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

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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 history[70] 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. Siversen 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 Siversen 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 endurable, 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 *soupçon* of exoticism" (108). Clearly, the case of Rita Hayworth[77] 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 Lăcătuş 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.

- 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 Semsa 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 Semsa 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

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 no 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 ethic 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 transvestite 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 perpetrator[84] 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'.