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Yo no soy trapacero

On the Variety of Human Types among the Roma

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*No author and no reader changes the meaning of words.
The struggle of discourses changes their meaning, and so
the combinations in which we put words together matters,
and the order of propositions matters: through these
whatever our intentions, words take on meaning.*

Diane Macdonell, *Theories of Discourse* (51)

Before focusing on the racialisation of ‘gypsy’ figures in classical works of art, we need to consider the Spanish video clip *Yo no soy trapacero* (2015, Dir. Sebastián Ántico) designed in a similar way to *Humanae*. To my knowledge, this is the only film of documentary value that testifies to the diversity of individuals within the Roma community. It has been commissioned by the Spanish State Council of the Roma People and is part of their campaign aimed at changing the discriminatory definition of the word ‘gitano’ in the Spanish dictionary¹¹ (Melchor). In the film, ten Roma children, nine of whom are to be seen on **Fig. 3**, introduce themselves by name, sharing some of their personal interests and thoughts. I will leave the topic of the campaign aside to examine instead the camera work and the casting. It is notable that the children are filmed in the same setting and with the same lighting set-up: one after the other, they take a seat in an armchair placed against a grey background. The camera shows each child in a close-up and in a medium

11 In 2016, a follow-up video called *Telebasura no es realidad* (*Trash TV is not reality*) came out, featuring the same protagonists and campaigning for a dignified treatment of Roma in the media. Both videos are available on *Youtube*.

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Fig. 3. Assembled screenshots from the campaign video *Yo no soy trapacero* (2015, Dir. Sebastián Ántico): nine of the ten children featured in the short film.

shot. Similar to *Humanae*, the film creates through the montage an overall portrait of the Roma, a gallery of individuals with very different combinations of hair type, eye colour and skin tone. There are darker and fairer types, there is also one light-blond girl with pale blue eyes. With its choice of cast, the film is a true exception. There are hardly any other cinematic works of art that place such an emphasis on the variety of human types already in the casting phase, nor are there many films that portray Roma as unique individuals in the modus of normality. By keeping this one collective portrait of the Roma in mind, in the following sections, I shall try to answer the question: Why are 'gypsy' figures, in spite of the variety of human types among the Roma, imagined and characterised as a rule as 'non-white' or 'black'?