

Antiziganism

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What's in a Word?

Edited by

Jan Selling, Markus End,
Hristo Kyuchukov, Pia Laskar
and Bill Templer

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PREFACE

HRISTO KYUCHUKOV

The present volume contains papers presented at the International Conference at Uppsala University's Hugo Valentine Centre, organised by Jan Selling in November 2013. The conference was entitled “Antiziganism. What's in a Word?”

“Antiziganism,” “antigypsyism,” “anti-Romaism”... these are names given in many European countries to the processes/phenomena of discrimination, racism, ignorance, neglect and marginalisation against the “conceptual Gypsy.” In the Romani language, there is not a word to designate all the forms of discrimination and racism. Among the Roma human rights activists and scholars for the last 20 to 25 years, there has been an ongoing discussion about what is the right word to be used for these phenomena, or whether there should be a Romani word instead. For the time being, most Roma activists and non-Roma use the terms “antiziganism” or/and “antigypsyism,” in English and similar terms in other European national languages.

The prejudices and racism against the “conceptual Gypsy” actually are projected on real Roma, and this takes on different forms:

- Individual/personal antigypsyism – when someone has negative or racist attitudes towards Roma;
- Institutionalised antigypsyism – when an institution engages in making racist comments or taking actions to harm Roma;
- Institutionalised personal antigypsyism – when a racist individual enjoys a level of power and position in an institution and presents her/his racist feelings on behalf of the institution which s/he represents.

The participants in the conference discussed almost all the forms of antigypsyism. Interesting research has been carried out using modern methods and doing critical analyses of different historical publications. All of this inquiry has provided new information and insights for the broader field of Romani studies.

Yet there were some issues not discussed at the conference: e.g. the forms of antigypsyism directed towards the Romani language and the forms of antigypsyism in the academic world. For the last two decades, the number of Roma scholars has been on the increase, and together with that the negative attitudes towards academics with a Roma ethnic background has also intensified. A Dean of Faculty in a Slovak university, whose department was engaged in a well-funded project on Roma integration, explained to me that she did not want “Gypsies” working in her department because “Gypsies always create problems.” For some non-Roma academics working on Roma issues, it seems it is preferable to work for or on “Gypsies,” but without “Gypsies” directly connected as researchers. Whether this is “conscious” or “unconscious” antigypsyism is hard to know, but it definitely affects the lives of Roma in negative ways and perpetuates the low status of Roma in academia. Most certainly this is also true when it comes to Roma teachers in the state schools in many countries as well.

The past two decades have also been fruitful in the field of Romani language – many new studies were carried out, many new findings, publications. Some countries recognised Romani as a minority language, it was introduced in schools and kindergartens as a “mother tongue.” However, all the attempts of standardisation of Romani, all the work on developing Romani to a written language were very often received with negative attitudes and comments on the language. In the linguistic literature, the negative attitude towards a language of group of people and their unfair treatment is termed “linguicism”:

Linguicism forms part of the hegemonic structure which permits the dominance of certain groups or classes and their language over others. Linguicism can be open (the agent does not try to hide it), conscious (the agent knows about it), visible (it is easy for non-agents to detect) and actively action-oriented. Or linguicism can be hidden, unconscious, invisible and passive (lack of support rather than active opposition). The latter is typical of the present-day education of indigenous and immigrant minorities in most Western countries (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson 1989: 456).

A striking recent example of linguicism comes from Bulgaria: one of the universities which had a Romani language program established in 2003 closed it down in 2010, because the National Agency for Accreditation of University programs “discovered” that “there is no such a thing as a Romani language.” This was just the opinion of one individual in Sofia who used his position at the National Agency for Accreditation of University Programs and was representing the institution, and presented

his own racism as a position of the institution. So that in the so-called Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005-2015), with education as one of the top priorities, “a country that is committed to working on the Roma inclusion stopped an initiative that was recommended by the Council of Europe and European Commission” (Kyuchukov 2013: xii).

These kinds of conferences are needed, as well as these kinds of publications. The more we talk and write about it, the more chances there are to combat all the forms of antigypsyism and to bring some positive change in the life of the people. I hope this publication will be one of them - it will make our societies better, more human, more empathetic and this Earth a better place for us all. Let us hope!

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INTRODUCTION

JAN SELLING

Research that deals with the discrimination, marginalisation and persecution of Roma¹ is an expanding but relatively new discipline. There are a few exceptions from the late 1960s and early 1970s, but broadly speaking, systematic research was not introduced until the late 1980s. There are also a number of concepts in use, such as antiziganism, antigypsyism, anti-Romaism and Romaphobia. None of these concepts, or their analogues in other languages, is universally accepted, and the approaches have developed in different national and disciplinary contexts without much cross-border or trans-disciplinary dialogue. How do we define and achieve knowledge about the topic? This complex was addressed at the international conference “Antiziganism: What’s in a word?” at the Hugo Valentin Centre, Uppsala University, 23-25 October 2013. Of the more than 40 papers presented at the conference, around one third have been chosen for inclusion in this volume. The contributions represent a wide range of approaches and contexts. To reflect the scholarly dialogue, each paper is supplemented by comment from another researcher.

The analytical and ethical appropriateness of the notion *antiziganism* as referring to a pejorative use by majority populations of “*tsigane*,” “*zigenare*,” “*Zigeuner*” (i.e. *antigypsyism* for contexts referring in the pejorative to gypsy, *gitano*, etc.) was a main topic at the conference and in many papers. This term will be used at an editorial level for the present volume. However, the view of each scholar will be made clear in the papers and reflected upon in the concluding remarks.

The volume begins with a keynote chapter by **Ian Hancock** containing a two-sided message: for the *Gadjé* (non-Romani) population to overcome

¹ This term as used in the conference title refers to the official EU and European Council terminology as an umbrella term that includes groups of people who share some cultural characteristics and a history of segregation in European societies, such as the Roma, Sinti, Travellers, Gens du voyage, Kalé, etc. The editors are aware of the fact that in some of the groups mentioned there is no consensus on this designation. The term Romanies, which is occasionally used in this volume, has basically the same designation but enjoys a wider acceptance.

its racism and for the Romanies to realise the necessity of education as “a passport to freedom.”

The main part of the book consists of four sections of papers, each paper supplemented by a discussant's comment. The first section looks at present-day implications of historical antiziganism. In the opening paper, **Wolfgang Wippermann** explores the “*longue durée*” of the phenomenon in the sense of a mentality and ideology directed against Roma and people labeled as Gypsies, for which he concludes that antiziganism (i.e. antigypsyism) is a necessary but problematic notion. In his comment, **Herbert Heuss** points out the disruptive continuity of the phenomenon and argues that antiziganism has not always been the primary cause behind the persecution of Roma. **Radmila Mladenova** analyses the function of Euro-centric representations of “gypsiness” in film and literature as projective identification, comparable to the blackface masquerade, but differing in their appearance. In my comment, I interpret her paper in a context of critical theory aiming at the core of racism, whereas **Margaret Greenfields'** supplementary comment discusses what practitioners can learn from cultural analysis. **Chalak Kaveh** analyses the Norwegian cases of “moral panic” directed against so-called Gypsies in the interwar period as well as today, showing how an “antiziganist arsenal” can be activated under very different historical circumstances. In my remarks, I discuss the paper as an indication that diachronic as well as synchronic comparison might be the most fruitful strategy for antiziganism research.

The second section focuses on Romani engagement and agency to counteract antiziganism. **Daniela Gress** analyses the strategies and goals of the early German Sinti and Roma civil rights movement. She concludes that it was the children of the survivors who managed the mobilisation that ultimately had a positive impact on the political and social position of German Sinti and Roma. **David Gaunt's** comment raises the issue that the movement in West Germany, which was originally Sinti, only later came to include Roma, and questions whether the media breakthrough of the movement in the 1980s reached beyond the West German elite. **Rainer Schulze**, investigating the case of Kosovo, shows how oral accounts from the Roma community can provide an alternative narrative to that of mainstream perception and ultimately contest antiziganism. In his comment, Ian Hancock discusses the reception of Romanies as “perpetual outsiders” in Europe as a primary cause for discrimination over the centuries.

The third section addresses theoretical concepts of research. **Martin Holler's** theme is the virtually unknown fact that the notion of antiziganism was used already in the Soviet Union of the 1920s/30s, though in a sense which would today be read as anti-Romaism. Holler's

findings prove those critiques wrong that stated that the term antiziganism had been a neologism, only copying the term antisemitism. In his comment, Herbert Heuss elaborates further on the nature of the “affirmative action” of the early Soviet Union and the more general issue of the “otherfication” of Roma in discourses that are well-intended. **Markus End** addresses the widespread critique against the morpheme “Gypsy” or “*zigan*,” which derives from an understanding as to where the morphemes explicitly or implicitly signify the meaning of “Roma.” Whereas this would reproduce the pejorative, End argues for the understanding of the morphemes as signifiers for negative projections by the majority society and that this meaning must be made clear by definition. **Wolfgang Aschauer**’s comment acknowledges End’s effort as necessary, but states that scholars of antiziganism should be more concerned with the content of the term than its name. Further, he argues that only actions should be encompassed by the definition, not attitudes. In my own article, I show that a too narrow understanding of antiziganism as racism often proved unable to detect the ethnic dimension of discrimination, prejudice and persecution of Roma and thus was instrumentalised in apologetic discourse. I argue that research must aim at detecting discourses directed against “the conceptual Gypsy,” which can target Roma and other persons. In his comment, **Markus End** reflects on the prevalent differentiation of a social and an ethnic definition in antiziganism research and cautions against analysing them separately.

The fourth section explores the intersections between “race,” ethnicity, gender, sexuality and class in constituting differences between the majority population and people associated with the pejorative concept of “Gypsy” as the Others. Through an analysis of 19th-century Swedish literary works, **Pia Laskar** pinpoints the gender-based and sexualised stereotypes of Roma otherness and links those to race-biologic discourses of “the other” as a demographic threat, which ultimately was used to legitimate coercive sterilisation. In her comment on this paper, **Alexandra Oprea** strongly opposes the use of the term antiziganism because of its stigmatising content, but also criticises the unreflected reproduction by some scholars of pejorative terminology found in historical sources. She also demonstrates the political relevance of a critical reading of literary classics, and shows how their imagery of Romani females reoccurs in today’s popular press. **Stefan Benedik** identifies how differentiation between imagined Romani and non-Romani people takes place along constructed categories such as “race,” class and gender, and argues that a critical use of analysis is needed to dissolve the stability of stereotypical popular reception of Roma. **Anna Friedrich and Benedikt Wolf**

highlight the critique of the concept intersectionality for its problematic implications in usage of a crossroads metaphor to explain how categories such as “race,” gender, sexuality, etc. meet and entangle. Instead, they argue with Benedik, the metaphor of different categories meeting in a crossroad implies that they have existed separately prior to the crossroads, i.e. they had an ontological status prior to the intersection. But categories such as “race,” class and gender are always already interdependent and entangled. **Shannon Woodcock** discusses the Romanian modernity project in legislative discourse and folklore. The link between the processes of modernisation and the legitimisation of racism, and sexism is characterised by the perception of the Other as those that are outside the development. In her comment, **Pia Laskar** contextualises the refusal of using and reproducing pejorative concepts as an outcome of the linguistic turn of the 20th century. Furthermore, she frames the analysis of Roma people as the Other within the last decades production on post-colonial theory and gender studies.

Finally, a concluding chapter by **Charles Westin** discusses the areas of agreement and disagreement among the contributing scholars and points out possible paths ahead. Although to a certain extent he supports the underlying conceptual approaches, Westin positions himself against many of the contributors in his rejection of the terms antiziganism and antigypsyism. Thus, this volume ends with a disagreement about the very title word and its equivalents. This might be seen as a provoking but suitable starting point for the discussions that will follow.

The editing of this volume, like the organising of the conference at the Hugo Valentin Centre in Uppsala 2013, has been a collective effort by dedicated scholars representing a range of different academic disciplines and national contexts. Among researchers who have not published in this volume but contributed in other ways, we are grateful to **Mats Deland** for his untiring support in helping to organise the conference, and to **Anne Minken** for her editorial input on Kaveh’s article.

The first part of the volume evolved from my initial call. Hristo Kyuchukov, who is responsible for the second conference session, which resulted in the second section of this volume, has provided invaluable input throughout this process as a scholar of Romani studies, himself representing a Romani discourse position. Markus End initiated the third session of the conference and corresponding section of this volume, which addresses the ultimate aim of the conference. Pia Laskar conceived of the fourth session and corresponding section here; it adds important perspectives and tools that have too often been neglected in antiziganism research. By inviting Charles Westin to contribute concluding remarks, the

editorial board forges a bond of continuity with the earlier “Stockholm International Conference on the Discrimination and Persecution of Roma, Sinti and Travellers,” which Westin hosted in 2009. Finally, we all are grateful to **Bill Templer**, who assisted as language editor of this volume.

Jan Selling, principal editor, Uppsala, July 2014

KEYNOTE ADDRESS: ROMA – EXPLAINING TODAY THROUGH HISTORY

IAN HANCOCK

The past two and a half decades have seen enormous changes confronting both the Romani people, and those who study us and work with us. For so many Romanies, these changes have meant adapting once again to new and typically hostile surroundings, seeking security in employment, education, housing and in health and legal care. For the non-Romani world, it has meant making room for newcomers who arrive with a complex baggage of stereotypes and a legacy of persecution.

Since the collapse of communism 25 years ago, hundreds of thousands of Roma from Eastern Europe have left to come west in search of a better life. For westerners, a colourful and largely inoffensive population that was very much restricted in the public mind to storybooks and film suddenly became a real, and evidently menacing, presence. This has not just affected Western Europe; in countries overseas too this has been the case; we need only to look at the hostile reception of Roma from the Czech Republic and from Hungary in Canada as an example.

Reports issued by the EU's *Agency for Fundamental Rights*² make it crystal clear: racism against Roma is everywhere on the increase throughout Europe. Today, the Roma are just as poor and marginalised, as unemployed, and as badly housed as they ever were. They are just as far from living the normal lives of citizens in their own countries as they were before the EU's expansion, and comparisons have been made with the atmosphere in Germany during the 1930s. During the past two years, at least ten Roma have been murdered – and those are only the reported cases. An estimated 80% of incidents of antigypsyism go unreported. Evicted families left stranded in the road after their settlements have been demolished are especially vulnerable to acts of violence from hostile gangs. Beatings and rapes are commonplace.

² Accessible at <http://fra.europa.eu/en/theme/roma>, accessed May 15, 2014.

A decade after the fall of communism, the Council of Europe issued a blistering condemnation of Europe's treatment of the Roma Gypsy community, saying they are subject to racism, discrimination and violence . . . the United Nations says they pose Europe's most serious human rights problem (Szente 2001). An editorial in *The Economist* (Ledgard 2001) described Romanies in Europe as being "at the bottom of every socio-economic indicator: the poorest, the most unemployed, the least educated, the shortest-lived, the most welfare dependent, the most imprisoned and the most segregated." An EU report called it "one of the most important political, social and humanitarian questions in today's Europe" (Cederberg 2010). We are over half way through the Decade of Roma Inclusion, but clearly the results of efforts to bring change have still to be judged, and we're not doing too well so far.

Those who went before us were equally unsuccessful. I was recently reading a report published fifty years ago in the journal *Soviet Studies* (Ulč, 1969) that described the situation of Roma in one particular Eastern bloc country. It claimed that while the socialist system had created all of the prerequisites necessary to deal with the "Gypsy problem," those "prerequisites" were not working. That "Gypsy problem" was described as the Roma's "lack of responsiveness to Marxist deterministic formulae," blamed upon their having inherited *pre*-communist notions of capitalism and, with one or two exceptions, Gypsies were still "beggars, thieves, violent and a scourge in the countryside," to quote from one government report. We were to blame because we were deliberately being antisocial by clinging to our distinctive identity, since as a people, they said, we came from the same racial stock as the non-Romani population. This contradicts, incidentally, a Romanian foreign minister, who stated publicly not very long ago, and echoing Hitler's belief, that criminality was a *racial* characteristic that set us apart from the rest of the world. We did not satisfy Stalin's definition of nationhood, those reports maintained, because we "neither possessed common territory nor maintained a common culture and economic way of life." Marxist ideology gave Roma a social identity, not an ethnic one.

Four decades of communism were not able to solve their "Gypsy problem," and the two decades that have passed since then have not accomplished a great deal either. We have seen a number of positive changes it is true. For example, the Czech government banned the Workers' Party in that country as xenophobic and a threat to democracy, mentioning specifically its attacks on Roma. But for each move forward, there are others that operate against us. As I am writing this paper, the French government has just come under fire for its expulsions of

Romanies; Switzerland's most recent report (December 2002) to the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities said that it was not considering ratifying the International Labour Organisation's Convention 169 because it was concerned that the treaty might apply to Roma; in 2012, Canada drafted an immigration law that will give the Minister of Immigration the power to declare which country is safe in Europe, and then rule that because of the new category, refugees cannot come to Canada from that country.³

It is almost predictable that any formal report on Roma will use the word *problem*; a quick Internet search for the words "Gypsy problem" that I made when writing this presentation brought over *twenty-two thousand returns*. Let me repeat that: an Internet search for the words "Gypsy problem" brought over *twenty-two thousand returns*.

It should perhaps be more openly acknowledged that we also have a *Gadjé* problem; after all, those 22,000 references on the Internet did not originate with us. But the reality is that both Romanies and *Gadjé* have a whole *lot* of problems with each other. And if they are to be dealt with successfully, just as in a successful marriage, the key words are *communication* and *compromise*.

I live, like an increasing number of Romani people, with a foot in two worlds, and I can identify a number of these issues from both perspectives. The non-Romani world sees us as the eternal outsiders, not wanting to fit in yet wanting what *they* have, living by deception and theft, and mendacity, taking everything while contributing nothing, except perhaps entertainment – loud, dirty and leaving a mess behind besides. These are some of the "Gypsy problems" the *Gadjé* have with us.

From our position, our overwhelming problem with *Gadjé* is *racism*. This directly underlies and supports the problems that it holds up – those of poverty, those in employment, schooling, health care and housing, and in human and civil rights. Poverty amongst some Romani populations is absolutely overwhelming. A World Bank report issued in April, 2010⁴ said "Roma are the most prominent poverty risk group in many of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. They are poorer than other groups, more likely to fall into poverty, and more likely to remain poor. In some cases poverty rates for Roma are more than ten times that of non-Roma. A recent survey found that nearly 80 per cent of Roma in Romania and Bulgaria were living on less than \$4.30 per day . . . even in Hungary, one

³ <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/media/backgrounders/2012/2012-11-30.asp> Accessed May 15, 2014.

⁴ <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/media/backgrounders/2012/2012-11-30.asp> Accessed May 15, 2104.

of the most prosperous accession countries, 40 per cent of Roma live below the poverty line.” George Orwell wrote that “the first effect of poverty is that it kills thought.”

* * *

So what to do?

A large sign in Romani on my office wall reads “Education is the Passport to Freedom.” I firmly believe this, and I urge that we make education our highest priority in the discussions that follow here in Uppsala. I will not elaborate upon the weightier issues that stem from racism, their solution will follow in due course once proper educational programmes have been designed and implemented. Just as issues of employment and housing exist because of racism, their solution will come about because of education. And I am not speaking simply of education for Romani people, but also for the non-Romani populations.

I made the point in a recently published essay (Hancock 2010b) that it is the vagueness regarding Romani identity that has allowed it to be so casually manipulated by outsiders, and this brings me to the main thrust of my talk this morning. The title of an influential essay on Roma refers to us as “people without a history” (Trumpener 1992). Individuals such as the head of the musical group *Gypsy Bordello* (a word meaning *kurvjango kher*, *bardàko*, which conflicts with our own norms of propriety), actually a Jewish Ukrainian, can present himself as a Romani man and speaking for us, repeat in interviews that we are such a free-spirited people living just for the day, that we can’t distinguish between ‘yesterday’ and ‘tomorrow’ in our language. This is false information picked up from reading books about us written by people who don’t know us, but it perpetuates a false and trivial Romani history and identity. If we as a people aren’t taken seriously, then our problems can’t possibly be taken seriously.

Much of the debate on the Romani Studies Network during the spring of 2014 concerned the question of who can or cannot speak for Roma; this indeed is the title of a whole book (McGarry 2012; see also Hancock 2007). Most of those expressing their views were not Roma themselves, and some among them questioned the notion of “Roma” being acknowledged as one global people.⁵ Certainly for those with specialised or localised

⁵ The title of my book *We Are the Romani People* was questioned, though its subtitle *Ame Sam le Rromane Džene* is less ambiguous, since *džene* (“peoples”) is plural.

academic Roma-focused interests, there is an investment in fragmenting the twelve million or so who speak, or whose ancestors spoke, Romani. This perspective differs polemically from that which groups all Romani populations together with no regard for their considerable linguistic and cultural and socioeconomic differences, even including non-Romani groups (such as the Jenische or the Miceirs) in the same category.

But what can we tell people who ask us about ourselves? If we knew who we were, and had more status allowing us to be heard, we would have a say in how we are portrayed. If a journalist wants to say we originated in Egypt, as one recently did, who are we to say she was wrong, and what would we say to correct her, and where would that protest even be heard or acknowledged? Because our history was lost to us many years ago and we thus cannot provide it, the non-Romani world has not shirked in creating various identities for us. I don't believe that we can *make* history unless we *know* our history; Alain Besançon has said that "a man without memory is of absolute plasticity; he is recreated at all moments. He cannot look behind himself, nor can he feel a continuity with himself, nor can he preserve his own identity" (1985: 183). As long as the storybook Gypsy influences the journalist's and the novelist's portrayal of us, as long as the instant experts in the media feel confident that what they write will go unchallenged, as long as their imagination has free rein, we will continue to be "recreated at all moments," as Besançon says, never in control of our own identity.

Without education we cannot be articulate; we lack a loud enough voice. We complain, but are not heard. Five members of the Roma Civic Alliance attending a conference on Roma in Bucharest some years ago were made to leave when they criticised the government's inaction. Their voice was stifled. Without education we cannot tell people who we are, and where we come from, and how we have had the strength and determination to survive centuries of persecution, slavery and genocide and still be here. When we have our own educators, lawyers and doctors, we will no longer need to rely on the outside world, and go to the *Gadjé* with our hands out. As long as we continue to do that, we will never be respected. We don't want the non-Romani world to love us, particularly, but we do want its respect.

Educational curricula for Roma must be carefully planned. Will they promote integration or assimilation? The older generations must be comfortable in the knowledge that it is not turning their children into *Gadjé*, which is a great fear among the Romanies in the United States. In

turn, education about the Romani people for state schools must present our history and culture in a uniform way.

I have already mentioned the media. While they could be a powerful ally, they are overwhelmingly just the opposite. A quarter century ago Kenedi Janós wrote “the mass media, in a veiled, and often less-veiled form, goad opinion in an anti-Gypsy direction.” Newspapers disseminate *opinion* on a regular basis as well as news. Newspapers make people’s minds up for them. Newspapers create attitudes. When the biggest daily paper in Romania, *Evenimentul Zilei*, wrote in its May 2nd 1995 issue that “Gypsies are believed to be genetically inclined to become criminals,” it was repeating Hitler’s rationale for the extermination of Romanians in the Third Reich. When another Romanian daily, the *Cronica Română*, advised customers in its July 4th 2012 issue not to do business with any salesman because “the colour of his skin” is an indication of his being “untrustworthy,” the message is clear. And this is not an attitude restricted only to Central and Eastern Europe. From England, headlines such as “Gypsies! You Can’t Come In!” in the *Sunday Express* (5 February 2004) or the *Sun*’s “How long before we kick the whole lot out?,” (6 February 2004) for example, fuelled public hostility, and a marked jump in anti-Romani public opinion. I was stunned to learn that the Foreign Press Association presented the BBC production *Gypsy Child Thieves* with its Media Award for the best Television Story of the Year (4 November 2013). The irresponsible move on the part of the BBC aside, in showing this for the *second* time despite outrage from Romani organisations following its first broadcast, the Foreign Press Association’s claim that its purpose is to “continually strive to enhance communication and understanding between the rich diversity of cultures of this world and the global community” is a travesty. *No* understanding of the situation of those children came from the documentary, and in no way did it present our “rich culture.” Instead it helped hammer down even more firmly the growing Romaphobia in Britain, the country where I was born, ensuring further hateful newspaper headlines. The documentary has just been shown in Italy and this country too, and complaints have been filed with the Belgian Centre for Equality and with the Media Supervisory Authority for Audiovisual Media in Belgium. In the spring of 2013 we heard about the abduction of the “blonde-haired, blue-eyed” little girl in Greece, the press making much of the “squalor” she was found in, living in the Romani settlement, having a field-day with the literary stereotype that “Gypsies steal children.” But no such concern has *ever* been shown in the same media for the same squalor the Romani children themselves are forced to live their *whole lives* in.

Fictional print media can also perpetuate stereotypes, though usually those of romance, magic, and mystery. Two recently published titles are Sasha White's *Gypsy Heart* (2006 [2013]) – the book's cover reads "Can a man bent on settling down convince a free-spirited woman . . . to risk her Gypsy Heart? Warning: this book contains explicit sex explained in graphic detail with contemporary language" – and Isabella Jordan's *Gypsies, Tramps and Heat: An Anthology of Erotic Romance* (2006), which tells the reader "Lose yourself in the dark eyes and crystal ball of a gypsy lover!"

Film also presents Romanies in a negative way specifically for entertainment. Showing now in 2013 is the movie *Werewolf*; a year ago we were watching *Drag Me to Hell*, and before that *Thinner*. My students' first exposure to Gypsies was through the Disney version of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. There is an Internet link specifically for "Gypsy curse movies," and typing *that* in on Google brings up 64,000 hits.

While there was a cursory reference in one BBC documentary to the shameful conditions experienced by Roma in today's Europe, *no* attempt at analysis was made to explain why such a situation has come to exist, *no* explanation of the profound psychological legacy Romanian Roma have inherited from 550 years of slavery, indeed no mention of that slavery at all, when it was the former slave-owners who received compensation from the government for their loss, while no programmes were created to help integrate the uneducated and penniless Romani ex-slaves into free society. There was no reference in that documentary either to the fact that after the Holocaust, the Romani survivors of that genocide were turned away from the camps with no help, no war crimes reparations, to rebuild their shattered lives in a hostile world where laws against them were still in effect. This is our history.

The Chinese say that the beginning of wisdom is to call things by their right name. If we treat "Gypsies" as one people, one "community," we are simplifying a complex situation and ignoring the great differences that distinguish the many and various Romani populations. A few years ago, *Newsweek International* ran a story entitled "All over the world, people are embracing the culture of the Roma people," but of course we *have* no single culture, and the cultures we do have are certainly not embraced by peoples all over the world. But it makes good copy. Finnish *Kaale* and Spanish *Calé* have more differences than similarities; *Romanichals* differ very considerably from the *Kalderasha*, and so on. Those differences have been used to deny Romani populations any shared ethnic identity, and instead to use *social* and *behavioural* criteria to define us. The quote from *Soviet Studies* I read earlier is an example of that kind of thinking, and I've

repeated the words of the Czech sociologist, Jaroslav Sus (1961) several times before, who claimed that it was an “utterly mistaken opinion that Gypsies form a nationality or a nation, that they have their own national culture, their own national language,” and those of the late Hon. Sec. of the Gypsy Lore Society Dora Yates (1953), who asked in reference to the Romani nationalist movement “except in a fairy tale, could any hope ever have been more fantastic?” They know us better than we know ourselves, apparently. Charles Godfrey Leland’s statement is revealing: “As chief of the English gypsies, or at least as President of the English Gypsy-Lore Society, which amounts to the same thing, I have a natural proclivity for ways that are dark and low society” (1892: 16).

Instead of thinking negatively in terms of identity, about the things that make one group different from another, we must think instead of what all of us share, in terms of language, culture and ancestry. After all, those are things we brought with us into Europe. The characteristics that divide us now have all been acquired from the non-Romani world.

Let me then turn to what I think are the main issues that bear examination. Do we proceed regarding Roma throughout Europe as ethnically-defined populations or as socially-defined populations? Clearly the latter has been the case so far, since both Romanies and non-Romanies have usually been grouped together, for example in the various Roma and Gypsy Traveller organisations and festivals. Certainly common cause is every reason for different groups to work together, and that should continue to be the case. But I maintain that not enough acknowledgment is made of the cultural distinctiveness of Romani peoples, distinctions that must be taken into account, for example in the areas of teaching or housing. The fact is that different Romani subgroups are not anxious to work with each other, given a choice, let alone with non-Romani groups who, from the Romani point of view, are *Gadjé* after all.

If Roma are to be regarded ethnically, then a number of questions immediately arise. Can we in fact speak about one Romani people? Well, the answer is both yes and no. Let me elaborate on that, and get to the title of my presentation, “Explaining today through history.”

A military-related reason for the migration of our ancestors out of India is not a new idea; it was first alluded to by Rüdiger in 1782. Over the past two and a quarter centuries, researchers, including de Goeje (1876), Clarke (1878), Leland (1882), Burton (1898), Kochanowski (1968), Bhalla (1992), Courthiade (2004), Mróz (1992), Haliti (2006) and Knudsen (2003) have all argued for this – the consensus being that it was the Ghaznavid invasions during the first quarter of the 11th century that led to the move

out of India. The works of Soulis (1961), Fraser (1989), Marushiakova and Popov (2000) and more recently Marsh (2003, 2008) have furthermore demonstrated that it was also the spread of Islam that was the principal factor in the migration of our ancestors into Europe from Asia during the medieval period. I will not go into the historical and linguistic details here, they are presented in a book of my essays, *Danger! Educated Gypsy*, edited by Dileep Karanth (2010). What is significant about this is that we now understand that our ancestors were never one people speaking one language when they left India, but included many ethnolinguistic components.

I have argued elsewhere that like our language, our identity as Roma came into being during the sedentary Anatolian period, the professional status of the Indians and the contact variety of their language crystallising into the Romani language and people, particularly under the influence of Byzantine Greek. There *were* no “Roma” before Anatolia.

I should like to advance here a different perspective which, I believe, provides an alternative way of understanding the question of identity, and why the question of identity confuses journalists and sociologists, and why it causes us ourselves so much of a problem.

In light of the particular details of our origins and of our shared and unshared social history since then, certain conclusions must be drawn: **First**, that the population has been a composite one from its very beginning, and at that time was occupationally rather than ethnically-defined; **Second**, that while the earliest components – linguistic, cultural and genetic – are traceable to India, we essentially constitute a population that acquired our identity and language in the West (accepting the Christian, Greek-speaking Byzantine Empire as being linguistically and culturally ‘Western’), and **Third**, that the entry into Europe from what is today Turkey was not as a single people, but as a number of smaller migrations over perhaps as much as a two-century span of time. These factors have combined to create a situation that is in some sense unique, that is to say we are a population of Asian origin that has spent essentially the entire period of our existence in the *West*. We are the proverbial square peg trying to fit into a round hole. But unless our cultural and linguistic differences as an Asian-rooted people in the West are properly taken into account, the problems will persist.

Because the population was fragmenting and moving into Europe during the very period that an ethnic identity was emerging, there is no sense of our ever having been a single, unified people in one place at one time. We can speak of a “core of direct retention” consisting of genetic, linguistic and cultural factors traceable to Asia and evident to a greater or

lesser extent in all populations identifying as Romani, but we must also acknowledge that all of these areas have also been augmented, as I've just said, through contact with European peoples and cultures, and it is the latter accretions that account for the sometimes extreme differences from group to group.

For some, "core" Romani culture has been diluted practically out of existence, sometimes by deliberate government policy as in 18th-century Hungary or Spain, yet such populations are nevertheless regarded as "Gypsies" by the larger society on the basis of appearance, dress, name, occupation and neighbourhood, and are treated accordingly, but have no traditional ethnic community into which to find refuge. At the other extreme are Romani populations in substantial numbers, such as the Vlax or Sinti, who vigorously maintain the language and the culture and who are restrained from functioning in the European mainstream because of them. Because of this, no single educational package will do for every group. We will need group-specific – within the larger framework of country-specific – programmes.

While these will provide knowledge of a common origin and early history, and explain our differences, they are not likely to serve to coalesce all groups into one. What relationship they will ultimately recognise remains to be seen, but ideally some sort of commonality should be achieved – there is strength in numbers.

My second point that I'd like to have discussed addresses the psychological damage that persecution has brought with it – not just the fear Roma live with daily in too many places, fear that affects both mental and physical health, but the deeper psychological damage that history has wrought. I don't believe that any attention has been paid to this at all. In 1988 in Austria, on the anniversary of the *Anschluss*, Romani survivors told a *London Times* reporter that they were still haunted by fears of recurrent Nazi persecutions.⁵ Apocryphally, there are stories of isolated Romani families in far Eastern Europe who believe that the Nazis are still in power.

Neither has formal or remedial acknowledgement been paid to another, heavier legacy – a perspective on life inherited from the hundreds of years of slavery. In her book *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, Joy DeGruy (2005) defines this term as

a condition that exists when a population has experienced multigenerational trauma resulting from centuries of slavery, and continues to experience oppression and institutionalised racism today; added to this condition is a belief, real or imagined, that the benefits of the society in which they live are not accessible to them.

For more than five centuries – practically for their entire European experience – Vlax Roma had no decision-making powers. This has created a worldview which sees the situation of Roma as having been created by non-Roma who, having caused the problems arising from it, must therefore be responsible for solving those problems. Having no internal autonomy or problem-solving power, the slaves had to go to the *Gadjé* for intervention, or else get by on their wits. If, for centuries, a people have lived in a society where every single thing, including food, clothing and even one's spouse was provided from outside, *i.e.* at the discretion of one's owner, and if getting anything extra, including favours, depended upon one's influence with that owner, then it must instil an assumption that this is how one survives in the world. And while slavery has been abolished now for a century and a half, remnants of this way of thinking are still in evidence. Not only are assistance and material things sought from outside rather than from within the community, but cultivating useful and influential contacts outside of the non-Romani world is also a priority, and becomes a mark of prestige within it. A man can become the leader of his community on that basis alone. This kind of thinking does not encourage self-determination or personal initiative, and can lead too easily to criminal activity; but before it can be addressed and changed, it has to be understood.

Seeing ourselves as victims, though, is a loser's game; we must use our own skills to change our situation, and if we don't have those skills then we must *get* them. Ultimately we must rely on ourselves. The outside world is not going to solve our problems for us and if we expect it to do so, it will be a very long wait.

Like us, the Jewish people have been pushed to the side and discriminated against, but they learnt long ago that no one was going to help them – that they were going to have to do it themselves. Like us, they disagree amongst themselves. But unlike us, they ask the rhetorical question in times of change “is it good for the Jews?” We must be asking the same thing: “Is it good for the Roma?” – the Romani people as a whole. What a strong voice we would have if we were truly united! This is a very real fear for some politicians, and the reason that they push to keep us fragmented.

The Indian writer N. B. Salunke (1989), in an article on the army leaders at the time of the Ghaznavid Wars that appeared in our journal *Roma* some years ago, noted that the resistance to cooperating with each other was

[their] major vice . . . the main reason which does not allow them to come together and try their problems. For minor disputes they never try to come

together to negotiate, to thrash out their problems or to resolve some reforms: the superiority of their kinsmen seems to be intolerable to them.

This is certainly a characteristic we seem to have inherited: where there are two Roma, you'll find three opinions; Radu Enache (2014: 246) calls the fact that we perceive the differences that separate our own from other Romani groups to be more important than our differences from the non-Romani populations "the Roma paradox."

We must learn to compromise. We must be confident in our identity, and value the inherited, common characteristics of our people as being what defines us, not the superimposed characteristics from so many different, non-Romani, cultures, that divide us. And unless we know our history, unless we know where we come from, we will continue to be just "Gypsies," whose identity is in the hands of others. Like the Republicans and the Democrats in the United States this month, we must agree to disagree if we are to move ahead.

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