8

Claims to Truth and Authentication Strategies

— ※ —

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:

- 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 film[127] 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 Siversen, 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 afford-ing scenic effects equal to those of any other country. (…) Marga la Rubia plays the title *rôle* of Betta. Regarded by the usual stan-dards of flaxen-haired lead, this actress fails to comply with conventional demands, but as a true picture of gipsy life, as a genuine character study, she throws her own personality away and becomes a living, vivacious, true-to-reality vagabond. ("Betta the Gipsy" 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 gipsies 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

271

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, unfilmed 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 pro-gramme 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 empa-thy 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

277

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

283

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 para-
texts, 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 possi-
ble 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 distributer) 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)
Das Mädchen ohne Vaterland (1912) (The Girl Without Fatherland)	*A Romany Spy*
Carmen (1918)	*Gypsy Blood*
The Loves of Carmen (1927)	*Die Liebe vom Zigeuner stammt*
Последний табор (1935) (The Last Camp)	*Gypsies*
The Bohemian Girl (1936)	*Lustig ist das Zigeunerleben*
Morena Clara (1936)	*The Fair-Skinned Gypsy*
Wings of the Morning (1937)	*Zigeunerprinzessin*
Jassy (1947)	*Zigeunerblut*
Carmen proibita/Siempre Carmen (1953)	*Die Liebe vom Zigeuner stammt*
Můj prítel Fabián (1953)	*My Friend the Gypsy*
Hot Blood (1956)	*L'ardente gitane*
The Gypsy and the Gentleman (1958)	*Das Teufelsweib*
Skupljači perja (1967) (The Feather Collectors)	*I Even Met Happy Gypsies*
Isabella Duchessa dei Diavoli (1969)	*Isabella the Gypsy Duchess*
Табор уходит в небо (1975) (The Camp Goes to the Skies)	*The Gypsy Camp Vanishes into the Blue / Gypsies Are Found Near Heaven* *Queen of the Gypsies / Das Zigeunerlager zieht in den Himmel*
Dom za vešanje (1988) (Home for Hanging)	*Time of the Gypsies/ Die Zeit der Zigeuner*
Duh Babe Ilonke (2011) (Granny Ilonka's Spirit)	*The Little Gypsy Witch/ Manusha – Die kleine Romahexe*

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 'gypsyness' 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 research-ing 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 travellers 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:

> <u>WAGON ENTRANCE</u> – (DAWN) – <u>Set & Plate</u> – <u>Transparency</u> (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 camp-fire, 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 Angelo[137] 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, Duvall 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, Duvall 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.

305

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 underclass 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 *Gipsy 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 per-form 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 Moldovian 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 'gypsyness' 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 "Chaje 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 'gypsyness', 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 'gypsyness', 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).