvian 364
- The Long Way Home* 84, 388
- Losey, Joseph 196, 200, 202–203, 327, 366, 374, 385
- The Lost Child* 61
- Loteanu, Emil xi, 24, 101–103, 122, 133, 141, 294–295, 310, 327, 366, 377, 390
- The Loves of Carmen* (1927) 100, 130–131, 196, 287, 388
- The Loves of Carmen* (1948) 83, 100, 196, 388
- Lothar, Rudolph 368
- Lowlands*, opera 368
- Lowlands*, film 100, 368, 388, 412
- Lubitsch, Ernst 70, 325, 366, 381
- Lucas, Wilfred 59
- Lucia, Luis 366
- Luhrmann, Baz 40, 391
- Lumière brothers 148
- M 201
- Maas, Peter 171, 277, 369
- Mácha, Karel Hynek 40, 365
- Das Mädchen ohne Vaterland* 100, 287, 391
- Das Mädchen vom Hof* 100, 383
- Madonna of the Seven Moons*, novel 368
- Madonna of the Seven Moons*, film 128, 292, 322, 324, 327, 337, 341, 368, 388, 403
- “Makar Chudra” 102, 369
- Manasijević, Aleksandra 220, 221, 375, 385
- The Man Who Killed Don Quixote* 326
- Manet, Édouard 127
- Manić, Aleksandar 134
- Mankiewicz, Joseph L. 196

- Manojlović, Miki 254
Maritana 80
- Marković, Marko 134, 219, 227, 312, 375, 385
- Marshal, Alan 90, 372
- Matveev, E. 102
The May Fairy 72, 328
- McCutcheon, Wallace 71, 358, 391
Mein Revier xii
- Meissner, Maja 240, 376
- Méliès, Marie-Georges-Jean 148
- Mercouri, Melina 130, 202–203, 369, 374, 385
- Mérimée, Prosper 18–19, 39, 80, 93, 102, 125, 170, 328, 335, 367, 395, 398
- Michell, Keith 201–203, 374, 385
- Mihai, Raisa 134, 389
- Mihăileanu, Radu 298, 343, 352, 392
- Mihajlovski, Toni 254
Mildred Pierce 195, 196
- Milland, Ray 131, 384
Minstrel Days 118–119, 373, 389
Miracle in Milan 213
- Mirga, Paloma 245, 248–251, 376–377
- Møller, Valdemar 68, 372
- Moholy-Nagy, László 333, 384
- Montez, María 370
Morena Clara, play 127, 368
Morena Clara (1936) 100, 127–128, 287, 324–325, 327, 334, 368, 382
Morena Clara (1954) 100, 127–128, 324–325, 334, 368, 383
- Moreno, Antonio 155
- Mortimer, Roz 44
The Most Dangerous Game 201
A Mother 206, 389
- Mujić, Nazif 134–137, 383, 407
Mule Train and Gypsies in a Forest 253
My Friend the Gypsy 287, 389
- Natasha* 88, 389
The Natural 242
- Negri, Pola 130, 370, 381
- Neill, Roy William 334, 366, 386
- Nelević, Mladen 220, 385
Nelly's Adventure 84, 133–134, 302–308, 377–378, 389
- Nestler, Peter xvii, 88, 393
- Nicoara, Mona 88, 389
- Nielsen, Aasta (Norway) 46, 234–235, 370–371, 376
- Nielsen, Asta (Denmark) 70, 370, 391
- Niemirska, Joanna 247, 377
- Nikolova, Pepa 129, 370, 385, 391
- van Noordt, Jan 81
Notre-Dame de Paris (1911) 334
Novelas ejemplares 74, 413
- Novello, Ivor 151, 238, 381
- Nvota, Juraj 327, 390
- Nykvist, Sven 187
- O'Brien, Edmond 90, 372
- O'Hara, Maureen 89–91, 93, 372, 386
Oh Pain, Little Pain, Pain 100, 389
Olympia 245
- O'Toole, Annette 186–187, 231, 374
Our School 88, 389
- Palacios, Manuel 196, 385
- Palizzi, Giuseppe 253
- Palmer, Greg 118–119, 142, 373, 413
- Palo, Tauno 104, 327, 392
- Papusza* 101, 197, 231, 232, 237–253, 284–285, 314, 315, 325, 334, 340, 355, 376–377, 389, 399, 409
- Pawlicki, Antoni 242–243, 249, 376–377, 389
The Peachbasket Hat 59, 360, 389
Peaky Blinders 45, 88, 263, 352, 390
- Pejović, Dejan 312
- Pemán, José María 128, 368
The People of the Simlång Valley 268
- Pesić, Slavoljub 221, 222, 375
- Petrović, Aleksandar xii, 6, 42, 122, 133, 141, 188–189, 196, 206, 254, 273–276, 286, 301, 310, 316, 366, 371, 386, 409
- Pichel, Irving 201
- Pickford, Mary 59

Index of Persons and Works

- Pierson, Frank 171–172, 179, 186–187,
191–192, 194, 197, 200, 230–231,
277–278, 374, 387
*The Pilgrimage of Students Peter and
Jacob* 101, 196, 334, 390
Pink Dreams 100, 132–133, 276–277,
301, 327, 341, 342, 390
Pištěk, Theodor 365
Pitt, Brad 130, 316, 370, 391
Pokorný, Ivan 206, 384
Popov, Alexo 84, 380
Popov, Stole 134, 141, 254, 308, 338,
366, 384
Porter, Edwin S. 60, 71, 358, 391, 408
The Portrait 361
Potts, Annie 187
Preciosa 80
Puncheva, Boriána 84, 388
Purviance, Edna 363, 381, 392
Pushkin, Alexander 40, 102, 125–126,
267, 407
Pustovit, Anastasiya 228, 375, 390
- Queen Elizabeth 29
Queen of the Gypsies xi, 24, 99,
101–103, 129, 133, 141, 227, 276,
287, 293–295, 301, 310, 325, 327,
334, 369, 377, 390
Quinn, Anthony 89, 370, 386
Quintero, Antonio 127, 368
- The Raggedy Rawney* 88, 352, 390
Ramati, Alexander 88, 379
Rasp, Alfons 365
Ray, Nicholas 114–115, 366, 373, 386,
409
Raymond, Charles 46, 70, 364, 366,
372, 380
Record 310
Renoir, Pierre-Auguste 127
Rescued by Rover 51, 60–61, 70–71,
328, 359, 390, 397, 398
Rescued from an Eagle's Nest 61
Redžepova, Esma 11, 313
Remember 227–228, 375, 390
Revision 88, 390
Rey, Antonia 172, 374
Rey, Florián 128, 327, 366, 381, 382
Rice, Thomas Dartmouth 199–122,
142
Riefenstahl, Leni 245, 366, 368, 370,
388
Rilke, Rainer Maria 137
del Río, Dolores 130–131, 196, 370,
388, 401
Ritchie, Guy 316, 391
de Rivas, Duque 80
Rivieralandschap met zigeuners 253
Roberts, Eric 186–187, 231, 278, 370,
374, 387, 400
Rogers, Charley 151, 153, 157, 159,
202, 373–374, 381
A Romany Spy 100, 287, 335, 391
A Romany Tragedy 59
Romashkov, Vladimir 199, 328
Romeo and Juliet 224
Roming 99, 325, 391
A Roof 100, 391
*Les roulottes, campement de bohémiens
aux environs d'Arles* 253
Roumen, Frank 44, 381
Rousseau, Henri 127
Rubia Levy, Marga 70, 267, 364, 370,
372, 380
de Rueda, Lope 73
Runaway Romany 364
Rusanienco, Petro 227
Russell, Jane 114, 386
Rydberg-Eklöf, Signe 297
- Saas, Margit 5, 371
de Saint-Exupéry, Antoine xii
Sali, Elvira 134
Salingová, Sally 341
Samardžić, Ljubiša 196, 208, 384
Sandvig, Anders 332
Sarandon, Susan 187, 312
Särkkä, Toivo 104, 327
Saura, Carlos 366
Der Scheeren-Schleiffer 294

- Scheffner, Philip 88, 379, 390
 Schiller, Johann Christoph Friedrich
 von 73
 Schneider, Yevgeni 133, 387
 Schoedsack, E.B. 201
 Schuster, Harold D. 70, 393
 Scurea, Ion Sandri 294, 377
 Seitz, George B. 362
 Severdžan, Bajram 134, 380, 384
 Seybold, Katrin 88, 383
 Shakespeare, William 28, 224
 Sharlandzhiev, Lyubomir 340, 385
 Shields, Brooke 187, 312
 Shijak, Arna 254
 Shilkret, Nathaniel 312
The Shutka Book of Records 134
The Sinful Apostles of Love 103, 125
 Sianosyan, Serine 228, 375, 390
Sissi: The Fateful Years of an Empress
 105, 391
 Siversen, Vladimir 123, 199, 267, 383
 Skjønberg, Henny 233
 Slichenko, Nikolaj 126
 Smith, C. Aubrey 151
Snatch 105, 316, 391
 Sollima, Stefano 197
The Spanish Gypsy 59
 Stanković, Bora 369
Stenka Razin 199, 266, 328
 Stoenescu, Eustatiu 253
 Stoev, Georgi 84, 141, 206, 381
Stolen by Gypsies 60, 61, 71, 358–359,
 391
 Streisand, Barbra 241
Strictly Ballroom 40, 391
Suburra 197
 Sundquist, Gerry 90, 373
 Svoboda, Hugo 365
 Symo, Margit 370

 Takamine, Hideko 328, 381, 382
 Tanović, Danis 45, 133, 135, 383
 Tarkovsky, Andrey 212–213
 Taylor, Stanner 60, 379
Telebasura no es realidad 142

 Tene, Steve 171
Terra baixa 368
 Thamar, Tilda 370
Tiefland, film 100, 368, 388, 412
Tiefland, opera 368
 von Theumer, Ernst Ritter 366
 Thiemann, Flora Li 305–306, 378, 389
Three 310
 Tilbury, Zeffie 153, 373
Time of the Gypsies xi, 1–2, 20, 99,
 129, 133–134, 138, 209, 211–214,
 254, 280–283, 287, 302, 309, 312,
 313, 316, 327, 371, 392
 Todd, Thelma 153–154, 370, 381
 Todorović, Bora 254
 Todorović, Srđan 209, 375
 Tomá, Svetlana 25, 102, 129, 141, 294,
 301, 327, 370, 377, 390
To the Hilt 134
Touch of Evil 105, 196, 392
 Tourneur, Maurice 82
A Tragic Love 59
Train of Life 298, 343, 352, 392
 Trajanova, Vera 228–229, 375, 380
Transylvania 298, 392
 Trousdale, Gary 93–94, 227, 373, 386
 Trpkova, Sinolicka 254
 Tuchner, Michael 89, 91, 372, 386
 Tulio, Teuvo 104, 129, 328, 370, 385
 Turner, Joseph 253
 Tveito, Einar 233, 235–236, 376, 384
 Tvinde, Lars 233, 235–236, 376
The Twin Triangle 363
Two Little Waifs 359–360
 Tyc, Zdeněk 84, 88, 352, 381, 383

 Ullmo, Kristine 233, 236, 376
Under a Gypsy Moon 15
Under the Joke 330

 Vaala, Valentin 104, 328, 366, 370, 385
The Vagabond 72, 125, 363, 392, 401
The Vagabond's Waltz 100, 104, 327,
 392
Valentina 137, 392, 400

Index of Persons and Works

- Vaudeville* 118–119, 142, 373, 413
Vazov, Ivan 330
Vejdělek, Jiří 325, 391
Verdi, Giuseppe 80
Vidor, Charles 83, 196, 327, 366, 388
Vihanová, Drahomíra 196, 334, 390
Vishnevskii, Dufunia 103, 125, 126, 391
Vitanov, Milen 228–229, 375, 380
Vučo, Olivera 196, 254, 326, 370, 386
- Wajs, Bronisława 238–239
Wallace, Vincet 80
Wallén, Sigurd 138–139
Walsh, Raoul 130, 388
Warsitz, Yvonne 45, 379
Weary Willie Kidnaps a Child 61
Weiss, Fernando 140
Weiss, Romana 140
Welles, Orson 196, 213, 392
Wells, Jacqueline 164
Wessel, Kai 140, 384
Wessely, Dominik 84, 133, 302, 389, 413
What the Daisy Said 59
When the Road Bends... Tales of a Gypsy Caravan 206, 393
White, Leo 363, 370
“The White Swallow” 325
Whitney, Helene 90, 372
Who Framed Roger Rabbit 305
- Wilde Cornel 114, 386
Williamson, James 359
Wings of the Morning 69, 287, 328, 393
Winters, Shelley 172, 179, 374, 387
Wise, Kirk 93–94, 227, 373, 386
Wolff, Pius Alexander 80
Wooded Landscape with Gypsies, Evening 253
Wordsworth, William 39
Wouwerman, Philips 253
- Yentl* 241
Yesenia (1970), telenovela 102–103
Yesenia (1971), film 102–103
Yonkov, Mitko 143–144, 335
Yo no soy trapacero 142, 393, 407
- Zangenberg, Einar 361
Zemeckis, Robert 305
Zigeuner sein 88, 393
Zigeuneren Raphael xvi, 52–53, 62–71, 100, 334, 372, 393
La Zingana 73
Živojinović, Bata 254
Zoltán, Greguss 370
Zorn, Michael 368
Zulić, Mirsad 254
Zwischen Strom und Steppe, novel 368
Zwischen Strom und Steppe, film 100, 368, 384

3

Antiziganismusforschung interdisziplinär Interdisciplinary Studies in Antigypsyism

The study ventures into a topic that has been so far largely neglected in film studies: the 'gypsy' phantasm on the big screen. It reconstructs the history of 'gypsy' representations in film since the birth of the medium providing a systematic film-theoretical analysis of their aesthetic and social functions. Based on a corpus of over 150 works from European and US cinema, it is shown that 'gypsy'-themed feature films share the pattern of an 'ethno-racial' masquerade, irrespective of the place and time of their origin. The author thus expands the research, concentrated until now in the field of literature, with another art form, film, opening up new dimensions of (popular) cultural antigypsyism.



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