

PRINT CULTURE AND THE ROMA IN NORTH AMERICA

A Thesis
by
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Abstract

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This thesis contributes to the ongoing work of undoing the erasure of the historically marginalized Roma through a retrieval, taxonomization, and analysis of a variety of ephemeral North American printed texts from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The texts under analysis were taken from several digitized archives, and they provide a representational sample of trends in depictions of the Roma across the much larger body of texts located in these archives. The first chapter discusses the research methodologies used for textual retrieval and revealed data trends. This thesis then analyzes these selected texts and presents a framework for understanding thematic shifts in textual representations of the Roma, shifts which correspond to notable changes in North American print culture. Chapters two, three, and four feature different types of texts and describe these shifts, which center on representations of the Roma as various narrative forms: the Roma as myth, as news, and as romance. This analysis helps us better understand the role of print in producing and reifying stereotypes of the Roma, and, thus, to challenge those stereotypes.

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Introduction: Print Culture and the Roma in North America

Ian Hancock's *The Pariah Syndrome: An Account of Gypsy Slavery and Persecution* was published in 1987 at the end of a two-year campaign for Romani representation on the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council. Hancock himself was a candidate for appointment to that council as part of the U.S. Romani Holocaust Council's lobbying for five positions on the Holocaust Memorial Council (less than ten percent of the fifty-five-member council). But despite this lobbying, and contrary to the fact—as Hancock himself points out in their book—that, “in terms of the genocide of an entire people, the proportions [of Romani and Jewish people killed in the Holocaust] are nevertheless similar” (Hancock 81), no Roma were appointed to the HMC. *The Pariah Syndrome's* publication was, in part, a reaction to this decision. Indeed, in the introduction, Hancock explicitly responds to the exclusion of the Roma from the HMC: “If this is not cause for concern among the non-Gypsy population, if that population is reluctant to be reminded about what it has done, and what it continues to do, then the Romani voice must be louder. But one way or another, it will be heard” (4). More broadly, *The Pariah Syndrome* is a comprehensive study of worldwide Romani oppression in face of the failure, both in academia and in the broader culture, to bring acknowledgment of this oppression. Hancock stresses the historic invisibility of the suffering of the Roma as a recurring theme throughout the book, arguing that the Romani presence has historically been erased and Roma voices have routinely been silenced.

One of the central aims of this thesis is to contribute to the ongoing work of undoing the historical erasure of the Roma. More specifically, it recovers and analyzes the varied representations of the Roma in U.S. American (and transatlantic) popular print culture, from the colonial period to the late nineteenth century, and it considers how these representations

contributed to the creation of numerous invidious and marginalizing stereotypes of the Romani people. It also addresses a parallel loss of awareness of the very existence of such texts and their depictions of the Roma in academia, a result of the ephemerality of popular, relatively cheap, and sometimes mass-produced literature, much of which remains hidden (when it has survived at all) in historical archives. However, large-scale searches enabled by the recent digitization of many of these archives have allowed the rediscovery of these texts at a level that has heretofore been difficult. My own engagement with these digital archives comprises a core component of the research in this thesis; based on this research, I propose a set of categories centered on the literary representations of the Roma within these texts as different symbolic and narrative forms, which correspond to the varying print forms that these texts take. The narrative forms which comprise these categories are the Gypsy as *myth*, the Gypsy as *news*, and the Gypsy as *romance*. By carefully locating, analyzing, and categorizing a large volume of popular ephemeral texts that depict the Roma we can better understand and help to counteract the role of print in producing and reifying stereotypes of the Roma that persist into the current moment.

Review of Existing Scholarship

The Gypsy Lore Society: Problems and Corrections

Hancock's work in *The Pariah Syndrome* and their call for other scholars to address the historical erasure of the Roma has led to partial progress since their book first appeared: in recent years additional notable works on the Roma have been published, and in this review of the literature I will consider some of this work, focusing particularly on studies concerning the Roma in North America. I will also discuss more European-centered scholarship,

including works in disciplines other than literary studies, such as in sociology, since, in the right framework, these works have applicability to the North American literary context.

Also, if it is true, as Hancock points out, that the relatively small amount of serious scholarly interest in the Romani experience (at least until relatively recently) represents a significant problem for understanding the Roma and their historical oppression, an additional problem derives from the large amount of quasi-popular writing about the Roma that has long been part of the broader culture. For instance, prior to the 1980s, the bulk of research of the Roma was produced by an only modestly academic organization, made up of mostly hobbyist amateurs, called the Gypsy Lore Society, who published a journal for distribution to overwhelmingly non-Roma subscribing members, the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*. Based on the number of issues of this journal over the many years of its publication, one might be tempted to think a substantial body of quality research had been produced: the Society has published semi-regular issues annually, going all the way back to the late nineteenth century. However, the veracity and reliability of nearly all of work produced and published by the Society have been heavily questionable. The work often focuses on attempts to establish a genealogical history of and/or “origin story” of the Romani people, in order to preserve what the society saw as the character of the “true” Gypsy, a concept which is rooted in problematic nineteenth-century Romantic notions of the “true Roma.” Responsive to this search for the “true Roma,” the late 1980s saw an expansion of serious Romani studies scholarship which incorporated important ideas from Edward Said’s famous book *Orientalism* and strongly criticized the Gypsy Lore Society for their problematic goals and consistent portrayal of the Roma through a racialized white gaze.

The journal, in turn, responded to these criticisms, and it improved substantially in 2000, when the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* changed its name to *Romani Studies*, signaling a positive shift towards more rigorous scholarship, both for the journal and the nascent field of English-language Romani studies in general. The journal's title change signaled a departure from the Gypsy Lore Society's implicit and deeply problematic Orientalist roots and a movement towards a new research paradigm, one that focuses on well-grounded and rigorous studies of the Roma rather than the sorts of reiteration of, and justification for, problematic stereotypes. Yaron Matras, who proposed this title change as their first act after becoming head editor, describes the paradigm shift thusly: "The notion of 'lore' – the internal cultural legacy of others – was replaced by 'studies' – denoting scholarly activity that answers to universal standards of rigour, realistic objectivity and evidence-based validation. ... The term 'Gypsy' with its vague and shifting readings of a status- and lifestyle-oriented attribute was abandoned in favour of 'Romani' to signal that our interest was in populations that had agency and their own image of themselves" (115). Notably, however, *Romani Studies* is still sponsored and published by the Gypsy Lore Society, which has not changed its name, and this sponsorship reveals there are tensions that still exist between the history of the journal and its current direction. Nonetheless, the Society's current goals as stated on their website are now much more clearly committed to scholarly excellence: they are described as the "promotion of the study of [Gypsy] communities, their history and cultures worldwide; dissemination of accurate information aimed at increasing understanding of them in their diverse forms; and establishment of closer contacts among scholars studying any aspects of these cultures"; my own review of research published in *Romani Studies* since the name and mission change confirms a clear commitment to rigorous

historical, sociological, and linguistic research, albeit, with a Eurocentric focus. The journal remains the primary English-language source for Romani Studies scholarship, and I discuss in detail below several important articles from the journal.

U.S. American-Focused Romani Studies and Broader Trends in Recent Romani Scholarship

Although discussions of U.S. American Roma, specifically, have been largely absent from even the more recent scholarship on Romani peoples, there have been a few notable exceptions. Much of this comparatively small volume of research on North American Roma consists of sociological studies on specific groups, such as Rena C. Gropper and Carol Miller's 2001 article, "Exploring New Worlds in American Romani Studies: Social and Cultural Attitudes among the American Maçvaia." This work is principally a study of the U.S. American Maçvaia, a Californian Romani group, but its arguments provide important context for the state of North American Romani Studies more broadly. Gropper and Miller suggest, as part of their thesis, the following four broad challenges in the field as a whole: 1) the "ethnocentric bias [Romani studies has had] since its inception," 2) "the terminology Romani groups use to refer to themselves [and its] fluidity based on both change over time and the context of the moment of utterance," 3) "the inevitability of change in most aspects of culture," and 4) "inevitable multiculturalism" (82) caused by interaction with non-Gypsy cultures. Each of these challenges point to some of the overarching themes in the debates about the field of Romani studies, particularly as applied, as the authors do, to the North American context. The "ethnocentric bias" mentioned is a reference to the problematic studies done by early Romani studies researchers such as by members of the Gypsy Lore Society, and the negative impacts of this and similar hobbyist groups on academic

perceptions of the Roma. The terminology mentioned in the second point refers to names of specific groups of Roma, but applied more generally, suggests the continuing tension in the field regarding the use of the term “Gypsy” to describe the Roma. The latter two points describe the tendency of earlier Romani studies writing to attempt to establish and define a “true” Gypsy, which ignores the complex existence of Romani communities in its diaspora. Diasporic communities of Roma encounter new societies and cultures, and of course they undergo cultural and social changes as a part of a complex mediation between their Romani identities and their newer, non-Romani identities, and this process is often accelerated, at least partially, as part of an adaptation strategy learned from previous episodes of persecution and forced assimilation. Much Gypsy-ologist writing attempts to suggest that these cultural changes are a regression: as Hancock describes it, “When non-Gypsies go from wagon to automobile, it’s called progress, when Gypsies do the same thing, it’s a disappointment” (qtd. in Ostendorf). These academic challenges, including the persistence of the stereotype of the “true Gypsy,” are explored in Gropper and Miller’s sociological analysis of groups of United States Roma, but can also be found in many other subdisciplines contained within the field of Romani studies.

Additional Important Debates in Current Romani Studies Scholarship

In contrast to the small number of mostly sociological studies of the Roma in North America, development of Romani studies in Europe has followed the academic trends spurred by continental critical theory. For example, the important influence of critical theory is a central discussion in Esteban Acuña Cabanzo’s 2019 overview of the field; Acuña Cabanzo describes a number of recent applications of theory in Romani studies, noting

especially that Edward Said's *Orientalism* has been fundamental by enabling a critical problematizing of the "Gypsy/Non-Gypsy divide" (46). Acuña Cabanzo goes on to trace how knowledge-production in Romani studies has transformed, noting how Eurocentric academic institutions have tended to structure the field around that same binary divide, despite the application of Said's work and that of other theorists by individual scholars in their own work. Acuña Cabanzo also acknowledges that much very recent Romani studies scholarship has dealt with the issue of who should participate in this area of knowledge production, specifically whether the contributions of non-Roma are as valuable as those produced by the Roma themselves. They note that in reaction to the field's history of non-Roma presenting themselves as authorities on the Roma, dating back to the formation of the Gypsy Lore Society, recent calls have come for a closed-society research paradigm. Such a paradigm, in theory, would overcome the Roma's historical exclusion from academic research institutions and center scholarship around the advancement and affirmation of the Roma.

However, this position is not universally held; for instance, Michael Stewart argues against the idea of limiting non-Roma contributions to the field in a 2017 article titled "Nothing About Us Without Us, or the Dangers of a Closed-Society Research Paradigm." Stewart suggests that the authority to speak should not depend on a scholar's own social position, arguing that social identity has little to do with the validity of academic knowledge production. Indeed, debate over who should rightfully conduct research on the Roma is very much continuing within the field, even into the present moment.

Yaron Matras, former editor of *Romani Studies*, expresses concerns about another recent point of contention within the field in an open letter included in the 2017 issue of the journal. Matras letter takes up the continuing influence of "Gypsyism," defining the term

and its social function as, “a descriptive label for the members of the early Gypsy Lore Society and subsequently a dismissive way to refer to a scientific ‘paradigm’ that linked language to Indian origins, and culture with ethnicity, supposedly in order to exoticise¹ Romani origins and racialise Gypsies” (114). Matras argues that “Gypsyism” is frequently misapplied to many contributions to the field, and that this has had the negative effect of stifling knowledge production. Like Stewart above, Matras also seems to be opposed to a closed-society research paradigm, as the last few paragraphs of the article propose a series of questions regarding the direction of the journal. Notably, Matras questions the benefits of relaxing the standards of academic publication and peer review in order to provide a platform to represent more Romani scholars, and concludes with a call to the new editors to uphold the journal’s “firm commitment to protect and pursue the principles of scientific discovery, on a skilful navigating of partnership opportunities and responsibilities, and on resisting the pressures toward instrumentalisation of this platform as a scene of competition for power and symbolic representation” (Matras 121). As the above discussion makes clear, since the field has only developed solid foundations in theory and methodology in recent decades, Romani studies is still very much in the process of self-definition as it reckons with internal tensions and fraught histories as the field evolves.

Key Concepts from the New Romani Studies

Even as a relatively young field, Romani studies has now produced several critical concepts that are considered foundational and essential, particularly as applied to literary

¹ This publication, as well as several others in this paper, is British and therefore uses British spellings. I maintain these spellings in quotes.

representations of the Roma, and many of these concepts are important in the present study; they both illuminate the current state of best practices in the discipline and provide the interpretive frames I will be applying in my analysis of primary texts in this thesis. The most central of these concepts is found in Katie Trumpener's "The Time of the Gypsies: A 'People without History' in the Narratives of the West." Trumpener articulates the crucial concept of the "literarization" of the Roma, a term defined as "the increasingly powerful Western symbolism developed around the Gypsies, and their discursive placement ever further outside of the national teleologies or cumulative time of history, [that] leads simultaneously to a progressive dissociation and conflation of literary traditions with living people" (849). This process of literarization, as Trumpener makes clear, has been a central force that enables the dehumanization and persecution of living Romani people, reducing them to literary stereotypes. The translation of living Roma into stock literary forms enables their mistreatment, as they are figured in European and U.S. American consciousness as literarized Gypsy first, and actual, complex human beings second, if at all. Indeed, Trumpener argues that this process was one of the primary mechanisms for justifying the Romani Genocide by the Nazis, and cites an SS leader's reference to a literary depiction as an explicit reason to justify that genocide.²

The process of literarization also extends to the realm of material print culture in so far as the conflation of the actual Roma with the written and printed stereotypes of the Roma enables a kind of parallel amnesia. This amnesia allows printed stereotypes to supplant the

² Trumpener cites the account of Otto Ohlendorf's testimony presented in Bernhard Streck's *In Auschwitz vergast, bis heute verfolgt*, pp. 64-65. Ohlendorf's testimony "justified the Nazi persecution of the Gypsies by citing Schiller's literary descriptions of the Thirty Years War" (Trumpener 849), referring to Friedrich von Schiller's *The History of the Thirty Years' War*.

full and proper recognition of living Roma as embodied individuals, even as such printed depictions of the Roma are themselves often discarded as non-literary ephemera and are subsequently forgotten, causing the living U.S. American Roma to fade even further from public consciousness. This parallel amnesia manifests, too, in the technologically determined lack of searchability of the term Roma in the digital archives I utilize: the technical challenges I encountered while working with these databases, which I will describe in detail in chapter one, are an extension of this parallel amnesia. In this thesis, I attempt to recover some of these printed texts that function to literarize the Roma, not as a means of preserving the methods of dehumanization within these texts, but to enable analysis of the process of literarization and the marginalizing stereotypes created by these texts, an analysis that aims to help discourage these literary depictions from being reproduced and reinforced in contemporary popular culture.

A second important concept within the field that is especially relevant in this thesis, building on Trumpener's idea of literarization, concerns the construction of the literarized Gypsy in discursive forms such as the "domestic Other." For instance, Deborah Nord explores a number of stereotypical commonalities in the literary depictions of the Roma. In Nord's *Gypsies and the British Imagination, 1807-1930* we find a detailed overview of the depictions of the Roma in a variety of British works from this roughly 120-year period (I will discuss in the next section the applicability of British Romani stereotypes to the U.S. American context). Nord argues that Roma in these texts function as domestic Others where their "proximity and visibility were crucial features in their deployment as literary or symbolic figures. Their familiarity lent them an exoticism that was, at the same time, indigenous and homely" (3). This figuring of the literary Gypsy as the domestic Other hinges

on their representation as simultaneously British and alien; they exist “on the periphery of British settlement, so they were present but separate, often within view but almost never absorbed, encountered but seldom intimately known.” The construction of the Roma as both familiar and Other, in terms of economic class, social positioning, and race, has been scaffolded by literary depictions of these same concepts for nearly as long as non-Roma have been involved in producing these depictions. Through this lens of the domestic Other, the book points out significant motifs that run throughout such depictions, such as parallels with the representation of Jewish ethnicity in Europe, a supposed tradition of kidnapping, and a hypersexualization of Romani bodies.

Moreover, this concept of the Roma as “domestic Other” has recently been further developed by Emily Webb. In “An Invisible Minority: Romany Gypsies and the Question of Whiteness,” Webb asserts that the Roma in Britain are seen as a “white Other” or “abject white”; based on an analysis of interviews with British Roma peoples. Webb asserts that this status constructs the Roma as an “invisible minority” that is not acknowledged in discussions of antiracism or economic class. Webb’s article is focused on the situation of contemporary Roma, but the problem is part of a long-standing historical pattern. This figuring of Romani individuals as the “domestic Other” or the “abject white” appears frequently throughout the North American printed texts that I examine throughout this thesis.

The final critical concept provided by the field of the new Romani studies concerns the sometimes-competing nomenclatures used by scholars to refer to the Roma. There has been significant discussion in the field about the best, most accurate terminology to discuss the Roma and their depictions in texts. For example, Paloma Gay y Blasco highlights these debates over language in the field, acknowledging the “role that academic writing on

‘Gypsies’ has played in the reification of this category and of its deployment in the oppression of the people we are writing about” but also notes problems with the “potential of the term ‘Roma’ [to create]... another kind of reification, a reality of a kind that our informants might not necessarily appreciate” (298). While using the term “Gypsy” can participate in reproducing damaging stereotypes, there are many populations who still refer to themselves as such, and the term Roma also does not accurately describe groups who refer to themselves not as Roma but by other, more specific designations. Thus, Gay y Blasco proposes the following system of nomenclature: “‘Gypsy’ to refer to exoticising and orientalisising representations, and ‘Roma’ to refer to the conglomerate of populations that would identify themselves as Gypsy, Roma, Gitano, Tsigane and so on” (298). I believe this system is the most appropriate, as it distinguishes between the actuality of Romani experiences and the constructed literarized Gypsy that Trumpener describes. Additionally, due to the murkiness in historical records regarding the transnational movement and specific identities of the Roma present in North America prior to the late nineteenth century, this nomenclature avoids potentially inaccurate specific terminology. For these reasons, I will use this naming convention.

British Romani Studies and Application to the North American Context

Although the above discussion demonstrates how broader critical concepts generated largely in European Romani Studies are applicable to this thesis, the comparatively small volume of scholarship focusing specifically on the Roma in a North American context complicates my study of the U.S. American Roma and their depictions in literature and print culture. The frameworks cited above originated in global Romani studies and were

constructed with primarily European contexts in mind, and beyond the works I discuss above, some European focused scholarship cannot be seamlessly applied to the North American context. Likewise, contemporary scholarship in critical race theory and U.S. American literature, for all its value, is also insufficient because it fails to take into account the specific racial situation of the North American Roma. Because of this, relying solely on continental European Romani studies scholarship for specific examples and frameworks in a thesis that focuses on North American Roma would be inadequate. However, because of the significant volume of transatlantic cultural exchange between the United States and Britain, and, bearing in mind the enormous volume of texts produced in Britain and imported to North America historically, it is reasonable to apply some British Romani studies scholarship to the North American context. Particularly, in nineteenth-century U.S. American print culture, both imports of British texts and reprints of British texts produced in the U.S. constituted a significant portion of the North American book trade until the recognition of the International Copyright Law of 1891 (Denning 12), and this resulted in material and literary-cultural exchanges between Britain and the United States that were reflected in many of the texts printed solely in North America during the nineteenth century. Given these deep transatlantic relationships in print culture, we can apply lessons from scholarship focused on nineteenth-century depictions of Roma in British literature to related and/or similar appearances in U.S. American imprints. These transatlantic influences manifest both in terms of content and in the circulation and production of material texts, which justifies the application of this transatlantic lens to the printed texts I discuss in this thesis.

Importantly, British Romani studies scholarship has generated several key observations about the recurring motifs often present in texts that participate in the above

described literarization of the Roma. As I discuss above, one such motif concerns the construction of the Gypsy as a domestic Other, and a number of studies in the British context have addressed this motif. For instance, in “Clare Among the Gypsies,” Anne Janowitz suggests that the Gypsy figure in John Clare’s poetry is constructed as a double of the “English cottager,” and this functions to reify existing broad class division between the Roma and the white working-class English, even as it constructs the class of “English cottagers” by emphasizing their posited separateness from the literarized Gypsy. In another discussion of Clare’s poetry, Kristine Douaud outlines the development of various conceptions of the literarized Gypsy, tracing it from the carefree and “wild criminal” Gypsy to that of the “noble savage” Gypsy. In a similar vein, in “The Transit of the Gypsies in Romantic Period Poetry” Janowitz traces the evolution of the figure of the Gypsy as broadly used in British Romantic poetry. Janowitz analyzes the image of the Gypsy in such works over much of nineteenth century, tracking its development from hostile and bitter representations earlier in the century to more “noble savage” depictions later on. Janowitz argues that a central aspect of both types of depiction is an association with geographical mobility, an association that links such depictions of Gypsy figures with those of the Wandering Jew. While the shifts in representations of the Roma in nineteenth-century North American texts appear to undergo an opposite shift from the one that Janowitz describes (as I argue in more detail in a chapter below), many of the particular motifs and stereotypes that Janowitz discusses do occur frequently in texts that I analyze in this thesis.

Other scholars, such as Abby Bardi, suggest that the figure of the literarized Gypsy, particularly in association with its construction as a domestic Other, is frequently indicative of extreme anxieties regarding gender and sexuality. The anxieties that Bardi points to in

their work are obvious enough that they have resulted in several additional studies that consider the same issue. However, some of these studies are problematic in their discussions of the Roma; for example, in an attempt to analyze the figure of the Gypsy woman in British literature, Celia Esplugas actually spends very little time discussing the gendered nature of these literary depictions, and instead provides an exoticizing representation of the Roma in Britain, a flaw that reinforces the very stereotypes that Esplugas purports to analyze critically. The very first paragraph of this article states that “exotic and wild, wandering Gypsies have traveled the world bewitching the noble as well as the layperson with their tales, fortune telling, and tricks” (Esplugas 145) – a statement that relies on fundamentally alienating and dehumanizing Gypsy stereotypes. The article continues in this fashion, continuing the problematic tradition of the Gypsy Lore Society by emphasizing “Gypsy Origins” before even broaching the topic of British literature. Unfortunately, this is an example of the kind of scholarship that provides a disappointing reminder of the continued marginalization of the Roma in some academic work.

Also relevant within the category of British Romani studies scholarship, is John Morgan’s “‘Counterfeit Egyptians’: The Construction and Implementation of a Criminal Identity in Early Modern England.” Morgan examines the legal construction of “Egyptian” identity in the early Modern period as centering around itinerancy and non-nativity, and the work considers how the broad application of these definitions to various groups enabled persecution based on deviation from societal norms. The article focuses on legal rather than literary depictions, yet it provides a comprehensive perspective on how the figure of the literarized Gypsy had been constructed according to deviation and Otherness, as opposed to drawing on actual features of Romani culture. Many of the motifs that Morgan identifies

within legal codes feature heavily in nineteenth-century North American literary depictions. Morgan also views the construct of the “Egyptian” identity as defined independently of association with the Roma. This provides an interesting contrast for the construction of Gypsy identity in a North American legal context described by Ann Marguerite Ostendorf in “‘An Egiptian and noe Xtian Woman’: Gypsy Identity and Race Law in Early America.” Ostendorf examines the legal position of Joan Scott, the earliest recorded Romany colonist in North America (although Hancock suggests that Roma were present in North America before British settler colonialism even began on the continent). She was charged with fornication, but as she professed not to be a Christian, she was able to win her legal battle by arguing that the court had no right to regulate her morality. Ostendorf suggests that this embracing of a uniquely “American Gypsy” identity enabled Scott to successfully challenge and position herself against the social and legal structures of the colonial U.S.

Ostendorf’s discussion of the representation and legal construction of a North American Gypsy identity brings us to specifically U.S. American literary and cultural studies scholarship that is relevant to the Romani experience, and the depictions of that experience, in U.S. literature: this work is especially relevant to my thesis in its attention to print culture and the broad literary formation of racialized tropes and the structures of race in the United States. Although most scholarship regarding race and North American print culture does not include specific discussions of the Roma (a result of the aforementioned general lack of awareness of the Roma’s history in North America), there are somewhat close parallels between the scholarship on indigenous Americans in relation to “abject whites” in U.S. American culture, such as the Irish. Thus, scholarship on these racial formations is also relevant to how the Roma are depicted in U.S. American literature and print culture: the

Roma are interpreted racially in very similar ways. A good example of this sort of applicable scholarship is Richard Slotkin's *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization 1800-1890*. Slotkin details the literary and cultural construction of North American conceptions of race and class in relation to both slavery and westward expansion or "Manifest Destiny." Slotkin pays particular attention to the role of indigenous Americans in these racial constructions, and also carefully examines the role that printed newspapers played in such deeply racialized rhetorics of the frontier and western expansion. Also notable for its applicability to the present study is Michael Denning's *Mechanic Accents: Dime Novels and Working-Class Culture in America*. Denning analyzes the role of popular print media in the construction of the Irish working class as abject whites. Denning also considers the literary figure of the "tramp" as connected with railroad strikes and likewise briefly analyzes the figure of the tramp in the context of the figure of the literarized Gypsy. He notes that "Gypsies" appear in the important dime novel *Nemo, The King of the Tramps*. However, Denning does not extensively explore the connection of the novel to the Gypsy figure. Instead, the analysis centers on the class implications of the tramp figure, which aligns with the focus of the rest of the book—an examination of the North American dime novels and their significance in U.S. print culture in relation to class dynamics and labor relations in the second half of the nineteenth century. Denning's analysis of dime novels as embedded within larger shifts in print culture is likewise of a piece with Robert Gross's wide ranging *A History of the Book in America* series, a landmark set of studies of book history in the U.S.; together these works provide a detailed framework for understanding the shifts and developments in print culture that had a significant influence on the proliferation of printed texts containing

depictions of the Roma, developments that, in turn, established and reified many of the problematic tropes via the literary, and literarized, Gypsy.

The historical and continuing presence of Roma peoples in North American society and the depictions of Roma in U.S. American literature and culture have both been largely ignored in the scholarship in U.S. literary history, print culture studies, and race and ethnic studies. It is thus only by combining aspects of the above-described different strands of scholarship that we can provide a more accurate view of the North American Roma. A continuing presence for centuries in the U.S., the Roma have been translated into and subsumed in a variety of popular literary media and, correspondingly, their experiences as an actual living, present people, has been erased. Moreover, many of those texts have now themselves been hidden or forgotten; they are often found only in the archives, with little scholarly attention paid to them. Yet these same literary depictions of the Roma, even as their precise origins in popular and often ephemeral print media of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have up to now been largely unexplored, continue to persist in invidious and racialized ways: on discussion forums, for instance, the Roma are referred to as “a stinking filthy race of people inbred with criminality” (Rowe and Goodman), and even current journalistic discourse portrays them as a homogenous European minority with no presence in the U.S. (Schneeweis). These modern ideas about the Roma construct them as a nearly invisible actual minority while they simultaneously perpetuate invidious historical stereotypes, all of which encourages the North American public (and academics) to ignore the human rights abuses that the Roma continue to suffer.

Chapter Overview

This thesis is in part a response to the relative lack of scholarship on representations of the Roma in North American literature and culture. It attempts to help fill in the gap by analyzing a broad selection of primary texts that feature depictions of the Roma found in archives of ephemeral U.S. American print culture. Accordingly, this project utilizes several digital archive databases derived from catalogued records of imprints produced in North America from the late eighteenth to the late nineteenth centuries. A search of these databases using the term Gypsy or its several common spelling variations reveals a massive number of texts that either deal directly with the subject of the Roma or, least, mention their presence, and this indicates that the literarized Gypsy occupies a significant place in North American print culture. Such a proliferation of texts challenges notions about the North American Romani presence that suggest it was only the large Romani migrations towards the end of the nineteenth century that enabled the beginning of Romani influence on North America (and that, even then, the Roma have had very little impact on U.S. American culture). On the contrary, a combination of analysis of the general content of these databases paired with close readings of specific relevant and previously unstudied texts from these sources reveal that the shifts in representations of the Roma in North American print literature correspond to broader historical shifts in North American print culture, particularly the shift away from reprinting and towards original texts. The correlative relationship between these shifts, in addition to the interrelation between literary representation and print culture more broadly, indicates that in this sociohistorical context, printed literature and its shifting forms work to literarize and assimilate the Roma into North American literary culture. Literary representations of the Roma create templates of the idealized Gypsy, which embodied Roma

are measured and judged against; Romani individuals are defined by these literary templates, preempting any unbiased judgment of their actions, and relegating their lived experiences to either confirmations or contradictions of the stereotypes. These literary templates also function to position the Roma within racial and economic hierarchies, which serves to further marginalize them.

I propose that these shifts in representations of the Roma and the corresponding shifts in print culture can be categorized into three overarching stages that correspond to the chapters of this thesis. Because of significant differences in the volume of print records available from each stage, the chapters will reflect slightly different research methodologies. These stages delineate changes in the makeup of print production and the narrative styles caused by these shifts in print culture, which correlate to similarly shifting representations of the Roma in print literature. Analyzing these parallel shifts together reveals that changes in print mediums and their distribution have caused the Roma to be represented, not only as literarized Gypsies generally, but in different narrative forms according to what medium these portrayals appear in and when they were produced.

The first of these stages extends from the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth centuries; my research dates this period specifically from 1778-1822 as determined by research strategies that I discuss in greater detail below. This stage is categorized by a large volume of reprints – authorized and unauthorized – from British publications occurring in lieu of texts mentioning Gypsies that were written in North America. These include full-text reprints of British publications, including periodicals such as *The Spectator* that were often reprinted in North America, as well as full-length novels and longer texts that were reproduced as a part of the transatlantic landscape of the North American book trade.

Examples of this latter type include *The Monk: A Romance* by Matthew Gregory Lewis, William Cowper's *The Task*, and Walter Scott's *Guy Mannering; or, The Astrologer*. The last of these was particularly influential in its depiction of the Gypsy character Meg Merrilies, the impact of which can be followed through an impressive array of later nineteenth-century depictions of Gypsies. This category of imprints also includes various texts such as music sheets, dictionary entries, and most substantially, reprints of selections from British periodicals that U.S. American newsagents deemed relevant to reprint.

The representations of Gypsies produced and printed during this stage are constructed as narrative *myth*. Predicated on the falsehood that no Roma resided in North America during the period, such narratives are based on both the assumption of the absence of Roma in North America and the mythic presence of the Roma in Europe. Texts printed during this stage reproduce the figure of the literarized mythic Gypsy as it was constructed in Britain, albeit, curated and adapted to a North American audience. Such representations portray, in contrast to Douaud and Janowitz's arguments about British texts depicting Gypsies, an image of the mythic gypsy that is mysterious and idyllic as opposed to hostile and criminal. Representations of Gypsies appear as supernatural curiosities that have little to no day-to-day relevance to the readers of the imprints in which they appear, paralleling the role of continental European mythologies in colonial North American popular literary culture. However, the racial hostility during this period directed at indigenous Americans can occasionally be seen to have been mapped onto the representations of Gypsies in this group of North American texts, which worked to produce and solidify the damaging stereotypes that appear throughout the nineteenth century and beyond.

The second stage that I identify in this thesis occurred between the years 1816 and 1866. The texts representative of this stage come from a search of North American newspapers from the period. The texts that I have selected appear, unless reprinted without attribution or credit, to have been written in exclusively North America as opposed to being reprints of British texts. This stage is characterized by a voluminous and diverse array of texts, comprising articles including neighborhood news announcements, ethnographic essays, short stories, and humorous sketch-anecdotes, as well as a number of other literary forms. Despite the great volume of texts produced during this stage, most of the texts that fall within these parameters are regarded as ephemera. Perhaps because of this status as ephemera, there has been little scholarly attention paid to these texts, and as a result of this they are not regarded as particularly influential or productive of significant cultural change. Notwithstanding references to more canonical literary works, none of them can be identified as more influential or important in terms of impact than any other, particularly as a result of the uncertainties regarding newspaper distribution and circulation numbers. As a result of these texts' statuses as ephemera, they are preserved only insofar as collectors or institutions think to save them, so assertions regarding the importance of any one of these texts particularly is fraught.

This category's representations of Gypsy figures are centered around narrative constructions of the Roma as *news*. Some of the most important texts from this period are brief articles that announce the arrival of the "first Gypsies to arrive in America" (even though, as Hancock argues, the Roma realistically were present in North America for many years preceding this period). There are even several examples of this type of text from different publications, describing different groups of Romani immigrants in different years.

Other texts from this period announce the arrival of a group of Roma camping in a specific area, warning readers of the newspaper about them, or report interactions that locals had with them. A huge number of these texts are made up of news articles that detail the “massive heist” undertaken by a group of Gypsies, or how a “local” individual was tricked out of thousands of dollars by cooperating with a Gypsy fortune-telling or wealth-creation scheme. Central to these depictions is the presence of the Roma in the U.S., contrasting the assumed absence in the mythic category. These stories are presented as largely factual, save for the short stories and clearly fictional anecdotes (whose fiction is evinced by the fact that a singular anecdote about two women, a pail of water, and a Gypsy fortune-teller was reprinted as “news” repeatedly over many years). More pertinent than the potential for these texts to be read as factual, however, is their consistent strategies for reckoning with the present Gypsy Other; no longer an absent and mythic figure, these texts reveal extensive anxieties about the presence of Romani individuals in white U.S. American society and the cultural upheaval that they are perceived to bring. This category of texts was also perhaps the most formative for how the Roma came to be figured into North American cultural conceptions of race and class: although the first period of print culture that I designate was significant in its reproduction of British stereotypes, this category demonstrates how these stereotypes were integrated into North American culture and solidified the perception of the Roma as criminal, untrustworthy, and undesirable.

Finally, the third stage that I have designated ranges from 1876-1895 (the gap between this category and the previous appears due to necessary differences in sampling methodology predicated by the massive volume of texts produced during this period, not the desire to erase the print literature of an entire decade). For this chapter, I move away from

large-scale analysis of newspaper imprints and turn to closer analysis of the genre of dime novels, which Denning defines as inclusive of dime novels, nickel weeklies, story papers, reprint libraries, serial books, and other forms of mass-produced literature, with the specific nomenclatures used as branding and marketing strategies. These genres take the form of popular recreational literature sold very cheaply and with very wide reading audiences. This category includes *Nemo, The King of the Tramps; or, the Romany Girl's Revenge*, which, as I note above, has been interpreted by Michael Denning to be reflective of the nineteenth-century railroad strikes and their influence on popular print culture. There are many other dime novels that contain representations of Gypsy figures: the sheer number of these texts requires the primary database for full-text dime novel searching, *Nickels and Dimes*, to have a catalog tag dedicated to Romanies. The proliferation and wide readership of these dime novels, evinced by this catalog tag, speaks to their potential influence on North American popular culture.

The narrative portrayal of Gypsy figures in these very popular and cheaply produced texts I classify as *romance*. This stage of Romani representation and print culture synthesizes the central features of the first two categories: the mystery and drama of myth-based representations is combined with the “realistic” portrayals of Gypsies as criminal in newspapers to fully subsume the embodied Roma into this literary form. They have been fully narrativized in a way that simultaneously erases and denigrates the presence of living Roma in North America, relegating them to a literary trope. The representation of the Roma in dime novels most closely resembles the representational style that has persisted in North American popular culture to this day, and in fact modern Hollywood portrayals of Gypsy figures can be traced back through the lineage and the impact of the dime novel in popular

culture. The persistence of these type of narrative representations of the Roma in popular culture emphasizes the urgency of this research, as North American printed texts of the nineteenth century were foundational in constructing the basis for these portrayals and have largely gone unstudied until now.

Chapter One: Data Sources and Research Methodologies

The primary sources that I utilize for this thesis have been selected based on my engagement with several databases—digital archives in many cases—containing records of eighteenth and nineteenth century North American printed texts – namely, the Evans and Shaw-Shoemaker collections of the *America's Historical Imprints* database, the various collections that fall under the purview of *America's Historical Newspapers*, and the *Nickels and Dimes* database, generated from the Johannsen and Leblanc collections at Northern Illinois University. These databases contain vast numbers of various types of imprints, including newspapers, songbooks, almanacs, dictionaries, novels, poetry collections, as well as numerous other genres of miscellaneous printed texts. Many of these texts have been regarded as ephemera and therefore as largely insignificant, despite the fact that these texts were often more accessible and widely distributed than the more expensive forms of print literature that now typically garner more literary analysis. The historic accessibility and great popularity of these ephemeral texts suggest that these texts had significant impacts on North American culture and played a vital role in shaping North American constructs of race and class. The texts that I analyze are particularly significant in that they both reflected and contributed to cultural attitudes towards the Romani presence in North America. By utilizing these electronic databases to recover these infrequently researched texts, my analysis illuminates important facets of stereotypical literary representations of the Romani and their role in culture that would otherwise be overlooked.

Central to this thesis is the fact that a significant majority of references to the Roma in nineteenth century print literature appear in ephemeral textual forms rather than those forms that are more frequently preserved, analyzed, and regarded as culturally significant.

Newspaper articles, cheap story papers and dime novels, and various miscellaneous texts published for popular consumption frequently use the Roma as a source of entertainment or intrigue. These texts are now twice forgotten. The first “forgetting” occurred after they were initially read by their target audiences, as today’s newspapers are discarded in favor of the publications of tomorrow, for instance. This initial forgetting of such texts and the treatment of their physical printed forms as entirely disposable resulted in reduced numbers of them having been preserved for research. Moreover, for the texts that were preserved, there has been a second forgetting, in that they have been locked up in archives, often incompletely cataloged (if cataloged at all), and thus they continue to be largely overlooked by scholars. If not for the efforts and foresight of a small number of select individuals who deemed it important to preserve such ephemeral texts, it is likely that even more of this important part of the literary and historical record would have been lost. Indeed, it is difficult to estimate how many of these texts did not manage to survive through preservation and archival efforts – it is likely or even assured that there are many textual depictions of the Roma that have been lost to time.

The tendency for the Roma to be represented by non-Romani authors primarily in such ephemeral textual forms of nineteenth-century North American literature is a mechanism of oppression that enables a phenomenon that I term “parallel amnesia.” The nature of most nineteenth-century representations of the Roma as objects of entertainment means that they are not considered serious subject matter by either white authors or white readers. Thus, depictions of the Roma, because the texts in which they appeared were so easily discarded, have substantially faded from the U.S. American contemporary cultural consciousness. As these texts are forgotten, so too are the Roma that these texts depict: not

considered important enough to be written about in prestige-hardbacks, the Roma are limited to the periphery of the culture, and they are remembered when they couched as the subjects of entertaining sources of light amusement for readers. Second, after these readers finish such texts, any sense of the Roma as an actual, living people, disappears (if it was there at all). In sum, both the cultural awareness of the Roma and texts in which they are depicted are all too easily discarded and forgotten.

This parallel amnesia is enabled by the literarization that Katie Trumpener suggests is crucial to cultural conceptions of the Roma (849). The process by which literary depictions of the Roma are allowed to supplant the actual, embodied Roma in a hegemony, literarization means that embodied Roma are replaced in the North American cultural consciousness by texts that depict them. The print forms that these texts take means that the Roma are then forgotten and rendered invisible in North American culture. Ian Hancock considers the erasure and invisibility of the Roma to be a primary mechanism of their oppression (4); the ephemeral print forms in which the Roma are depicted, the literarization of the Roma, and the parallel amnesia as a result of the combination of these factors, enacts this erasure in the North American context. Even retrospectively, the status of these texts as ephemera are glossed over by literary and historical scholars as unimportant: not literary enough for scholars of literature, and not verifiably factual enough for historians. My research, however, is enabled by the new accessibility of historically ephemeral texts now digitized. These texts contain depictions of the Roma, and thus I have been able to analyze the attitudes contained within these texts, and so contribute to the process of recovering such depictions, and to help to redress the parallel amnesia I describe above.

Much of the printed literature of nineteenth-century North America has been heretofore inaccessible simply because the large numbers of texts produced during the period that have been preserved have been locked up in poorly cataloged archives. But the recent digitization of such archived collections, notable in their scale and diversity, is the primary reason why research for this thesis has been possible. Full-text keyword recognition and Boolean search engines, as well as careful archival categorization of different types of texts and their dates of publication, have enabled me to locate and research references to the Roma at a scale that has not been attempted before in the context of U.S. Romani studies. These database tools have allowed the collection of a significant number of primary sources, collected via a variety of search methods and selection criteria. Prior to the digitization of these archives, library cataloguing and personal engagement with print archives would have comprised the basis of studies of textual representations of the Roma. Simply because of the time required to engage with print archival material compared to digital, these studies would have been limited to a few texts that a researcher would manage to locate. Even then, it is likely that the texts identified for these studies would often not be the ephemeral texts that I argue are significant in the overall state of textual representations of the Roma, simply because of the labor commitment involved in physically going through a century of print newspapers, which are notoriously fragile to handle directly. But the recent digitization of North American pamphlets and pamphlet novels, newspapers, and other forms, such as story papers and Dime Novels, has allowed me to search thousands of relevant texts for relevance and significance. To give a sense of the scale of this project, and of just how much we do not yet realize about depictions of the Roma in popular ephemeral texts, a single search in the America's Historical Newspapers database initially returned 150,656 results.

However, despite the advantages of digitization to recover texts, the time required to manually check and read every search “hit,” is a significant limiting factor: the massive (occasionally, apparently exponential) increases in the number of texts printed at different points throughout the nineteenth century have thus required me to alter and narrow my research practices, depending on which the database and period I examined. In some cases, instead of manually looking at each record pulled from the database, I used a sampling method to collect texts from across a longer range of time, rather than trying to reading a massive volume of texts. For example, between 1822 and 1866, nearly 80,000 texts that refer to the Roma in one way or another were printed. Clearly it would be a well-nigh insurmountable task for one individual to read and analyze every one of these 80,000 texts (especially in the compressed time of conducting thesis research), so I found that methods of cutting down the number of texts to analyze were necessary.

There were several additional factors that complicated my database research that I also had to address. One of the initial obstacles in finding relevant sources was the struggle to find the correct terminology for the Roma that would actually locate relevant results. It is as yet unclear the extent to which the terms Roma, Romani, Romany, etc. were each used during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, for several reasons. Most of all, it appears that these terms were not frequently used by non-Roma to refer to the Roma until relatively recently (some time in the twentieth century). The term Roma was primarily used by individuals that belonged to that group, and even then, such a wide umbrella term was less likely to be used than more specific terms such as Rom, Dom, Romanichal, or Vlax Romani. Moreover, the Romani language itself had remained largely spoken, and there is little evidence of substantive adaption into an alphabetical writing system until the early-mid

twentieth century. Of course, there likely were geographically limited forms of written Romani that pre-date this larger shift, but any texts written by the Roma in these localized forms do not appear in the databases that archive texts in English from the seventeenth through the nineteenth century. Similarly, if there exist references by non-Roma individuals to the Roma using their own self-designated (oral or written) terms, the technology available currently has not revealed them. References to the Roma lead to references to romance, Romans, and several other irrelevant terms. With Boolean constraints – “Roma” – records pull texts written in Italian that reference Rome. Romani, likewise, leads to references to Romania. Even with all the appropriate constraints attached to these search terms, the limits of mechanically scanned and digitized textual artifacts lead to numerous false flags, particularly in older or more damaged texts: searches for the spelling variant “Romany” often result in texts that use the word “Romans,” just as a result of a flaw in the computer-based digitization process and text recognition technology.

These obstacles in my research, combined with the unlikelihood of non-Romani writers using the term Roma during this period, resulted in my decision to base my searches around the term “Gypsy.” This word has several spelling variations, so in order to generate maximal results for a more accurate sampling of relevant texts, my keyword searches used the following search: “gypsy OR gypsies OR gipsy OR gipsies.” I found that listing the various terms, for some reason that is remains unclear, worked better than simply using the Boolean asterisk — g*ps*— which produced significantly fewer results. Also, in order to reduce false negatives, I did not include the terms Bohemian or Egyptian in my searches. Bohemian, frequently misapplied to describe Eastern European Romani populations, simply resulted in too many references to the Bohemian region. Likewise, Egyptian or “Egipycean”

(as it is often spelled in older texts) results in too many references to Egypt, per se, rather than references to the Roma, despite the then popular belief that they migrated to Europe from Egypt. Although it is possible that there are significant numbers of texts that reference the Roma using these terms, I unfortunately had to exclude them from searches in order to better manage the time-consuming nature of eliminating false positives. Considering all the factors noted above, I am relatively confident that searching for the term “Gypsy” and its spelling variations produced an accurate cross-section of nineteenth-century textual references the Roma, and one that was manageable given the time constraints of conducting thesis research.

Furthermore, and despite its problematic connotations in contemporary discourse, Gypsy remains the most accurate and period-appropriate term, particularly as the texts I focus on were produced exclusively by non-Romani individuals. This is another reason why I use the term Gypsy throughout this thesis: the framework constructed by Gay Y Blasco – where the term “Gypsy” is used to refer to “exoticizing and Orientalizing representations, and ‘Roma’ to refer to the conglomerate of populations that would identify themselves as Gypsy, Roma, Gitano, Tsigane and so on” – remains consistent with the use of the word Gypsy within these texts, for the most part. The non-Romani individuals that produced these texts, because of their own prejudices and through the active process of literarization, often depict these “exoticizing and Orientalizing representations” as opposed to writing neutrally about embodied Roma. Indeed, it is significant that all of – or the vast majority of – these texts use the term Gypsy to depict the Roma; the construction of the mythicized stereotype of the Gypsy is more important to the authors of these texts than representing the Roma accurately. This prioritization of the mythic Gypsy stereotype over embodied Roma is just

one of the biases revealed by this database research, and indeed this prioritization persists in contemporary discourse; a simple search for the frequency of the terms “Gypsy” and “Romani” in United States Google searches reveals the continued relevance of this dichotomy in representations (see fig. 1). The fact that the constraints I experienced in my database research due to nineteenth-century literary Orientalism are virtually identical to constraints that I would experience in searching for contemporary depictions of the Roma reinforces the importance of these types of textual analysis and research.

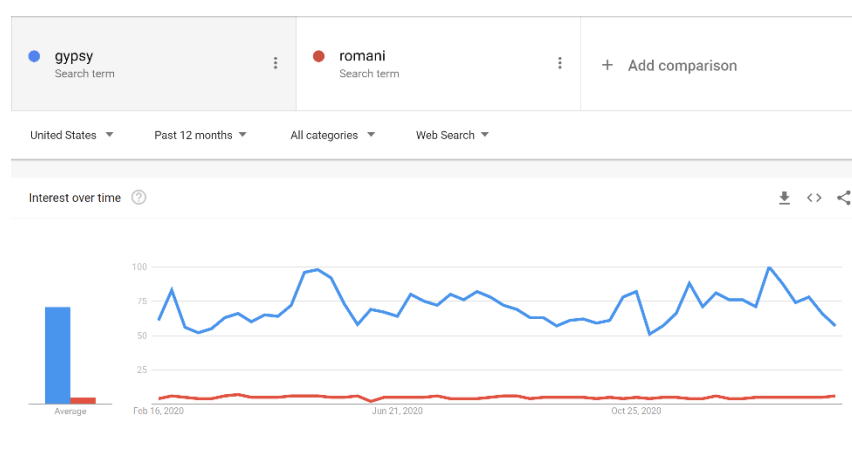


Figure 1. A Google Trends search for the terms Gypsy and Romani over the last twelve months (2/14/2021). The term Gypsy is obviously – and significantly – more common than Romani.

The massive number of texts that reference the Roma – or perhaps more appropriately, those that reference mythicized Gypsies – still pose a problem for conducting research, however. Even in the periods of time with few enough texts that I can manually check every record that my database searches pull, I regret that it is still inaccessibly time-consuming to fully read every single text that is potentially interesting or significant. Even with the application of numerous search strategies, Boolean constraints, and category limitations (which I discuss more thoroughly in my descriptions of the research process for

individual chapters), I still ended up with several hundred texts that I needed to reduce in order to present a coherent and readable thesis.

Specific Research Methods in Relation to Individual Thesis Chapters

For my first chapter, I collected texts from 1773-1822. These texts were collected from two primary databases: the America's Historical Imprints database, which contains the Evans and Shaw-Shoemaker collections, and America's Historical Newspapers. These two databases contain the most comprehensive records of North American printed texts from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and, given this comprehensiveness, we can reasonably assume they contain proportionally accurate records of references to Romani people throughout print literature of the period. Indeed, the distribution of these references between the databases and within the individual decades catalogued within them appear to accurately represent the extent to which the Roma are depicted in these texts – and to an extent, in broader North American culture – throughout the years. This allows us to analyze these trends without fear of disproportionate representation or underrepresentation: since these databases contain such a vast array of texts and have not been curated in reference to any specific subject or topic, there appears to be few factors that would skew the data.

The America's Historical Imprints database is described by Readex – the company that gathers these collections and develops the software used to catalog and navigate them – as containing “virtually every known book, pamphlet and broadside published in the U.S. between 1639 and the first two decades of the nineteenth century—more than 75,000 printed items in all.” America's Historical Newspapers, also provided by Readex, is the most comprehensive online resource available for digitized historical newspapers and contains

“digital facsimiles of thousands of titles from all 50 states.” Across these two databases, the search process for this first category was the most straightforward regarding searching for and choosing texts. I searched for all instances of the term Gypsy and its spelling variations within the full text of works printed up until 1822. In the case of America’s Historical Newspapers, I eliminated records with the word “hat” contained within: evidently, there was a type of hat style called the Gipsy bonnet that was relatively popular for milliners to mention in their advertisements. There was also a shipping vessel called *The Gipsy* that occurs in naval records and for-sale advertisements at different points throughout the period, although I was unable to filter these out due to the occasional mention of Roma arriving on ships. Examples of these types of “junk” results follow in figure 2 and figure 3:

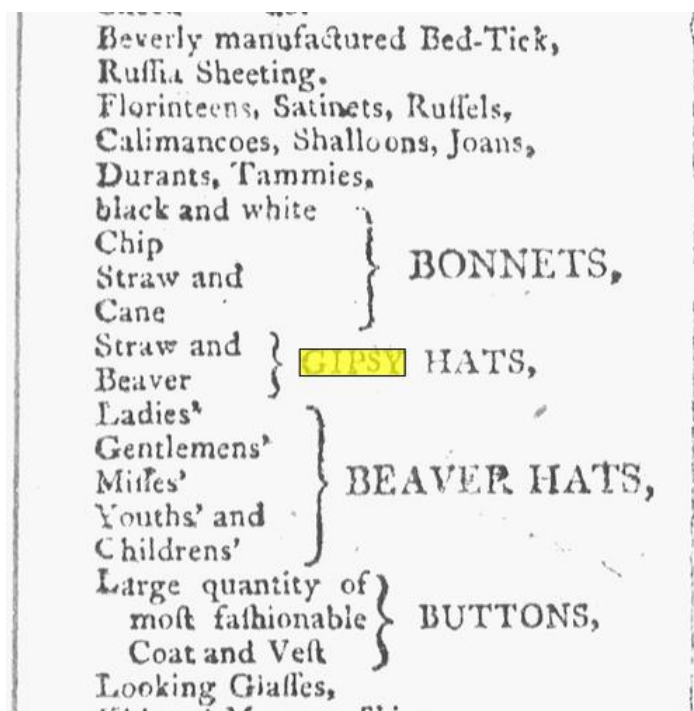


Figure 2. An example of an advertisement selling “gipsy hats” (“Advertisement,” *Newburyport Herald*)

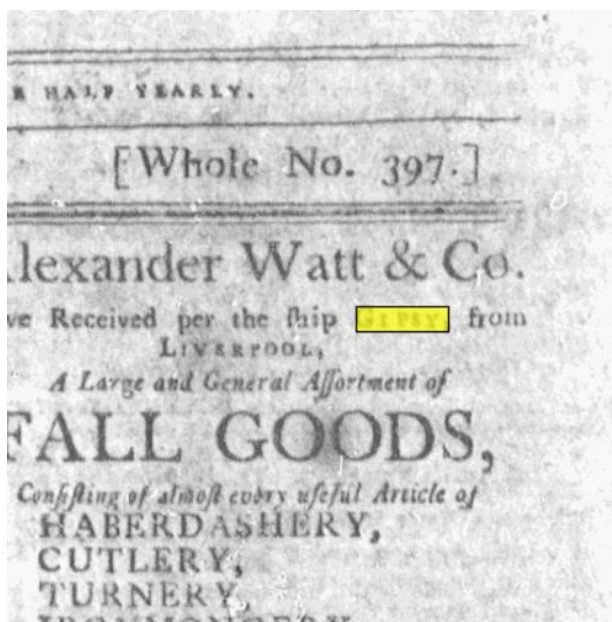


Figure 3. An advertisement for goods that were imported in the hold of the ship Gipsy (“Advertisement,” *Columbian Museum and Savannah Advertiser*)

With these constraints applied, the American Historical Imprints database search engine pulled 753 records, and America’s Historical Newspapers pulled 2,108. With American Historical Imprints, I simply opened every record that I determined to be relevant (e.g. not a repeat of a previous record and not a misapplication of the search terms: there were quite a few references to the mineral gypsum in this database).

<input type="checkbox"/> 1770 - 1779	1
<input type="checkbox"/> 1780 - 1789	2
<input type="checkbox"/> 1790 - 1799	13
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800 - 1809	310
<input type="checkbox"/> 1810 - 1819	635
<input type="checkbox"/> 1820 - 1829	4,928

Figure 4. The number of database records in *America’s Historical Newspapers* that contain the word Gypsy, organized by decade, indicating a significant increase in texts each decade.

<input type="checkbox"/> 1814	16
<input type="checkbox"/> 1815	56
<input type="checkbox"/> 1816	124
<input type="checkbox"/> 1817	104
<input type="checkbox"/> 1818	81
<input type="checkbox"/> 1819	53
<input type="checkbox"/> 1820	189
<input type="checkbox"/> 1821	179
<input type="checkbox"/> 1822	779
<input type="checkbox"/> 1823	1,029

Figure 5. The number of database records in *America's Historical Newspapers* that contain the word Gypsy, organized by year 1814-1823

In pulling from this still quite significant number of records (see fig. 4 and fig. 5), I selected texts that seemed to be most revealing of how the Roma have been culturally constructed through imprints in North America. I paid special attention to print forms that I viewed as atypical to conduct a literary study of: songsheets, dictionary entries, and similar textual forms fell within this category. I selected these types of texts because I believe them to be instances where passive attitudes towards the Roma are revealed without editorialization or dramatization: a children's picture book referring to Gypsies as "idle" individuals that "young people should not encourage" or an encyclopedia entry declaring that "A liberal policy would probably destroy their corporate existence in all nations" seem to me markedly more damning than similar sentiments in a novel, where they could just be dismissed as fictional overdramatization. I repeated this search process for the America's Historical Newspapers database, and I reviewed nearly 2000 entries before I realized that the number of records per year was increasing dramatically. Because of this increase in the number of imprints, 1822 was the last year that I used this specific methodology, and thus the year delineates the second time category that I discuss, which stretches from 1822-1866. However, before I discuss this later time category, I want to discuss a few interesting trends in the data, aside

from the otherwise obvious increase in the printing of texts that mention the Roma in North America. It is necessary to mention that America's Historical Newspapers has significantly more tools available to look at these data trends, so I primarily observed these data trends in this database.

Notably, the texts containing the term Gypsy in the America's Historical Newspapers database were printed in 115 cities, spreading across twenty-four states. These imprints tend to concentrate in large cities which, by nature of their large populations and the development of the print trade in North America, produce significant numbers of texts. New York, particularly, is the origin of many of the texts that fall within this data set, yet despite this large number of texts being printed, it does not appear that this number is indicative of a substantial Romani influence on the city. Although New York during this period was a hub of immigration, there are no clear records in these texts of Romani immigration or the presence of Roma within the city: based on the data I have collected, it seems much more likely that the number of texts mentioning Gypsies is an artifact of the massive numbers of texts in general being printed in New York. Likewise, in places where there are records of populations of Roma such as Louisiana, there is no observable corresponding increase in printed textual depictions of Gypsies. Potentially, these trends indicate a slight skew towards representations of the Roma being printed in densely populated cities, but it is hard to determine from this data the extent to which that is an artifact of the North American print trade versus a particular interest in the topic. If this skew did exist, it could potentially be read as an increased interest in Othered depictions of country life in contrast to the busyness of the city as a manifestation of the "myth of the frontier in the age of industrialization" that Richard Slotkin discusses (1). In fact, this city/country binary is crucial to many depictions of

Gypsies in literature, as suggested by Anne Janowitz (213) and, to an extent, Michael Denning (151), but without a more substantial comparison of the print productions of these cities compared to the texts that they produce mentioning the Roma, I cannot confidently say that my data supports this, at least in terms of pure numbers.

The second category of data that I designate for this thesis, corresponding to the second analysis chapter, is constructed from primary sources that I pulled exclusively from the America's Historical Newspapers database. For this set, I used the same search terms and limiters as the first data range, but I changed two crucial fields: firstly, I changed the keyword searches to pull only those records that are classified as "news articles," which excludes advertisements, shipping news, etc. This took the number of records from approximately 130,000 to 80,000. I also limited the number of searches to only those news articles that contain the term Gypsy in the headline of the article, as opposed to the full text of the newspaper; this allowed me to pull a greater proportion of texts that center around depictions of Gypsies, instead of those that might briefly mention them or even just use the word Gypsy as a descriptive adjective unrelated to the Roma. This limited the search results to roughly 10,000 entries, which is still a prohibitively large number of texts for a single individual to quickly read. For this reason, I chose not to look through all – or even most – of the texts from this section. Instead, I sampled roughly one record out of every fifty results in order to construct a general idea of what sorts of texts are represented in this dataset. I selected the one result out of fifty based on a) the requirement that it was not a reprint or similar text to a source that I had pulled before, b) the representation of a wide variety of types of newspaper article, and c) the ability to represent crucial facets to the stereotypical depictions of the Roma that constitute the main subject of this thesis.

Irrespective of the methods used to pare down the number of results, the original result of 130,000 newspaper records from this period that mention Gypsies is astonishingly high, particularly considering most people are under the impression that there was not a substantial Roma population in North America until the last decades of the nineteenth century. These records originate from 191 cities across all 50 states, and the prints are no longer concentrated in a few large northern printing hubs but more evenly spread out across the country. It is also notable that during this period, the most heavily acknowledged migrations of the Roma into the United States occurred in the North, but other areas of the country still produce texts about the Roma at high rates (see fig. 6), indicating that the increase in texts is not simply a reflection of increases in Romani populations.

USA - Massachusetts	963
USA - Pennsylvania	831
USA - Michigan	693
USA - Georgia	618
USA - Missouri	614
USA - Ohio	562
USA - Louisiana	509

Figure 6. The top seven states for printing texts containing the word Gypsy. Other states produce significantly fewer texts, but these main centers of printing are more evenly distributed across the country than in the previous category.

The general increase in the number of imprints produced over time also holds true for this section. There is slight overlap with the dates of the first section; my research for this category begins with 1816. Because the database that I use for the third section starts at 1866, that is where I have capped the research for this section. However, it is worth noting that there were mass migrations of Roma beginning in the last decade of the century. My research does not show this directly, as I cap my data collection at 1893 as a result of the copyright laws that were introduced at that time (and the necessity of getting to an endpoint for this

project at some point), there were indeed a substantial number of texts produced after this date, ostensibly in reaction to the migrations of Romani populations into the United States. It is also worth noting that this category contains the earliest source that I have located of the Roma being referred to as Roma instead of Gypsies: an 1859 article from the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* refers to them, in the context of the Romani language and how it is spread, as the “Children of Romma.” Although this does not necessarily point to a reduction in stereotypical ideas of the Gypsy, it does point toward a greater awareness of actual Romani people and their presence in North America.

The data for the third chapter of my research comes from the Nickels and Dimes database, compiled and serviced by Northern Illinois University. This database contains exclusively those types of texts that comprise the genre dime novel, which contains nickel weeklies and reprint libraries that have similar formats. The site contains “materials from two major dime novel collections in Rare Books and Special Collections at Northern Illinois University, the Albert Johannsen and Edward T. LeBlanc Collections.” The search process was also relatively straightforward for this database: I used the pre-arranged subject tags for “Romanies” and “Romanies—Fiction,” which was convenient. This search, limited by my date cap of 1893, turned up forty-three search results. Unfortunately, since these dime novels are quite long, it was still prohibitive to read all of them to look for representations of Roma to analyze, so I limited it further by manually picking out the eleven dime novels that contain the word Gypsy in the title in order to focus on texts that feature Gypsy characters prominently in the stories.

Chapter Two: The Roma as Myth in Printed Ephemera, 1773-1822

In this chapter I analyze the literarized Gypsy as a mythological figure that appears in texts taken from the digital databases America's Historical Imprints and America's Historical Newspapers, with a date range of 1773 to 1822. The majority of these texts are imported British texts reprinted in North American print shops. These texts were sometimes reprinted in whole, such as full-copy reprints of the British *Spectator*, but often U.S. American printers would choose selections from British texts and include them as part of their domestic newspapers, miscellanies, and other collections of short works such as poetry anthologies or songbooks. Reprints of British texts made up a significant percentage of North American imprints overall during this period, and they represent a significant aspect of the transatlantic cultural exchange between the United States and Britain as well as the developmental state of printing and textual production in the U.S. The prevalence of reprints within the North American print landscape at the time, then, means that logically representations of the Gypsy figures often appear in British reprints. Notably, however, the Gypsy figure seems almost exclusively limited to such British reprints; there are next to no references to the Roma in texts that were actually written in North America during this period. This absence can be explained by the supposed absence of the Roma from North America during the period. The cultural mythologies that had been built up around the Romani people at this time had primarily originated in continental Europe and Britain, as their presence in those locales was significantly more visible than in North America. Because North American cultures had not yet formulated any unique stereotypes of the Roma during the period, the literarized Gypsy was, necessarily, imported. Nevertheless, these reprinted texts were still instrumental in the construction of the Gypsy as a mythic figure in North American culture; crucially, without

the prevalence of these reprints in the transatlantic print market prior to the first major visible migrations of the Roma to North America, there would not have existed an established North American body of stereotype and myth about the Gypsy, and, when larger numbers of Romani peoples arrived in North America, these previously imported myths had a drastic impact on how the first acknowledged Romani immigrants to the United States were perceived and written about.

Although this chapter focuses on the various shorter-form texts and miscellanies that I located and argue are central to the construction of the literarized Gypsy, this period contains reprints of several well-known British texts, which I must briefly discuss due to their prominence during the period. *The Monk: A Romance* by Matthew Gregory Lewis, William Cowper's *The Task*, and Walter Scott's *Guy Mannering; or, The Astrologer* all appeared as reprints in North America during this period, and they were occasionally referenced in other U.S. American texts that depicted Gypsies. Since the above-named texts have already been discussed extensively by British literary and Romani Studies scholars, I will not analyze them at length here. They are, however, worth briefly discussing, since they were imported and reprinted in North America, and they tended to reinforce the stereotypes that were already circulating in North America in shorter more ephemeral texts. To begin, the figure of Meg Merrilies, from *Guy Mannering*, is a significant example of the quintessential British Gypsy figure, and Meg Merrilies is mentioned in several of the miscellaneous texts and articles that appear within this category. The authors of these texts frame Meg Merrilies as a template for the ideal Gypsy figure and judge other Gypsy figures based on how well they conform to the cornerstone template created by Walter Scott. In a sense, the Meg Merrilies of British literature acts as an archetype: her character is removed from her original context and

held up as *the* Gypsy, and all other Gypsies are measured against this idealized and mythic figure by readers and authors alike.

The Literarized Gypsy as Mythic Narrative

The contours of the Gypsy as an archetype, in broader terms, are important in understanding how Gypsy characters were constructed in North American reprints as literarized myths divorced from the actual Roma. As archetypal figures, these Gypsies are divested from realistic human complexity and reduced to mythic tropes that are locked within repeated narrative patterns. For example, consider this brief passage, first printed in the eighteenth-century London newspaper *The Connoisseur* and subsequently reprinted in Philadelphia, it is taken from a larger piece condemning the “idle superstitions of the vulgar.” The text provides a classic literarized Gypsy, and it is a telling example of how Gypsy characters were constructed as magical and mythic but unreal figures:

Virgil represents Dido, as soon as she has contracted her fatal passion for Aeneas, going to the priest to have her fortune told. In like manner the love-sick girl . . . crosses *the gypsy's hand* with her last six-pence, to know when she will be married, how many children she will have, and whether she shall be happy with her husband. (Town, emphasis added)

The comparison of Dido's request to the priests in Virgil's epic to the request of a love-sick girl to a Gypsy fortuneteller has several important implications for the textual representations of Gypsies, representing many of the crucial elements of the construction of the Gypsy as a mythic figure. First, and perhaps most obvious, is that the Gypsy figure is depicted in parallel with characters in a classical and epic work from the ancient past, but the comparison with

this work, because it is mythic and literary, clearly literarizes the Gypsy, translating it into the realm of imaginative and mythic Romance, rather than depicting the Gypsy as a realistically complex human figure. Moreover, the description of the compared exchange between a “love-struck girl” and a Gypsy is reduced from the epic, if mythic, scope of the *Aeneid* to one of childish frivolity. In tension with this frivolity, the comparison also marks the Gypsy as invested with a potential mysterious power similar to that of Dido’s trusted priest; readers of the scene might understandably interpret the Gypsy’s proffered power to tell fortunes as fraudulent and silly, in keeping with the credulity of a “love-struck girl.” Notably, the *Connoisseur* here is relying on the idea that Gypsy fortunetelling is a farcical event, a derisive portrayal that recurs in many textual depictions of Gypsies – yet, as is the case with many reprinted texts from this period, the Gypsy is actually constructed as genuinely magical: within the bounds of the text’s diegesis via the comparison to Dido’s priest, the Gypsy appears as an authoritative figure with the potential to hold meaningful spiritual power and even accurately tell fortunes. Thus, the text’s comparison of the scene to that of the *Aeneid* – the epic *myth* of the founding of Rome – positions the literarized Gypsy, even if used for comic purposes, as a mythic, truly magical, but literary figure, one stripped of any realistic, individuated qualities.

These sorts of mythical representations abound in this body of texts: from the oft-reprinted magical tale of two girls who are “accosted by a gipseey woman, who promised to shew [sic] them their future husband’s faces in a pail of water” (“Some Time Since,” *The Vergennes Gazette*) to digressions on how “some young ladies confide too much in fortunetelling,” leading them to locate “their Adonis” that the “[Gypsy] Witch of Ender has described” (“Some Young Ladies,” *Spirit of the Press*), Gypsies are often represented as

simultaneously genuinely magical and fraudulent, as well as parallel to mythic figures. In “Of Gipsies, Conjurours, &c,” the Gypsy is also constructed as the mythic downfall of the main character: “The efficient cause of [Belinda’s] complicated distress, may be traced up to the fortune teller. Her enigmatical words, by occupying a vacant place in Belinda’s thought, sapped the foundation of sanctity in manners” (“Of Gipsies, Conjurors, &c,” *Ladies Port Folio*). Belinda’s object of affection in this passage is named Polydore, the name yet again a reference to classical and epic myth. The Gypsy figures in all of the above passages disappear as soon as they have served their mythic role as a fortuneteller, suggesting the inability of the mythicized Gypsy to exist beyond the bounds of the text: they are absent from the geographical context of the readers and exist as objects of fantasy.

The construction of the Gypsy character as a mythic figure in the passages above is crucial for this section of my thesis: within the texts that I collected from this period, the narrative construction of the mythic Gypsy is most common. For the purposes of this chapter, I use the term myth in the contemporary popular sense to refer to that genre of narrative which is regarded as untrue and even legendary and/or folkloric and yet still conveys ideological and social meaning through their entertainment value and implicit (and sometimes explicit) moral messages. Also significant is that, within the North American cultural context, myths – primarily those first produced in Britain and continental Europe— Arthurian and Greek myths, for example— are read as belonging to times and places that are “somewhere else.” This enhances the invocation of Otherness for the Roma. The mythic representations of Gypsies in these texts are made possible by their assumed (incorrect, as we have discussed) absence in North America; by virtue of this purported absence, combined with their presence in an imagined Romanticized European past, the literarized Gypsy

represents the mythic Other. The Roma, within the ephemeral, popular texts that I analyze below, are literarized Gypsies in ways typical to their respective formal and material genres, and they are very often similar to the Gypsy fortune-teller from the *Connoisseur* passage above; the Gypsies depicted in such ways are granted supernatural powers and a certain sense of mystical authority. Nevertheless, the many negative elements of these stereotyped and genre-based depictions – the creation of patently unreal and “magical” Gypsies, who are often seen as foolish or conniving – are, because of that very unreal and “magical” construction, made into subjects of entertainment value, while the actual Roma, both as an actual presence in Europe and a soon to be significant immigrant population in North America, essentially disappear from the cultural consciousness as a real group of people.

This construction of the Gypsy as a figure of myth during this period, based on their supposed absence, is what enabled Gypsies in North American culture to be viewed as nonthreatening objects of entertainment. Because readers believed that no Roma existed in their proximity, the Gypsy figures in the North American print context are not in any way real to readers and therefore have no more capacity to be actually threatening than the cyclops from Homer’s *Odyssey*. Like fairy-tale bogeymen – or the mythical Amazons with their posited strange sexual practices – these Gypsies function as a safe way for North American readers to enjoy the titillation and exoticism inherent in Otherness without feeling a need to confront any actual Roma Others who might live within their own borders. Thus, there are fewer of the sort of fearmongering warnings about local Gypsy populations and child-stealing as are found in Europe, and more texts that represent these Gypsy figures as non-threatening fortune tellers and peddlers. This is the reason why Kristine Douaud (1) and Anne Janowitz’s (167) observations about the trends in British depictions of Gypsies do not

necessarily hold true for similar North American depictions. Because these stereotypically negative depictions – including facets of criminality, poverty, uncleanness, and the like – are reprinted in a North American context, under the supposition that the Roma do not exist on the continent, even depictions of Gypsies that are textually identical to those printed in Britain were received with less vitriol.

This construction of the North American literarized Gypsy archetype as nonthreatening objects of mythic narratives speaks to their role in North American reading culture; although they function as safe explorations of the Other, these texts were primarily selected to be reprinted for their entertainment value, and thus the vast majority of the texts that I collected from this period were written or presented in a fashion that indicates they were intended to entertain or amuse. More than other textual forms, the texts from this period include a significant proportion of poems, plays, amusing short anecdotes, and the like. Even records of factual occurrences or legal proceedings are presented in a fashion that indicates they were intended to entertain: in an 1812 text by J.B. Depping titled *Evening Entertainments*, “Thirty-Seventh Evening” provides an ethnography of the Roma in the form of a dialogue between a father and his children, with the father providing dramatic accounts of their dress and customs, while the children react in surprise and fascination. Although the information that the father presents in this text could have been found within any informational text regarding the Roma from the period, the information is framed as entertaining: after the father announces that he will “treat of the vagabonds known in this country by the appellation of *Gypsies*,” the curiosity of his children is excited, and “it might be seen in their eyes how eagerly they awaited the particulars he was about to communicate respecting these people” (418). Likewise, newspaper columns regarding crimes committed

by Roma – in Britain, no less – are sensationalized; descriptions of relatively boring and mundane British crimes and legal proceedings that lack drama are not reprinted, as they have no value (situationally, morally, or otherwise) to a North American audience seeking to be entertained by a mythic and exotic Other.

Gypsy Figures in Miscellanies

The representation of literarized Gypsies as entertaining mythological and Otheresque figures is underlined by the material printed forms in which they appear. Although many ephemeral print forms feature such constructed Gypsies, the printed “miscellanies” of the period prominently feature these literarized Others and give insight into why texts depicting Gypsy figures were so frequently reprinted in North America (see fig. 7). The miscellany was a collection of disparate texts, sometimes extracted from other sources and sometimes original, that were collected in a single printed text, typically in tabloid or pamphlet format. Miscellanies could include almost any genre of written text, and they frequently contained more than one genre in a single number, though poetry was very frequently included. The miscellany began as a manuscript form, one related to the commonplace book, but in the second half of the eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries, miscellanies shifted to print. This new printedness and the associated quickness of production of many copies created a broader audience for the form, and miscellanies soon became serialized, and they overlapped with, and in some cases evolved into magazines, newspapers, and other forms of periodical and serialized texts. Indeed, as Mark Turner says, “these forms were not always discrete and were frequently similar and even overlapping. A magazine or a newspaper can also be a miscellany; a monthly is also a magazine; an annual

is often a retrospect. In other words, serial form was not singular or discrete any more than it was fixed and stable” (284). Some of the serials in which I have located depictions of literarized Gypsies, therefore, potentially represent a hybrid genre that was in a state of flux when they were printed; nonetheless these miscellanies reached a wide array of demographics and individual readers.

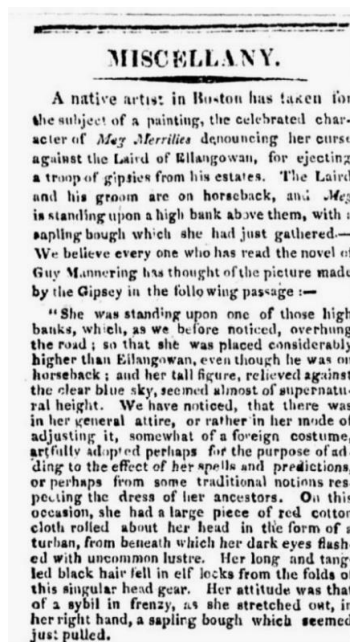


Figure 7. A text from a miscellany describing a painting inspired by *Guy Mannering*, an example of a text (albeit a painting) that uses the character of Meg Merrilies as a template or a point of reference for Gypsy characters. Notably, I was unable to find this painting – the only similar piece of art that I found was the frontispiece of a late nineteenth-century edition of *Guy Mannering*. (*Boston Intelligencer*, 1817)

Because of the importance of selecting texts to miscellany as a genre, which texts appear in any given miscellany allow us insight into the purpose of the collection. Although as Jonathan Gibson states, often “extensive research is needed to ascertain who might have compiled a miscellany, for what reason, and within what context(s)” (104), most of the serialized printed miscellanies/magazines/newspapers that I examine in this chapter appear to have selected texts to reprint for entertainment purposes, which reinforces the trends that I

have discussed previously. These texts selectively depict the Roma as akin to mythological figures; Othered in that they are present only *over there*, these depictions emphasize their supposed mystic and fortune-telling abilities, their attractiveness, their purportedly whimsical wandering lifestyles. They are also depicted less as hardened and abject criminals and more as mischievous, whimsical, and even fairy-like individuals who can be outsmarted by a canny individual: these representations were selected not to evoke fear of an ever-present domestic Other, as Janowitz argues is the main feature of British representations of Roma during the early nineteenth century, but to entertain. Represented as myths in these texts, the Roma are portrayed as a fiction that holds power only in a literary context. Like the above nineteenth-century North American reading of Dido's priest in the *Aeneid*, the literarized Gypsies in these texts are granted supernatural powers when they are represented on the printed page. Yet, unlike the *Aeneid*, the majority of these texts had nothing like the same staying power as that Roman foundational myth; the Gypsies in these texts are divested of their power as soon as the ephemeral texts on which they are printed have been written and then tossed aside. While the power of Dido's priest in the *Aeneid* is constantly re-read and preserved in the literary canon, the power of the Gypsy decays and is forgotten the instant the miscellany or newspaper becomes out-of-date and is consigned to trash, and, thus the actual Roma in North America disappear even more completely from cultural awareness.

The short lifespan and shorter length of these texts, however, allows us – once the process of recovering them is completed – to look at a wide variety of texts in order to determine the various ways in which the literarized Gypsy has been constructed as myth during this period. The earliest recorded text that mentions Gypsies that is accessible in the databases that I have utilized is an advertisement, printed in 1773, for a performance of *The*

Maid of the Mill, a comic opera adaptation of *Pamela*, not to be confused with the early modern play *The Maid in the Mill*. Interestingly, these databases do not contain a record of a North American imprint of *Pamela* until 1808, despite the fact that it would have been widely distributed and reprinted as a bestseller; this highlights the unfortunate gaps in the databases available to us. For example, the playbook of *The Maid of the Mill* (if there was one) does not appear in these databases, but a search for the play in the *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* database tells us that the role of the Gypsies in this play is more prominent than in *Pamela*. This play has Gypsies as recurring characters, as opposed to a single mention in *Pamela*, where the Gypsy Fan predicts the title character's fortune. *The Maid of the Mill*, as well, portrays Gypsies as genuinely magical within the mythic diegesis of the play. Theodosia (the play's Pamela equivalent) has her fortune told correctly by Fan, as she gives Theodosia information regarding her potential upcoming marriage. It is significant that Theodosia's fortune is provided on a piece of paper surreptitiously given to her, and that Theodosia refuses a fortune spoken aloud: "as you cannot tell me any good fortune, I'll hear none" (Bickerstaff 34) – it seems that even in the literary space of the play, Fan's mythic power is only effective when transcribed into physical text, the paper fortune doubling the literarized Gypsy's inability to exert power outside of the realm of paper. It is also notable that Fan's self-introduction is an offer to "write you the first letter of your sweetheart's name; how many husbands you will have, and how many children," and Theodosia refuses this as well: once again, the Gypsy figures only gain credibility when paper comes into play. Subsequently, the Gypsy who has power only within a literary space is not threatening outside of that space: mythic creatures are not threatening once the story is over and can be forgotten.

Tropes of the Mythic Gypsy

While *The Maid of the Mill* was itself clearly popular enough to have a lasting legacy, it was followed in 1793 by another highly popular text that featured the mythical Gypsy, a printed songbook containing one of the songs from the play, but published separately from the play's text itself (see fig. 8):



Figure 8. The first few lines of music from “The Gipsy’s Song”

Despite being removed from the context of the narrative of *The Maid of the Mill* and, to a lesser extent, *Pamela*, the lyrics within the song still display some of the common motifs in the depictions of mythological Gypsies. Even with the limited number of lines available in such a short song, we see Gypsies presented as idle, and adjacent to grazing animals, with the implication that they are “animalistic” themselves. One line, for instance, notes, “the fields were gay and sweet the / hay, our Gipseys sat upon the Grass” (Young 1). Here, the Gypsies are presented as nature-adjacent Others who reside in a world entirely removed from white society. Of course, humans compared to – or portrayed as – animals is a common theme in myths and folklore; in this text, the purpose of this comparison appears to be to portray the Gypsies as the subjects of a pastoral fantasy, representing them as akin to hay-chewing

livestock – and yet, as suggested by Abbi Bardi, “rural settings associate [Gypsies] with the power of nature, but it is precisely this geographical position as outsiders that poses a threat to social mores” (35). This trope of the nature-adjacent and “animalistic” Gypsy appears also in texts such as “The Gipsy” (1802), where the Gypsy figure, bent over a cauldron like a storybook witch, lives “in the barn with mousing owlet bred,” eats her nightly meals in a “rifled roost,” and is able to summon up the howls of dogs. This text also describes the Gypsy as “elfin” and a “Sybil,” clear references to folklore and mythology, reinforcing their mythic constructions. Comparison of Gypsies to animals is seen again in *Memoirs of Dick, the Little Poney* (1813), where the narrator (a wild horse) suggests that the Gypsy lifestyle is much the same as his own, and again in “Rondeau – In the Quizes” where warriors are described as “higgledy piggledy, on the ground, Like gipsies pig together” (196).

“The Gipsy’s Song” also portrays Gypsies as highly sexualized and seductive, another common motif in the mythologized Gypsy: “when e’er we met with kisses sweet / with speeches soft you won my heart / the hawthorn bush should make you blush / twas there you did seduce my heart” (Young) The trope of the seducing Gypsy, found frequently in folk ballads such as “The Raggle Taggle Gypsy,” presents the Gypsy figure as sexually threatening to the proffered decorum of white Anglo society: indeed, as Abbi Bardi argues, the Gypsy is often portrayed as “the embodiment of sexuality that [by contrast] threatens the purity of virginal female characters” (35). In this text, the seductiveness of the Gypsy figure acts less to portray the Roma as actively threatening in reality, but to once again invest them with mythical power on the space of the page, similar to the aforementioned Amazons – and yet, still, these manifestations of mythic power are constructed as entertainment. In other texts, Gypsy women are presented as seductive, such as the 1801 poem “Could You Have

Thought It,” which depicts a man with a “goodly name” being seduced and having his reputation ruined by a Gypsy. The speaker refuses her, saying to his servant “What wanton termagant is she / that lingering eyes my garden gate / Dick, take the lantern, bid her flee / tell her vagrant Gipsies I hate” (“Could You Have Thought It,” *Columbian Centinel*), but eventually lets her inside and is seduced. In the ballad “In Great News,” as well, a woman is described as “gipsy” in reference to her perceived promiscuity (254).

The *Youngs Vocal* songbook is an artifact of the period’s tendency to depict the Roma in songs, ballads, or lyric poetry. Gypsy figures are even depicted in verse in works that are predominantly prose, such as *The Monk*, which has the singular Gypsy character in the novel speak exclusively in song: the only songs or poetry in the entirety of the novel. In miscellanies that reprint various unaccredited poems, as well, the Roma are often depicted in this lyric mode. This is perhaps as a result of the strong association between the Roma and music and dancing – they are depicted in “Manners and Customs of the Gipsies” (1822, taken from an unspecified late periodical work) in this fashion: “Their excessive vivacity and impudence attract the attention of people; and they practice wild music, unseemly dancing, and grotesque grimace, so as sometimes to extort money, and sometimes to withdraw observers from the vigilant care of their property, and thus expose it to their depredations.” Frequently the presence of Gypsy characters is heralded by descriptions of lively music or feverish dancing. Through these depictions, the Gypsy figures are forced into a state of constant performance. This association with performance perhaps explains why Gypsy figures are added to stage adaptations, as in the case with *The Maid of the Mill*. The forcing of Gypsy characters into poetic and theatrical performances constructs them as spectacle that exists for the amusement of the readers. They exist divorced from actual, corporeal Romani,

and are Othered by this state of constant spectacle: the Gypsy characters are disposed of whenever their enacted dancing, etc. is concluded, along with their intended narrative function. This association with music, dancing, poetry, and general public performativity has other implications for the literarized Gypsy as myth: the construction of Gypsy figures in texts intended for entertainment reinforces their marginalized position within North American literary culture, but the spectacle-centered aspects of these texts also call to mind traditional oral retellings of myths and folklore. Even though these texts are printed and have material existence, they still hint at the aesthetic characteristics of oral tradition through such spectacles, and these characteristics serve to further establish these Gypsy characters as mythological and part of a mystical past before recorded history. While the fact that the Gypsy myth is developed in part by depicting them in writing as performative, folkloric, and oral/aural is somewhat ironic, it remains true that these literary depictions still reinforce motifs and stereotypes that erase the actual Roma.

The tendency to regularly depict Gypsy characters in drama or verse forms has several additional implications for stereotypical mythologized Roma. Firstly, many of these verse depictions are presented in the form of humorous folksy anecdotes, such as this one published in *Houghton's Genuine Almanac*:

A country gentleman, of the name of Wood, having given some offence to a gang of gypsies, not long after, missed six geese from the common before his house. A reward for the apprehension of the thief was advertised, but without the least effect, till one morning her perceived a packet hanging to the neck of his gander. --- Having opened it, he found, to his great mortification, these lines, accompanied with six-pence: ---

Farmer Wood, Farmer Wood,
 Your geese were all good,
 You must know we come from yonder:
 We have taken six geese, At a penny a-piece,
 And the money we've sent by the gander. (19)

Here they are depicted as mischievous and amusing Everymen, in contrast to the “country gentleman.” Their criminality is still central to this depiction, but once again, even the aspects of this depiction that would be presented as threatening in another context are portrayed as humorous and entertaining. In this text, the Gypsies never appear physically; first, they are represented in the past tense, as the gentleman had previously “given [them] some offence.” They are only represented again in the text once they have returned to Farmer Wood’s land and left again: their only representation in present-tense is in the lines that Wood reads, which are subsequently printed for the entertainment of readers. The Gypsies’ note taking the form of a poem rather than prose serves the important narrative function of framing this anecdote as humorous; while the same sentiments found in their poem may still be read as humorous in prose form, it is their verse form that solidly cements them as an amusing anecdote for readers as opposed to an outrage-inspiring event. The Gypsy figures in this text are yet again presented as spectacle for readers, as the entertaining and witty lines that they write are given precedence over the Gypsies themselves. They are present in the narrative to serve as a humbling foil to the gentleman and to entertain readers with their witty poem, fulfilling their mythic narrative role as mechanisms for frivolity and humor at the expense of the voices and existence of actual Roma.

The divorcing of Romani bodies from their songs is found in many texts that have Gypsy characters sing; for instance, the song from the *Maid of the Mill* was deemed worth printing on its own, and the separation of the Gypsy song from its narrative in the play also removes the voices of the Gypsies from their speakers. In other texts, the separation of voices from their (fictional) speakers is extended to the separation of voices from actual Romani individuals. In several texts that I located, the printed texts purport to have been recorded after being performed by a Travelling Romani singer. The construction of the literarized Gypsy as a performative entity aligns, in part, with the important performative traditions of the Roma: historically, some Romani Travellers did make a living through song, dance, and other performance arts. However, the crucial distinction is that literarized Gypsies are often *only* represented in terms of their performance, flattening the cultural significance of Romani performance and preventing depiction of the Roma as realistic individuals. In turn, the popularity of these literarized depictions often mean that Roma can only find occupations in these performative professions, as non-Romani culture finds the performative literarized Gypsy more palatable than embodied Roma.

In the printed versions of songs purportedly performed by Romani Travellers, the songs are removed from the context of their original singers. They are recorded by non-Romani individuals and printed for the profit of non-Roma, appropriating their songs and translating it into a printed form for the consumption of non-Romani readers, often with little to no acknowledgement of the original singer. The separation of the Romani performer and their text further limits the Gypsy to the status of mythic fables, as their songs no longer belong to embodied individuals but are instead printed, decontextualized and anonymous. This erases any actual Roma singers or tradition, immanent in an actual live performance,

leaving only the image of yet another literarized Gypsy. Subsequently, this literarized Gypsy takes a form more similar to an Orpheus-figure rather than an actual oral performer: a singing character, rather than a living storyteller. And, of course, a Gypsy character is not able to ask for compensation after the song is over, a consequence of this literarization that enables the continuing disenfranchisement of the Roma.

The erasure of Romani performers in the printed versions of these songs is reinforced by the material form of these texts. Often printed in miscellanies, which frequently contain unattributed works, printers of these songs are able to obscure the identities of the authors of these songs by not including their names or simply not referencing them. Because unattributed works are a frequent inclusion in miscellanies, this erasure can be excused as a consequence of the miscellany form. Instead of the song being attributed to a Romani individual that exists after their song ends, the literarized Gypsy that sings in print exists only in the instant the reader engages with the poem, consumed and forgotten as the reader moves to the next item in the miscellany.

Even further, collecting these songs in formats intended for entertainment consumption changes the way that these texts can be interpreted: “A Gipsy Ballad” (see fig. 9), a song attributed to a “lovely rustic,” reads entirely differently based on whether it is being performed live by a Romani singer or removed from its context and printed. In the former, the entertainer is performing a service and asking for compensation; in the latter, the lines where the Gypsy speaks of their misfortune and asks for money seem to exist for the voyeuristic fascination of readers. In this song, it is notable that the prefatory material of the text even mentions the Romani individual that purportedly sang it, but the erasure and silencing of the individual is made evident in textual form by the page break at the end of the

poem: the Gypsy holds out her hand for payment and is cut off by a dark slash of ink, barring them from receiving compensation for their song or from persisting beyond the borders of the page. Notably, this song again portrays the Gypsy life as parallel to animal life by suggesting that the only “friends” of the Gypsy are the “Red-Breasts,” or birds, who dictate the beginnings of their days and nights.

This song is also relevant in that it represents another common theme in depictions of the Roma in these texts: voyeuristic joy in the hardships of Travelling life. The ballad above gives a tamer example of this, but the “blustering wind and rushing rain” and focus on the speaker’s “shiv’ring limbs” in this ballad place heavy emphasis on the lack of comfort in a Traveller’s life in order to inspire pity. In the case of “A Gypsy Ballad,” said to have been performed by a Romani singer, the text’s emphasis on hardship may have been a rhetorical choice in order to elicit larger donations after the performance, but other ballads do not have the same clear justification for their focus on suffering. Poems such as “The Gypsy Boy” take particular pleasure in the discomfort of their subjects: “Then, oh, my good lady, pray pity the fate / of a poor wretched wand’rer deprived of all joy / oh drive not the motherless child from your gate / but pity the complaints of the poor Gypsy Boy.” These types of depictions of “wretchedness” are one of the key features of many stereotypical depictions, including poems and songs written about Gypsies that do not proclaim to be from their perspective, such as in “A Child’s Hymn of Praise,” which depicts a young boy singing of how glad he is not to have been “born without a home / or in some broken shed / a gypsy baby; taught to roam / and steal my bread.” In North American imprints from the period, there are many examples of texts that emphasize discomfort and suffering, but often these texts are paired with depictions of the more idealized facets of the stereotypical Gypsy lifestyle. Potentially

more than any other Gypsy stereotype, North American imprints consistently indulge in the portrayal of Gypsy figures as mystic fortunetellers.

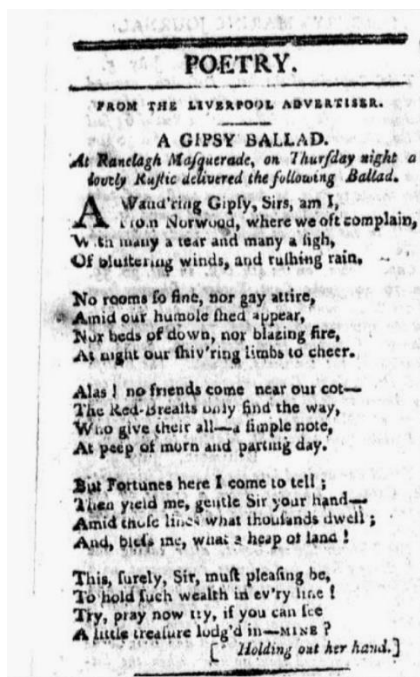


Figure 9. The text of “A Gypsy Ballad,” printed in *The Massachusetts Mercury* in 1793

This mythical fortunetelling trope is apparent in the poem “Sir Lance and the Gypsy” (see fig. 10), which depicts a knight that encounters a Gypsy on a moon-lit ride and is one of the clearest associations between myth and fairy-tale stories and literarized Gypsy narrative depictions that I found in my research. The poem tells the story of a knight, “Sir Lance,” who, while on a midnight ride, is surrounded by Gypsies that attempt to lure him into the forest to steal his horse.

This text is interesting for a few reasons. Firstly, searches across the internet for “Sir Lance and the Gypsy,” as well as “P. M. James” produce absolutely no results: ostensibly, this poet and poem were obscure enough that it was not canonized, and perhaps survives only in archives like the ones that I utilized for this project. Next, the name of the knight in the poem resonates with the Arthurian Sir Lancelot, perhaps reinforced by the lines referencing

“the maiden that dies for thy love” (29) and “the rival that hates thee” (30) although it is somewhat unclear whether the poem is intended to reference the Arthurian mythos.

Nonetheless, the subject matter of the poem calls back to chivalric times, the stories and themes associated with which have mythic significance for English-speaking cultures. The poem itself has the cadence of a fairy tale; in addition to the knight and the “tranquil and still” forest setting, there are references to lore such as “The Ghost of the Hills” (17) and the “spirits that Joy in the silence of night” (21). It contains many of the essential Gypsy stereotypes: the Gypsies in this poem are thieves, and specifically horse thieves, as they intended to “[fleece him] of gold and of courser” (44). This stereotype is significant in the fact that the Roma are heavily associated with horses on the basis that certain populations of Roma have utilized horses and participated heavily in the horse trade, which in conjunction with their stereotypical representation as thieves, leads to the common trope of the Gypsy horse thief. The Gypsies in the poem are represented as deceitful and dark-skinned, contrasted with the knight’s white steed and the moonlight, and the “orgies that reign on the height” (47) associate them with dance, sex, and revelry. The “brown littly Gypsy” comes to the knight “from the woodland,” and attempts to lead him into the forest, again reinforcing the association with Gypsy figures and nature; although the knight in this poem is not a child, the attempt to lead him into the forest resonates with many depictions of Gypsies as kidnapers. Of course, the Gypsies are associated with fortune telling, as they offer to “[read the knight’s] fate in the book of the future” and “teach [him] the spell that bewitches” (27-28). Although their fortunetelling is not explicitly proved to be real, and indeed might be a ruse to distract the knight, it is significant that the third stanza depicts the landscape around them as affected by their “magical” presence, suggesting that once again the Gypsies

in this poem do actually have supernatural powers and a mystical connection to the natural environment.

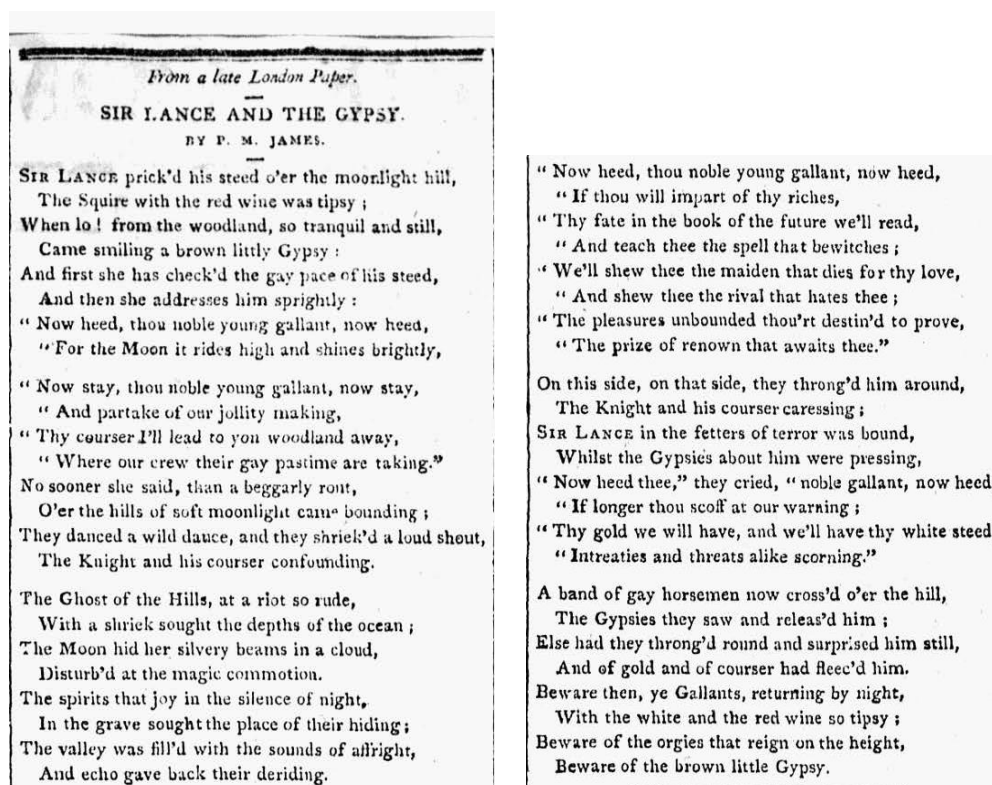


Figure 10. The full text of "Sir Lance and the Gypsy," printed in an 1804 *New York Commercial Advertiser*

This brings us to perhaps the most obvious aspect of the construction of Gypsies as narrative myth: the representation of Gypsies as actually magical within the texts in which they appear. There are many texts, of course, that represent the fortune-telling and supernatural capabilities of Gypsy figures as ploys in order to trick or steal from non-Gypsies. These texts occur in North American imprints fairly frequently, particularly in the later parts of the nineteenth century. However, during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, within the miscellaneous texts that were produced during this period, the texts that circulate most frequently are those in which Gypsies are, if not overtly magical, strongly associated with supernatural effects (see figures 11 and 12). Fairly frequently, in addition to

poems and stories like those shown above, these magical depictions circulate in the form of fables and superstitions like these:

By crossing the hand of a gipsy or fortune-teller with a little silver, one may be told of preferment and good luck all his days.

Figure 11. An anecdote from an 1807 *Balance and Columbian Repository* issue

Gibberish. For a man to dream he hears gibberish, shews he shall have to do with gypsies, rogues, and common beggars.

Figure 12. From *The Universal Dream Book*, 1817

Although the latter example obviously has negative connotations in the posited association between Gypsies, rogues, and beggars (as well as the association between Gypsies and “gibberish” languages), the former is one of the more overtly positive and idealized representations of Gypsies that I found in my research, and it was widely circulated and reprinted in various papers over several years. Indeed, folk wisdom and tales like these perhaps best exemplify the construction of the literarized Gypsy as narrative myth in North American print literature. The miscellaneous genres in which they are printed allow a wide variety of mythic representations, serving as diverse iterations of the Gypsy myth. They are constructed as magical and powerful within the bounds of the text, as well as serve the purpose of entertaining those who consume them. These mythic representations are not allowed power outside of these texts; their supernatural abilities stem from the fictional narratives in which they appear, they are constructed as nonthreatening due to the perceived absence of the Roma in North America. Crucially, these stories do not refer to the Roma or

even an embodied Gypsy: while the literarized Gypsy might exist in these printed texts, the Roma are conspicuously absent.

Chapter Three: The Roma as “News,” 1816-1866

In this chapter I analyze a group of texts discovered by searching North American newspapers from roughly the first half of the nineteenth century that are archived in the *America's Historical Newspapers* database. Unlike the texts discussed in the previous chapter, many of which were North American reprints of British texts, the newspaper articles within this section were predominantly written, originally printed, and first circulated within the United States. Although US print houses did still reprint some British material during this period, newspaper content was increasingly dominated by texts by US writers, and the texts that I have selected for this chapter reflect this: they contain markers of their North American origins in the form of publication source, geographical references, and subject.

My research methodology, and my text selection based on that research, reflect the great increase in the volume of texts that reference either the Roma or literarized Gypsies during this period. As I note in the methodology chapter, my search of this database resulted in upwards of 130,000 results. Thus, my selections for analysis in this chapter were determined so as to provide some representative sense of the overall makeup of newspapers from this period. The texts that appear in this chapter can be understood to represent a general trend in content or themes; for every article that appears here that describes a single event of a Gypsy conning someone out of large sums of money, there often are a dozen or more corresponding articles that describe very nearly the same event, often varying only in particular names, locations, and amounts of money lost. In addition to the sheer volume of the texts produced within this period, this category also represents a diverse array of article types, including neighborhood news announcements, anecdotal, feature-like stories revolving around Gypsies, ethnographic articles, and a number of other article types. My main focus

here, however, is on news articles and related short informative pieces about the Gypsy presence in North America, and I do so for a reason central to a main argument of this chapter: unlike the reprinted British/European texts from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries—texts that tend to construct a literarized Gypsy archetype as figures of mythic significance and that largely functioned in the supposed absence of the actual Roma in North America, the texts that were written for newspapers printed in the mid-nineteenth century constructed a very different form of Gypsy, albeit one that was still literarized, the Gypsy as “news.”

This narrative construction of the Gypsy as news has several important facets distinct from the Gypsy as myth. Firstly, this narrative construction is both enabled and driven by the visible presence of the Roma in North America during this period, as opposed to their (supposed) absence in earlier periods. However, as Ian Hancock suggests and as some of the newspapers in this category actually reference, the Roma were actually present, to a degree, in North America during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but there was a notable wave of Roma immigration to the Northeastern United States in the mid-nineteenth century. This immigration was particularly significant in cities of the East Coast, such as New York and Baltimore, and it marked the beginning of the first clearly visible and substantial migrations of the Roma to the United States. U.S. culture responded to this wave of immigration in differing ways, as it tends to do even today when anxieties over immigration rise, but the most important result of the Roma immigrations in the mid-nineteenth century was the simultaneous shift in textual representations of Gypsies. Such immigration driven representations began by depicting Gypsies as objects of casual intrigue and novelty, then shifted to emphasizing a wariness with immigration, before shifting again

to an emphasis on fear and distrust of Gypsies. This shift from relatively positive (albeit Otherized) depictions to negative and distrustful ones is another facet of the construction of the literarized Gypsy as news and is the mirror opposite to Anne Janowitz's thesis regarding British trends of depicting the Roma. Rather than moving from negative and distrustful depictions to representations of the Romanticized "noble savage," the trend moves in reverse order: the closer the actual Roma appear to be to the authors of newspaper accounts, the more fearful and negative their depictions of Gypsies become.

The shift to describing Gypsy figures as "news" also moves the Gypsy away from the realm of myth and towards literarizing the Gypsies as local "facts," as opposed to objects of entertainment. The news accounts of Gypsies are primarily represented as truthful and factual, even when those representations are clearly based on piecemeal elements of earlier established Gypsy stereotypes or editorialized so heavily that is difficult to get a sense of what the "facts" were. Likewise, even newspaper stories that seem *prima facie* to be written exclusively for entertainment purposes still maintain that the Gypsies are a novel group in close proximity to North American readers in their own or nearby communities. This proffered physical proximity is important in that it produces one of the most significant and visible aspects functions of this body of texts: a reflection of, and even an emphasis on the anxieties about and possible strategies for coming to terms with a present Gypsy Other. These texts reveal a growing and extensive fear regarding the proximity of Othered Roma to white U.S. American society and a possible cultural upheaval driven by that proximity. Also of interest, these texts demonstrate a further solidification of certain of the earlier stereotypes about the Gypsies, first transplanted from British/European culture via imported and reprinted texts into U.S. American culture; the characterization of the Gypsy as "news" thus

markedly contributed to broader notions in North America that the Roma were a criminal and undesirable population; and this was particularly damaging in that a construction of the literarized Gypsy as factually relevant news suggested they could be an actual and imminent threat to readers.

The characterization of the Roma as news not only presumes the objective factuality of heavily editorialized Gypsy representations, but also their novelty; numerous reports of the “first” Roma to arrive in the U.S. can be found in newspapers throughout the nineteenth century. As an extension of this constructed “newness,” Gypsies are also constructed as “newsworthy”: from the most neutrally-framed accounts of Romani immigrants to the most fearmongering, most of the news texts in this section imply that Romani immigration is something interesting that readers need to be aware of, and even keep a watchful eye on. Although this focus on the “newness” or “newsworthiness” of the Roma is significant in that clearly it speaks to anxieties regarding contact with the Other, it also serves to construct the figure of the Gypsy in a certain way: the Gypsies in many of these texts command attention by virtue of their novelty, and not by any of their Other qualities – and, as such, when the Gypsy figures are no longer new, and no longer exist as objects of curiosity, they are able to be forgotten. By virtue of their literarized construction, the actual Roma immigrants to the U.S. are forgotten as “yesterday’s news,” yet another manifestation of the parallel amnesia that I argue is a crucial mechanism in the marginalization of the Roma in North America.

One of the clearest manifestations of parallel amnesia derived from the Gypsy-as-news paradigm occurs in the announcements of the first Roma to arrive in the U.S. Such articles are written as brief announcements of the arrival of Gypsies to the United States, and often include descriptions of the numbers and appearances of the arriving immigrants. One of

the first instances of this type of article (see figures 13 and 14) appeared in an 1843 Baltimore newspaper called *The Sentinel of Freedom*: it begins, “A first family of Gypsies has arrived at Baltimore from Bremen – Wm. Wegman and five children, including two black-eyed daughters” (“Gypsies; Arrived”). Even this very brief article has several perplexing elements. First, the article is *not* an accurate record of the first Gypsies to immigrate to the U.S.: some Roma had been in North America for some time before 1843, and there are even earlier periodical articles that note their presence; for instance, an 1834 article in the *Portsmouth Journal of Literature and Politics* notes: “It has been said that there are no Gypsies in America: but Doct. Jones, in a letter to Professor Silliman, says that there is a colony of Gypsies in Louisiana, who were brought over and colonized by the French at an early period” (“Gipsies in the United States”). References to this particular group of Roma appear scattered in periodicals throughout the nineteenth century. Furthermore, an 1853 edition of the *Washington Review and Examiner* newspaper contains a column from a correspondent in Bangor, Maine, who notes that the white residents of that area have been aware of a group of Gypsies in the area, “where they have been seated for a hundred years or more” (“Gipsies in the United States,” *Washington Review and Examiner*). Perhaps this explains the imprecision of the phrase “A first family of Gypsies,” as opposed to *the* first family. Nonetheless it is notable that this article was even framed in this manner considering the records of North American Roma published prior to this announcement. The emphasis on the novelty of these immigrants despite the apparent incorrectness of that assertion makes visible how the Gypsy figures in these texts are primarily constructed as Othered figures, the central feature of which is their new proximity to the white U.S. American readers of these texts.



A first family of Gypsies has arrived at Baltimore from Bremen--Wm Wegner and 5 children, including 2 black eyed daughters.

Figure 73. The 1843 *Sentinel of Freedom* announcement showing a record of the “first” Romani arrivals to the U.S.

The “two-black-eyed daughters” in *The Sentinel of Freedom* is the beginning of a troubling trend in these sorts of news announcements: a hyper-focus on the appearance of the Gypsy women that appear in these texts. Another announcement, perhaps of the same family of Gypsies, considering the similarities between the locations and families (although the name of the patriarch is different) presents a similar picture:

The group consists of William Regner, the father, and five children. Those who have studied the character of Meg Merrilies, will perhaps be curious to see a part of the people of whom she was queen. They are formed like other human beings, and [they] speak a language resembling Dutch. The girls have jet black hair which falls in a neglected style over their shoulders. (“Gypsies,” *Gloucester Telegraph*)

The hair of the Gypsy girls is a marker for their perceived exoticism, and it is a recurring feature of many depictions of the literarized Gypsy: the subject of fetishistic interest and a marker of Otherness, Gypsy women’s hair, particularly when described as “neglected” or wild, serves as a distinguishing characteristic. These descriptions of the appearance of the Gypsy men and women are heavily racialized; where Gypsy men are mainly described with a focus on their dark skin, Gypsy women are framed in terms of their “desirable” Othered characteristics, with heavy emphasis placed on their hair. The “black eyes” of the Gypsy

women are often used to portray them as mysterious and inscrutable, a subject of fascination and dangerous intrigue for white readers of these newspapers.

Of course, it is also important here that these embodied Romani immigrants are compared to Meg Merrilies, which serves a clear example of how the mythic literarizations in the previous chapter lead to embodied Roma being judged in light of them. As I discussed in the last chapter, Meg Merrilies is a character in Walter Scott's *Guy Mannering* that quickly became popular outside the scope of the text and became a model for the stereotypical Gypsy figure. Many texts from the period, both British and U.S. American, use Meg Merrilies as a template for constructing their own variation on the Gypsy archetype. Other texts, like the *Gloucester Telegraph* article above, judge actual Roma based on how well they confirm to that literary character and, through this, the purported "true" reporting of actual Gypsies is shaped by earlier and imaginary literary forms. It is also significant that the Gypsies here are described as being "formed like other human beings"; that the article seemed to require this to be clarified also suggests that the Roma-as-myth found in earlier depictions had disconnected the Gypsy from "normal" human bodies. Thus, otherwise what need is there to note that these Gypsies are indeed "formed like other human beings." Similarly, their "language resembling Dutch," also speaks to the persistent attempts to understand the Roma in the context of previously known idealized mythic frameworks, even as those frameworks failed to adequately provide a means to understanding the Roma when they appeared as an actual and much more numerous immigrant group.

A tribe of Bohemian Gypsies have arrived in Baltimore. This is the first time this wandering class of creatures have ever been seen in America. One of the girls is represented as very beautiful, and she is the fortune-teller.— She looks into futurity considerably beyond the end of the world as predicted by Father Miller, and deals out plenty of good luck, to all who will pay her for it.

Figure 14. An article from *The Pittsfield Sun* announcing the same family of immigrants discussed above, with the notable addition of the fortuneteller trope (“Gypsies,” *The Pittsfield Sun*)

Ultimately, newspaper articles from this period suggest an intense feeling of shock at the possibility of an actual Romani presence in North America. Take, for instance, an article that appeared in the 1843 issue of the *Evening Post*, where the new arrivals of a family of Roma is announced. These Roma were, the article reports, actually exhibited in an Evacuation Day (a Boston holiday commemorating the evacuation of British forces early in the Revolutionary War) American Museum exhibit:

To-Morrow, being Evacuation Day, there will be extraordinary attraction at the American Museum ... Grand performance will be given during different hours of the day, and a novelty never before seen in America, will be exhibited for the first time, vix: a German Gypsy – she and her family being the first of that extraordinary race that ever set foot on this continent. – With such attraction the place must be filled to overflowing. It can't be otherwise.
 (“Advertisement,” *The Evening Post*)

This newspaper announcement suggests that at this point in time, a significant mythology had been built up around the literarized Gypsy, commanding immense cultural interest. The

archetypal figure of the Gypsy, manifested most obviously in Meg Merrilies and diffused throughout the North American imprints in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, commands enough intrigue to cause readers of this paper – as well as everyone who attended this event – to regard the attendance of a family of Roma as a significant and fascinating event. The author of this text clearly has no doubt in the strength of this mythology, as evidently “it can’t be otherwise” that a Gypsy family would not attract a crowd of significant size and fervor. And yet this text, which showcases so clearly the extraordinary extent to which the Gypsy myth was cemented into North American culture, translates the Gypsy from myth into news. The mythic Gypsy is gone, altered and translated by its transatlantic journey, and only the *actual* “Gypsy” remains as a “novelty” to the readers of these texts. Also significant is that because of the “novelty” factor of these depictions, there is little interest in the actual Romani presence in North America beyond these “first arrivals” until later in the decade, when texts start showing signs of significant distrust towards the Romani immigrant population.

This reinscription of the Gypsy from myth into news also appears in the museum event itself, which has lurking implications for the position of the Gypsy in North American culture. Perhaps most obvious, as I discussed the prevalence of performance in Gypsy stereotypes in the previous chapter, is the construction of the presence of the Gypsy family as a performative event, which serves (in addition to actualizing the mythic stereotype) to recontextualize the presence of the Gypsy from an aspect of the mythic past to an active figure of the present. The Gypsy here is not a static relic, but an ongoing exhibition that the North American public has access to, and perhaps even has a chance to participate in. The location of the event at a museum, as well, is significant: the “human zoos” of the nineteenth

century, stemming from the tradition of freak shows and exhibitions at the circuses and fairs, are relevant here, as the newly-arrived Romani immigrants are indeed being exhibited as racialized novelties – a status that remained attached to them long after this exhibition occurred. Museums also carry with them the implication that their exhibits are objects from the past: even as the new Romani immigrants were exhibited as present-tense news, the exhibition simultaneously showcased the end of the mythic and romanticized Gypsy. Indeed, the idea that idealized Gypsies were figures from the past appears several times in texts from this period. This passage from the *Easton Star*, although it was reprinted from a “late English paper,” is pertinent here: “This mysterious and wonderful people are rapidly fading away. Lines of railroad run through the glens they haunted, and the whistle of the steam engine harshly breaks the solitude of the woods which the Gipsy tradition and superstition had invested with romance” (“From a Late English Paper”). This category of texts, as a result of new Romani immigration to the U.S., showcase many instances of this tension between the ideal of the “old” mythic Gypsy and the novel Gypsy-as-news paradigm.

News-based texts concerned with the arrival of the first Roma in America are also valuable sources for analyzing nineteenth-century North American attitudes toward immigration more generally: if the Roma, in their literary construction as myth, represent an ideally absent Other, their actual presence in proximity to white U.S. Americans, as recorded in such newspaper stories, foreground a variety of reactions by white U.S. Americans when confronted with an actually present Romani Other for the first time. One of the common sentiments found in these texts is that European countries were financially pushing a large Gypsy immigration to the U.S. Consider this notice in the *Alexandria Gazette* from the 1840s, “These roving bands of pilfers [Gypsies] have long been a great annoyance to Europe,

and the cheapest mode of disposing of them would be for the European authorities to pay for their passage to the United States. In this country we have no laws to prevent the introduction of the whole Gypsy race in our country” (“Gypsies,” *Alexandria Gazette*). This passage reflects both the all-too-familiar sentiment that immigrants represent an undesirable population that their home countries have no use for, with one of the earliest instances of the idea that an incoming Gypsy population demands, in response, a new legal framework in order to limit their freedom of movement, both to limit further immigrating to the United States, and, for those who do arrive, to prevent them from “roving” and “pilfering.” The idea that Roma immigration demands new and repressive legal regimes of course presupposes that Gypsy immigrants are inherently a “problem,” a suggestion we see foregrounded in the passage below from the *Daily National Intelligencer*:

The women and children are said to possess the peculiar physical features of their strange race, having slender figures and an abundance of black hair. The men pursue the business of tinkers, and the females cook their meals by the fires made in the open air. It is probable that we are indebted for this odd importation of humanity to the increased facilities for emigration afforded by steam navigation; and, should this small nucleus of a new race of people which we have acquired in these Gipsy immigrants be enlarged by accessions hereafter, it may be reserved to the United States to solve the problem whether it is possible, under any form of social and political institutions, to amalgamate with other races as strange order of cosmopolites, who have, immemorially, been nomadic in habit, and intolerant of any admixture with a different people. (“A Band of Gipsies”)

There are, in addition to the assertion that Gypsy immigrants are a “problem” that requires a solution—which has chilling resonances with the “final solution” of the Holocaust—there are several other related and notable things on display in this passage. Firstly, the opening lines exemplify how descriptions of purportedly Gypsy physical characteristics mark them as Other; their “peculiar physical features” are emphasized, and, particularly, we see how the black hair of the women is central in this Othered depiction. The “black hair” is implied to be beautiful, but also a marker of racial difference, and therefore its desirability – in this and other passages – is constructed to exoticize them. Their “slender figures,” as well, suggest the fetishization of the racial difference constructed in these texts. The lifestyle of the Gypsies in this text is also used to Other them: their “nomadic” habits are presented as a fundamental issue of their presence in the United States, as it is fundamentally opposed to the hegemonic “social and political institutions” that the above passage clearly values. “Admixture” and “amalgamation,” too, are important aspects of this passage: during this period, miscegenation was being considered by some perspectives as the solution to racial issues, and evidently it was also considered as a potential solution to the Gypsy “problem.”

Also, we see how certain forms of labor are regularly associated with Gypsies—they are either tinkers or cooks—and this emphasis on supposedly distinctive forms of Gypsy labor as low and common contrasts with the mythicized depictions I discuss at length in the first chapter, where they are typically depicted in terms of their magical or performative abilities and as not doing physical work at all. In the formulation of literarized Gypsies as news, however, material and physical elements of the Roma are emphasized. Thus, we see, in the new prominence of labor in these news articles, the beginnings of an awareness of Romani populations within broader North American economic and cultural systems. These

articles communicate significant anxieties about the mobility and non-industrial modes of economic production that the Roma have traditionally taken part in. They are essentially free-floating gig workers, which means that economic systems have trouble with regulating and figuring them. The emphasis on their trades as tinkers and metalworkers is at odds with the frequent depiction of Gypsies as unproductive criminals, which perhaps was solidified in these North American texts because of this unease with traditional Romani trades. Yet, even as the Gypsies in these texts are constructed as productive – ostensibly more desirable than criminal depictions – their constant association with “lowly” trades enabled by itinerant lifestyles emphasize the undesirability of Gypsies as participants in economic systems. Nonetheless, the incongruity between depictions of Gypsies as productive tinkers versus unproductive criminals serves to evince how these stereotypes are chosen based on the agendas of the authors and not any objective accuracy.

This text also criticizes immigration generally—it remarks about the new availability of steam-powered ships and links the technology to immigrants arriving in overwhelming numbers in the US—and it clearly sees that possibility as negative and threatening. Interestingly, however, other newspaper texts from the period feature a different view of immigration. Consider the following passage from the *Portland Daily Advertiser*. It emphasizes what the previous passage calls “amalgamation” and “admixture” and describes them as a vital source of new energy, even as the distinctiveness of the Gypsy immigrants is erased:

Our powers of absorption are illimitable. We take in the representatives of all nations, kindred and tongues, without the slightest inconvenience, and they soon get assimilated to our own people in spite of all their efforts to the

contrary. These Gypsies will find great difficulty in preserving their identity as a separate tribe, living in any part of the United States. We are not sorry to see them come among us, They will soon find easier means of livelihood than thieving, charlantry, and imposture: and we should not be surprised to see them abandon their vagrant habits and settle down as permanent residents in some attractive locality. – This is the first company of Gypsies that we have ever heard of in the United States. (“Gipsies,” *Portland Daily Advertiser*)

This text on its surface appears to have a less negative attitude towards the new Romani immigrants, but has ominous implications: it reveals a desire for a destructive form of assimilation that erases all manner of cultural distinctiveness. Even the facets of the Gypsy that are sometimes framed positively, such as their (Othered and exoticized) attractiveness or their performance arts would be erased in this paradigm in favor of hegemonically-aligned lifestyles in some “attractive locality.” Indeed, this text, as well of many others in this vein, suggest that “assimilation” is best when it is regulatory and oppressive, that the transformation of the Gypsies into acceptable (and, as implied, WASP-like) United States citizens *will* take place, “in spite of all their efforts to the contrary.” Positioning the Roma as vagrants rather than “permanent residents” evinces just how unsettling the nomadic lifestyles of the Roma were during this period to white U.S. American society. The livelihood of “thieving, charlantry, and imposture” associated with the Gypsies in this text serves the purpose, not as warning the readers of the paper away from the Gypsies, but to position white U.S. Americans as benevolent in their “illimitable powers of absorption” which cast as normative WASP identity and reveal an only thinly veiled white supremacy.

It is also worth noting that the *Portland Daily Advertiser* article is yet one more example of the common trope in such newspaper articles in the way it purports to be an account of the “first” group of Gypsy immigrants to the United States. Even though this article appeared nearly eight years after the announcements of the “first” Gypsy immigrants to Baltimore, the use of the trope of “first arrival” in this article reinforces how the constructions of Gypsies as “news”—as a fundamentally new and novel population with strange appearances and manners of making a living—highlights their supposed transgressive Otherness.

Having noted all the above, it is still worth discussing that despite the obviously troubling implications of the above text, it also does claim that the authors “are not sorry to see [Gypsies] come among [them],” and thus it is one of the more welcoming texts concerning the arrival of Gypsies in North America. It is in contrast with the other passages above which discuss the new immigrants solely in terms of the “problems” to U.S. American society that they represent. Such a difference in attitudes about Gypsy immigrants is somewhat characteristic of articles from this period. This breadth in attitudes is most clearly evinced in instances where two newspapers from the same place and time appear to present very different accounts of the same group of Gypsy Travellers, with varying tones and representations of the actual Roma that they reference. Consider these two articles, published by the *Washington Reporter* and *The Washington Review and Examiner* (see fig. 15) within four days of each other. First, we have this passage:

We have heard of an encampment of some eight or ten of these singular people, near the Pittsburgh Road, some five miles from town. They are pursuing their characteristic trade of juggling, fortune telling, &c. They

had better not venture into town or Constable Kennedy will be after them with a warrant for *vagrancy* in one hand and “*a sharp stick*” in the other. ... P.S. Since writing the above we learn that they have encamped within a half mile of town ... As they are regular rovers we presume their stay will be short, as we believe it had better be. (“Gipsies,” *The Washington Review and Examiner*)

And then this,

We've had an encampment of these strolling vagabonds in our vicinity for some two weeks past. They appear to be of the better class of that singular and remarkable people. Their vehicles and horses are better than ordinary and their dress, habits and manners are rather an exception to those generally distinguishing their class ... They manufacture willow-baskets ... they propose to tell fortunes and make large pretensions to powers of divination! (“Gipsies,” *Washington Reporter*)

These two passages ostensibly refer to the same group of Roma yet have striking differences in tone and content. The first passage from the *Review* is overall quite threatening and appears to be less an announcement of the Gypsy presence than a threat directed at them in order to incite them to leave. The *Reporter* article, in comparison, seems quite favorable, and it is conceivable that it was written in response to the *Review* article. This would explain the similar language used in these texts, including the description of them as an “encampment,” as opposed to a band or a tribe (as other sources sometimes refer to groups of Gypsies), as well as the references to them being a “singular people.” Despite the differences in tone between the two texts, both articles use loaded terms to describe the Gypsies’ itinerancy:

“rovers” and “vagabonds.” Even the more favorable *Reporter* article constructs Gypsies in general as undesirable and Other.

The subjects of the above texts are changed depending on the attitudes of their authors. The trades of these Gypsies also appear in these texts, the more positive *Reporter* article focusing on their willingness to “sell or trade anything they possess” and their manufacture of willow-baskets in addition to their fortune-telling. Notably, the more negative *Review* article focuses more on their “mystical” trades than the actual services that they provide or the state of their camp, suggesting that their Otherness in this text is constructed via their unconformity to more economically acceptable trades, although the economic activity in the *Reporter* article is still used to highlight the class distinctions between the Gypsies and the white readership of these papers. Clearly the author of the *Reporter* article still holds a generally negative view regarding “their class,” yet the text portrays this particular group as “better than ordinary,” which is clearly not the stance that the author of the *Review* article takes. However, even the *Reporter* article seems to be centered around the idea of this group of Gypsies as “good Gypsies,” perhaps mirroring the attitudes in some of the above articles that they are good targets for assimilation. This raises the question of whether the “good Gypsies” are those that participate economically, that possess “better than ordinary” material goods, or simply those that can be quietly erased and assimilated into white U.S. American culture. Despite the differences in tone between these two texts, they both present a picture regarding the presence of Gypsies as a “problem” in the United States as a whole, which represents the majority of attitudes toward these immigrants during the period.

Another significant aspect of the *Washington Review* article above is its reference to interactions between the police constable of the town and the Gypsies. Being driven off lands by authority figures, or “moved on,” is a common mode of oppression of the Roma: their nomadic lifestyles, in the view of some Roma, were predicated less by an earnest desire to be nomadic and diasporic than by the local governments and peoples that historically did not tolerate their presence. The issue of whether the historical itinerancy of some Roma was voluntarily nomadic is not one that I intend to resolve here, but as the *Washington Review* article above mentions threats to evict the Gypsies in question with a “sharp stick,” the issue of being moved on is relevant. An interesting aspect of this article is the question of why these threatening sentiments were printed at all, as opposed to being verbally directed at them. Stereotypical perceptions of the Roma suggest that they are unable to read English, which calls into question the logic of printing a threat that its intended recipients would, to the view of the authors, be unable to read. It appears that this article, as well as others of a similar ilk, were printed with the purpose of stirring up ill will against the Gypsies and manifesting negative tensions between them and the local white community that would force the Gypsies to pack up camp and travel again.

Gypsies.

We have heard of an encampment of some eight or ten of these singular people, near the Pittsburgh Road, some five miles from town. They are pursuing their characteristic trade of juggling, fortune telling, &c. They had better not venture into town or Constable Kennedy will be after them with a warrant for *vagran-y* in one hand, and “a sharp stick” in the other.

P. S. Since writing the above we learn they have encamped within half a mile of town and have been plying their arts within the limits of Uncle Peter's Bailiwick. As they are regular rovers, we presume their stay will be short, as we believe it had better be.

Figure 15. *The Washington Review and Examiner* article (“Gipsies”)

Many of these texts that appear to have the implicit purpose of generating hostility towards new Romani populations do so by utilizing and warping many of the facets of the construction of the Gypsy-as-myth that I discussed in the previous chapter. The narrative construction of the Gypsy as incredibly novel and news-worthy creates tensions and prejudices by modifying the stereotypical aspects of the mythic Gypsy to be more overtly negative and derogatory. These newspaper texts, even as they sometimes show similar stereotypical “Gypsy” qualities as the texts found in other ephemeral print forms discussed in the previous chapter—texts that construct the Gypsy as a mythic Other—nevertheless shift these stereotypes, and, in so doing, emphasize the supposed undesirability of a Gypsy presence in North America. For example, in the previous chapter I discussed the comparison of Gypsy figures to animals that emphasized the fantastical and pastoral elements of the literarized Gypsy. In newspaper texts, however, the juxtaposition of animals and Gypsy figures is more centered around the comparison to animals in a derogatory way. An announcement from an 1852 *Charleston Courier*, for instance, discusses the relationships between Gypsies and their animals: “The Rochester papers announced the arrival in that vicinity of a tribe of Gipsies. They are distinguished by the wild freedom which characterizes the race – and their horses, dogs and foxes lie down together, unchained and uncurbed, in imitation of the unrestrained freedom of their masters” (“Gipsies,” *Charleston Courier*). Although the initial “wild freedom” mentioned in the first line of this report appears at first glance to be in keeping with the titillating and exotic “wildness” of the mythicized Gypsies, the comparison to animals functions in a deeply negative and repellant manner. The “horses, dogs and foxes” lying in a miscellaneous group right next to members of their Gypsy “tribe” suggests an animalistic and base literarized Gypsy, one that is unpredictable, motley, and that

does not conform to the chain-of-being order of nature where humans are distinct from, and above, other animals. Indeed, their “unrestrained freedom” seems to even suggest Gypsies reject the role of humans in husbanding animals, almost as if they are reversing domestication and turning animals “wild” again, with the Gypsy’s own “wildness” setting back the animals by dividing them from the proper set of relations with humans.

The regressing animals described in the above passage, and their relation to “wild” and “undomesticated” Gypsies is mirrored in a similar text from the *Albany Evening Journal*: “A strolling band of Indians, probably from Canada, although they call themselves Egyptians... [has] three one-horse wagons, a cow, dogs without number, [illegible], a parrot, and a variety of musical instruments” (“Gypsies”). Here, we see Gypsies depicted as a group where animals, humans, and instruments are inseparable; such Gypsies are implicitly threatening to readers, as they once again represent a transgression of the “natural order” that constructs humans as separate and distinct from both animals and human-constructed tools in the form of instruments and wagons.

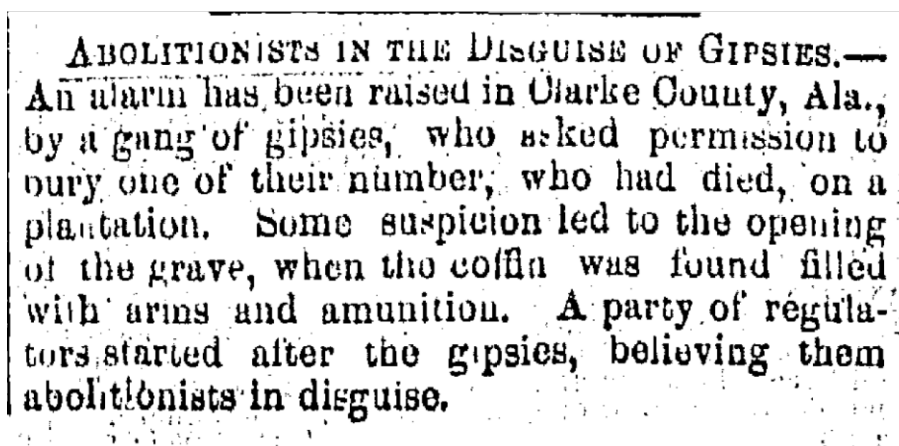
Also, their description as “Indians” in this passage marks another significant – and uniquely U.S. American – feature of Gypsy depictions in many forms of print literature: comparison to and description as Indigenous Americans, based on skin color, perceived relation to nature, and lifestyles deemed transgressive to white U.S. Americans. The framework used to discuss indigenous Americans, in many of these texts, is applied to the Romani immigrant populations, and as such the stereotypes and prejudices associated with these groups are mapped onto the literarized Gypsies. In this text, it appears that the description of “Indians” is based on the skin color of the “Egyptians,” yet in other texts it appears as a metaphorical description for nomadic lifestyles, perceived primitiveness, etc.

The consistent description of Romani immigrants as having striking black hair and eyes – as well as “tawny” skin – resonates with similar descriptions of indigenous Americans. Indeed, it appears that Indigenous Americans and Romani immigrants challenge in similar manners the rhetorics of westward expansion and white U.S. American superiority that the United States had a vested interest in constructing and perpetuating in the nineteenth century.

Notably, some texts do the reverse of this and describe Indigenous Americans as Gypsies, but this is much more common in texts from earlier periods. Nonetheless, it speaks to the fact that Gypsies, in these imprints, are figured in North American culture as racialized Others.

The “unrestrained freedom” described in the *Charleston Courier* is also a central facet of the printed depiction of the literarized Gypsy in North America, particularly in antebellum print literature. Generally, this “freedom” is portrayed as antithetical to the political purposes of slaveholders, who obviously had a vested interest in suppressing rhetoric and groups that exemplified or valued “freedom.” In several news texts, Gypsies are described as negative influences on enslaved Black communities in the South, “leading slaves into theft” (“Gipsies,” *Washington Sentinel*). As a consequence of their “demoralizing influence” on these communities, this same text encourages “all good citizens into the employment of ridding the country of these pests.” The figure of the literarized Gypsy, here, is positioned as a direct threat to white supremacy and the institution of slavery in the United States. This positioning is a result of these Gypsies’ Travelling lifestyles and their fortune-telling and metalworking trades, which threaten the structure of white society by virtue of the difficulty associated with structurally controlling or profiting off Gypsy individuals. Clearly, Gypsy figures were immensely threatening to slaveholders in one way or another – another newspaper article in the *Plain Dealer* presents an account of “Abolitionists in the Disguise of

Gipsies” (see fig. 16): “An alarm has been raised in Clarke County, Ala., by a gang of gipsies who asked permission to bury one of their number, who had died, on a plantation. Some suspicion led to the opening of the grave, when the coffin was found filled with arms and ammunition. A party of regulators started after the gipsies, believing them to be abolitionists in disguise” (“Abolitionists”). While the question of whether these individuals were actual Roma, or simply “abolitionists in disguise,” as the paper claims, is certainly interesting – it raises the question of to what extent North American Roma participated in abolitionist movements, as the Roma were enslaved in Europe themselves – but a definitive answer is ultimately beyond the scope of this thesis. What is essential is that this news article presents the figure of the Gypsy as critically threatening to white society and white supremacy, and, ultimately, through this, they become an essentially intolerable presence in the U.S. South, and thus worthy of being violently oppressed and scourged.



ABOLITIONISTS IN THE DISGUISE OF GIPSIES.—
 An alarm has been raised in Clarke County, Ala., by a gang of gipsies, who asked permission to bury one of their number, who had died, on a plantation. Some suspicion led to the opening of the grave, when the coffin was found filled with arms and ammunition. A party of regulators started after the gipsies, believing them abolitionists in disguise.

Figure 16. Sept. 16, 1860 *Plain Dealer* article referencing “Abolitionists in the Disguise of Gipsies”

The fundamentally challenging and intolerable nature of this type of literarized Gypsy leads us to one of the most prominent features of Gypsy depictions in these texts, particularly as time went on: the ever-present association of the Gypsy with untrustworthiness and

confidence games. As North American newspaper readers began to become more familiar with stories about the Roma presence, depictions gradually shifted from interest, to wariness, to fear and hatred. From the 1850s on, it was increasingly uncommon to see print depictions of Gypsies that were not associated with crime. An article from the Philadelphia *North American* describes the arrest of a group of Romani men for suspected robbery: “there was no evidence before the Alderman to implicate these prisoners in the burglaries. ... These gipsies must continue suspicious characters, whether they are proved burglars or not, for their habits are of a nature to excite the mistrust of the police” (“Arrest of Gipsies”). This is historically accurate in relation to the frequent oppressive treatment of the Roma, as their mere presence is often deemed suspicious, but this text also acts as a warning to white readers that they must be wary of any nearby Roma, as they are, apparently, dangerous criminals not to be trusted. Other texts give more detailed accounts of the crimes allegedly perpetrated by Gypsies (see fig. 17); one of the more common stories, which is reiterated in many papers with names, locations, and sums shifting slightly, is the story of a Gypsy fortune-teller that, rather being exotic and perhaps magically powerful, is a conniving huckster who tricks individuals out of a huge amounts of money, often by convincing them to bury it for good luck and then taking the money once the owner leaves. A good example of this sort of depiction is found in this passage,

In the Georgian Journal of yesterday we gave a full account of the swindling operation of a confidence-gaining gipsy on a party not far from the city, and today we can inform our readers of her arrest, riding with a male accomplice on the charge of having cheated and swindled Uriah Mitchell, Esq., of Bryan County, out of \$1,500. The mode by which the accused worked up matters to

effect their swindling views is curious and almost verifies the saying that truth is stranger than fiction. (“Trick of a Gipsy”)

Even though, as the text mentions, this is not the “full account” of the event (which would be far too lengthy to feature here), there are a few significant aspects of this passage that bear discussion. Firstly, the perpetrators of these scams are almost always women, which speaks to shifts in Otherized depictions of Gypsy women: while depictions in the early 1840s were exoticized and sexualized, particularly when paired with the fortune-teller trope, the threats implicit in this type of Othering evidently manifested and became explicit in the decade since Gypsy women first became objects of fascination. The perpetrators in these accounts are also frequently framed as duplicitous, not in the sense that they merely lied, but that they gained the “confidence” of the people they were swindling and then betrayed it, suggesting a sort of moral bankruptcy. The final lines of this text, also, manage to invest the Gypsy figures in these texts with a sense of intrigue and banality: although “truth is stranger than fiction,” the entertaining qualities of this story are juxtaposed with an implicit warning that Gypsies pose a potential threat to the readers of the paper, and both of these facets mark the Gypsies as newsworthy. Such narratives are so common that it would take quite a bit of time to explain all the variations this basic idea, so, it suffices to say that even if the odd Roma person did practice some form of swindle (as do some people from all national and ethnic backgrounds), the widely-circulated stories of these events serve to foster and generate distrust and negativity surrounding the Roma, leading to further persecution like the “mistrust of the police” quoted above.

THIEVING GIPSIES—\$1000 STOLEN.—A company of gipsies, consisting of three men, two women and children, with two one horse wagons, tents, &c., have been perambulating different sections of the country, for some months past, making a living by fortune telling, tinkering and stealing. Their boldest and most successful undertaking in the line last mentioned, transpired last Thursday, near New Lisbon, Fairfield county, Ohio. The sufferer is a farmer named David Rhodes, from whom they stole \$1000. They had been encamped

Figure 17. Another example of a “gypsy swindle,” printed in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* (“Thieving Gipsies”)

The negativity constructed in these texts pervades North American print culture of the period, and it resulted in what I consider to be a culmination of anti-Romani racism and ethnic oppression, facilitated by the print medium: the first instance of a story regarding the kidnapping of an U.S. American child by the Gypsies. The *New York Daily Tribune* presents the story with this lede: “The recovery, on Saturday last, of the female child of Mr. M. Greenan, after an absence of three weeks, reveals the fact that there are in this, and probably other states as well, strolling bands of vagabonds corresponding to the gipsies of Europe” (“New York Gipsies”). Stories of kidnapping by Gypsies appear at the peak of anti-Romani racism, and are indictive of a thorough cultural fear of this group. The skin color, trades, lifestyles, and presence of the Roma are construed as threatening, which results in these sorts of stories; having little to no basis in historical fact, Gypsy kidnapping news stories are the constructs of years of developing hatred toward the Roma that, at this point in the nineteenth century, became thoroughly ingrained in white U.S. American culture.

Chapter 4: The Roma as “Romance” in U.S. American Dime Novels, 1876-1895

In this chapter, I discuss texts that fall under the umbrella term “dime novels,” collected from the *Nickels and Dimes* database collated by Northern Illinois University. I adhere to the definition of the term proposed by Michael Denning in his discussion of this body of texts: “the entire body of commercial, mass-produced, and sensational fiction of the nineteenth century” (10). The most widely-known type of text that falls under this umbrella term is that from which dime novels got their name: “regularly issued pamphlets of around 100 pages that measure approximately 4" x 6," ranging in price from 5 cents to a quarter” (“Dime Novel Formats”). However, the term can refer to a number of other popular print forms mass-produced in the mid- to late-nineteenth century, as it was used primarily as a marketing label denoting its cheap price and general accessibility. In addition to the standard dime novels, the term is often also used to describe nickel weeklies, a shorter (16-32 page) variant of the dime novel named for their reduced price (and therefore greater accessibility to individuals with less disposable income, such as children and teenagers, to whom these stories were often marketed) (“Dime Novel Formats”), cheap libraries, shorter standalone stories published in three-columned print, and story papers, short weekly newspapers containing serialized stories that were a precursor form to the standard dime novel (Denning 12). For this chapter, I will examine three of these types of texts: “Nobody’s Boys; or, Life Among the Gipsies,” “Breaking the Fetters; or, the Gypsy’s Secret,” and “Nemo, the King of the Tramps; or, the Romany Girl’s Vengeance.” These stories are all listed in *Nickels and Dimes* as nickel weeklies, despite the fact that “Nemo, The King of the Tramps” was sold for 10¢ rather than 5¢, and due to their length and print layout, would probably fall into Denning’s categorization system as cheap libraries. Ultimately, the distinctions between the

genres are more a product of marketing than any meaningful variations in readership, publishers, [or] the fiction itself” (Denning 12), and therefore I will follow Denning in using the term dime novels for the texts I examine here. I move from large-scale to closer analysis in this chapter due to the comparative length of these texts, but this does not mean that there are proportionally fewer texts in this category that mention Gypsies: of the roughly 8,500 dime novels archived in *Nickels and Dimes*, 57 of them mention Gypsies or the Roma, which is a substantial enough number for the database to have a subject category tag for “Romanies.” The necessity of this catalog tag evinces the prevalence of Gypsy figures in this genre, which, combined with the pervasive popularity of the genre, suggests the influence of these texts on U.S. culture.

These dime novels represent a synthesis of the constructions of the literarized Gypsy that I discussed in the previous two chapters. These popular and mass-produced texts utilize elements from both the Gypsy-as-myth and Gypsy-as-news constructions of U.S. American print ephemera and selectively combine them to create the third and final category of literarization that I discuss in this thesis: the Gypsy as *romance*. I use the term romance in relation to the genre of Romance, a form of prose fiction that was long a precursor to and, in this period, sometimes overlapped with the genre of the novel, that focuses on imaginative and obviously fictionalized content; I use romance for this type of literarization to refer to the complete assimilation of the Gypsy figure as narrative devices into these fictional texts. The dramatic, mysterious, and entertaining symbolic constructions of the mythic Gypsy are combined with the negative and fearmongering “realistic” elements of Gypsies in news articles in the Gypsy-as-romance paradigm; a construction that relies on the complete narrative assimilation of the Gypsy. That is, depictions of Gypsies in the dime novels are less

focused on representing the Gypsies as quasi-mythic, albeit Other, figures, or as threatening groups of immigrant Others, but instead deploy these already established Gypsy topoi as narrative devices that advance the plots and moralizing elements of these stories. Thus, the shorter, self-contained representations of Gypsies in the texts of the previous two chapters are exchanged for longer, more complex texts which use Gypsies as convenient plot devices and deemphasize the Gypsy characters in-and-of themselves. Through this type of literarization, the Roma are fully subsumed into a literary form and a predetermined set of reader expectations; they are reduced to a stock trope that is standardized as an object of both revulsion and fascination for white U.S. Americans. Moreover, such stock character Gypsies, at least to an important extent, further the mechanisms of white supremacy, class differentiation, and the racialized discourses of westward expansion featured in the US ideology of manifest destiny.

It is also important to note that the depiction of Gypsies as romance in the dime novels likely had significant material consequences for the actual Roma, who, at this point, had become a substantial immigrant population in the United States. These representations, in addition to combining and advancing the denigrative, reductive, and essentializing stereotypes produced in the texts of the first two categories, led to the final form of erasure of the Roma through literarization; these texts fundamentally stripped them of any individuated qualities, uniformly representing all Roma as untrustworthy and undesirable, and, in the process, foreclosing readers from being open to actual Roma immigrants. Yet even the sources of these invidious formulations of the Roma—many of which have been carried forward in later cultural forms—have themselves now been forgotten; these ephemeral dime novel texts have passed out of public consciousness. If they have been preserved at all, they

have been locked away in archives. The parallel amnesia that I have discussed throughout this thesis reached its pinnacle with this genre of texts as the Roma, depicted in culture as fairy-tale monsters and titillating mystical fortunetellers instead of actual, embodied, and complex individuals, faded out of the cultural awareness of most U.S. Americans. This in part explains the general lack of awareness of Gypsy populations in the United States, as well as the gap in literary scholarship discussed in the introduction. Also, the erasures of the actual Roma via Gypsy depictions in dime novels did not only affect nineteenth-century Roma: the representation of Gypsies as romance deeply influenced the representation of Gypsies that has continued in North American popular culture even to present, extending not only into modern popular fiction but also to Hollywood and new media portrayals. In this way, the formulation of the Gypsy as romance in these texts manifests a traceable lineage of Gypsy stereotypes, from the miscellaneous reprinted British texts of the late-eighteenth and early nineteenth-centuries and the announcements and news articles of the mid-nineteenth century to these texts, which then can be traced through the Gypsy depictions in popular media of the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries.

Below I will analyze three particularly noteworthy dime novel texts that exemplify the Gypsy as romance. The first is *Nobody's Boys; or, Life Among the Gipsies* (1883), written by J.M. Hoffman and published by the market-leading and most productive publisher of dime novels, the publishing house of Beadle and Adams. *Nobody's Boys* is one of the relatively short variety of dime novels, at only 16 pages, and it was published within one of *Beadle and Adams's* particularly cheap library series called *Beadle's Boy's Library of Sport, Story, and Adventure*. As made evident by the title and the library-series in which it was located, *Nobody's Boys* was marketed towards younger male readers, a not uncommon

subdivision of this wider form of print that frequently featured narratives of boys who were separated from authority figures and who went on fantastical adventures, often involving travel to distant places and interactions with nonwhite peoples. *Nobody's Boys* falls neatly into this framework: this story tells the tale of a young orphan boy of unknown Italian heritage called Jack who makes a living as a traveling fiddler. He is implicated in the disappearance of a young rich girl called "Gipsy" and is forced to go on the run to avoid unjust punishment, meeting another young boy who becomes a traveling companion along the way. About a third of the way through the text, Jack and his friend join up with a group of Gypsies and travel with them for a while as a part of their search for "Gipsy," and they discover that she was kidnapped by the group of Gypsies shortly after her disappearance. Jack and his companion spend roughly a third of the dime novel traveling with the Gypsy group (which is interesting, given that the title of the dime novel would suggest that the Gypsies are a central aspect of this text), playing their instruments for money and eventually travelling west to Texas, where they are separated from the Gypsies.

One of the most interesting things about this text is the conflation of Gypsy identity with Italian identity, which suggests that in this text Gypsies are constructed as an analogue for immigrant populations more generally. The text also blurs the distinctions between race, ethnicity, and national origin: Italians are as Gypsies and vice versa. Significantly, both groups are non-WASP, which is particularly relevant in the context of the period's racialization of abject (often Catholic) whites such as the Irish. Jack, who has no memories of his parents and only vague memories of being around Italians as a child, is described in the first few paragraphs of the story as having an uncertain ethnic identity, with blue eyes, blond hair, and brown skin. At his first meeting with the Gypsies (see fig. 18), a Gypsy says to

another Gypsy “[that he calls himself an Italian] is a lie; he is not of [their] blood . . . Look at his eyes and hair” (Hoffman 7). In response to this, Jack says, “‘I don’t know what I am,’ he retorted, in the Italian tongue. ‘I was brought up as an Italian, and have always lived with that people, as far back as I can remember. But one thing I do know: I can play the violin with the best of you’.” Here the Gypsies call themselves Italian, are said to speak in Italian, and identify outsiders by whether they have Italian blood. Of course, there exist substantial populations of Roma in Italy, so this is not historically implausible, yet it seems that Italian ethnicity is being substituted piecemeal for Romani ethnicity here, as Jack’s ethnic identity is questioned based on the intersection of his Italian/Roma brown skin with his Anglo blue eyes and blond hair. It seems here that “Italian blood” is conflated with “Gypsy blood” as a marker of Gypsy identity. Jack’s acceptance within the group of Gypsies is enabled by his violin performance, which justifies his inclusion in the group of Italians. Yet, as we see in many texts that represent Gypsies as abundantly musical, the violin is the standard “Gypsy” instrument that characterizes their essentialized musical abilities. It is unclear whether the author of this text genuinely intended to represent a group of Italian Gypsies or whether he had some confusion about the Roma and the language that they spoke – given the general lack of widely-known factual information about the Roma during the period, the latter seems more likely.

At the end of the text, it is revealed that Jack was born to an English family and somehow “fell into the clutches of Italian spectators, who took him to America” (16), raising the question of whether these Italians were Gypsy Italians or not, but also the question of why he is marked as Other by his brown skin; it appears that his time with the Italians marked him indelibly as nonwhite, which resonates with old British myths that suggested that

Gypsy kidnappers would dye the skin of a kidnapped child with walnut juice in order to make him less identifiable to authorities looking for the child. It is also worth noting here that Gypsy identity is inexact in another part of the text: the kidnapped girl's name, Gipsy, does not appear to refer to Gypsy identity, although she does travel extensively in the text and is consistently described with emphasis on her brown eyes. It seems rather unlikely that Hoffman chose this name at random due to the prevalence of Gypsies in the story at large, and it further complicates Gypsy identity within the text; both Gipsy and Jack, the protagonists of this text, maintain an identity that is somewhere in between white and Gypsy, a "Gypsy but not Gypsy" construction that occurs throughout texts from this period.

The rest of the facets of the depiction of Gypsies in this text are somewhat less complicated, and they generally function to reproduce and expand older stereotypes. For instance, the group of Gypsies naturally includes an example of the fortuneteller archetype, an old, wizened Gypsy named "Mad Ellen" who looks "so wrinkled and brown" that she "looked hardly human." Mad Ellen is both a skillful con artist (when dealing with non-Gypsy customers) and an apparently genuine magical figure (when predicting the effects of westward migration at the request of the leader of the group). Interestingly, as a fortuneteller Mad Ellen is marked as Other in a different manner the rest of the members of the Gypsy group: she appears to selectively speak English depending on the circumstances, and when she is telling fortunes for people who do not speak Italian, her dialogue is not distinguished in the text as being at all different from the white English speakers of the text. However, the attempts of Jack's traveling companion to speak to her fail because of "his inability to speak any language other than English, [which] was a serious drawback to friendly intercourse with the old hag" (7). Mad Ellen's fortune-telling trade is a manifestation of the gendering of

Othered Gypsy figures, as Gypsy men are infrequently associated with the magical aspects of Gypsy stereotypes and are even more rarely linked with fortune-telling. Mad Ellen's depicted madness, also, is gendered as an extension of this, as she is called mad by the Gypsy men as a result of her depicted connection to the supernatural and her cryptic speech patterns. This depiction of the fortuneteller aligns with the Gypsy-as-romance paradigm – the magical qualities of myth and the invidious qualities of news combine to create this character who is perfectly fitted for her narrative function; she unsettles the boys, but also maintains an allure of mystery that is conducive to the sense of adventure that the story seeks to create.

The Gypsies in this text are also consistently depicted as inveterate thieves and swindlers, and while their thefts do not appear within the actual events of the text, it is referenced regularly in dialogue between Jack and his friend, like in this casual example that occurs shortly after the boys begin travelling with the group: “‘It isn’t so pleasant as I thought it would be,’ said Jack. ... ‘Too much stealin’?’ suggested Andy. ‘Yes: and then I’m suspicious all the while that they’ll get us into trouble’” (7). The text appears to take great satisfaction in having Jack and his companion moralize against the Gypsies: after watching Ellen tell fortunes, Jack says “‘It’s a shame to swindle people in that way ... why, she doesn’t know any more about telling fortunes than I do. ... But right is right ... and it isn’t right to cheat people out of their money, that’s certain” (8). Indeed, the text’s general assertion of a loose moral character in the Gypsies is seen as a function of a supposedly innate Gypsy avariciousness and shared greed. For example, we see one Gypsy leader remark that, “‘It is said there is gold in California, and in abundance, and that is what we are after. What do I care for danger, time, or distance, so that I get money and riches?’” (10). Here we see a Gypsy leader willing to throw a host of other human concerns completely aside simply to get gold,

as “that is what we are after.” Earlier in the text, too, we see that gold appears to have a powerful psychological effect on the Gypsies. After Mad Ellen is given a twenty-dollar gold piece that turns out to be fake, she breaks into violent paroxysms, peppered with oaths: “The old hag fairly raved: she cursed the day she was born; she grew lived [sic] with rage as she spoke of the man who had treated her thus and declared that she would sometime have her revenge. Finally she was quieted; but it was not until the night was half gone that she was induced to seek repose” (8). This proffered special obsession with gold synthesizes aspects of both the mythic and the news-making constructions of the Gypsy: ideas of supposed Gypsy avarice are central to the “Gypsy robbery” stories printed throughout the nineteenth century in newspaper articles, and in the dime novels this is overlaid with a Gypsy desire for gold that is depicted in a stock way: gold holds mysterious powers including a unique, even magical allure, and this links the Gypsies to other “gold crazy” and quasi-mythological figures, such as pirates or leprechauns (which calls to mind the view of the Irish as abject whites during the period). In other words, the Gypsy-as-romance figures seen in *Nobody’s Boys* have little interest in money as a means of survival and/or social mobility and better living standards, but instead is driven by a “mad” fascination with shining gold as a mystical substance that is worth possessing simply because it is gold.

The mysterious allure of gold for dime novel Gypsies has further implications for this text in relation to its historical moment. The novel was published in 1883, which was not long after the California Gold Rush, and as gold rushes in other parts of the West, such as the Black Hills, were continuing. Thus, gold continued to be a major component in the ideologies of U.S. westward expansion and Manifest Destiny that continued even to the end of the nineteenth century. Not surprisingly, then, westward migration is a central aspect of

Nobody's Boys, as Jack travels from Kentucky to California over the course of the story, and his journey showcases many of the typical scenes and motifs of stories concerned with the western "frontier," including those that demonize Native Americans, a group to which the Gypsies are linked. For instance, the event that drives the end to Jack's stay with the Gypsies is the joining of Jack and the Gypsies by a group of hopeful "pioneer" homesteaders, a period during which Jack gets lost for a few nights. When he eventually finds their campsite again, he discovers "the mangled bodies of men, women and children scattered here and there over the plain" (11). It is implied that this was done by the "Indians" that had come to the camp on a previous night, but the last thing that Jack observes about the scene is that "there was not a Gipsy body among the slain!" This is the final mention of Gypsies in the text (barring the discussion of Italians at the end of the story), and it implicates the Gypsies as a barrier to the "proper" westward expansion of the Anglo population into the west, linking them to the "barrier" of Native American populations, and, thus, also implicating them in the oftentimes genocidal rhetoric used to support continued westward expansion and settler colonialism. Gypsies are aligned with the Indigenous Americans who oppose U.S. expansion, and this presents an interesting paradigm for the construction of the Other in the United States: while the Indigenous Americans represent a "new world" opposition to the U.S. machine of colonization, the Gypsies represent an "old world" Other that continues to oppose the white U.S. American agendas, even as they intentionally immigrated to the United States. Their status as Other, translated transatlantically, finds them a new position within the hierarchies of WASP supremacy in North America. The Gypsies in this story, then, function less as the actual subjects of this story, and more as narrative features of the U.S. American story of manifest destiny.



Figure 88. The title illustration to *Nobody's Boys*, depicting Jack's first meeting with the Gypsies. Note Jack (left), the leader (center with cane) and Mad Ellen (right with cane)

This existence as narrative devices appears again in the second text that I will discuss: *Breaking the Fetters; or, the Gypsy's Secret* written in 1883 by Georgiana Dickens and again published by *Beadle and Adams*, but this time in their *Waverly Library* series. In this story, the protagonist is Clara Meredith, a young woman who is engaged to a distasteful man and who lives near a settlement of Gypsies called "Gypsy Corner." There is notable tension with local rich white family the Cawsands – to which Clara's fiancée, Herbert Cawsand, belongs – and the Gypsies. Before the events of the story, Clara met a man named Ivan Berrington, an actor staying at the local theatre for a short period of time. He continues to act courteously towards her, and eventually they fall in love; meanwhile, a Gypsy woman named Lottie is also in love with Ivan, and she eventually stabs Clara out of jealousy. This event causes the Cawsands to try to indict the entire group of Gypsies for the crime, and in order to protect them, Ivan Berrington reveals that he is, in fact, himself a Gypsy, an identity he has taken

pains to hide. There are several additional plot twists in this story, confusing familial relations and secret identities, all of which are apropos of the dime novel as genre, but these are the key drivers of the Gypsy plot.

It is Ivan Berrington's secret Gypsy identity that is of most interest here, as it exemplifies the trope of the "Gypsy who is not a Gypsy" and the fascination with the "Romany Rye"³ that occurs throughout this body of texts. The crucial details of his story are this: he was born to a white man of the Cawsand family and a Gypsy woman, who died shortly after he was born, meaning that he has some measure of "Gypsy blood." He was then, instead of receiving a Romani surname and living among the Gypsies, given the surname Berrington and educated, living separately from the Gypsies from most of his life. As the leader of the Gypsy group notes, "he [was the leader's] daughter's child; but he knows little of our ways, and he is nearly a stranger to us" (Dickens 14). This distance from Gypsy culture despite his Gypsy blood makes him "Romany Rye," a category that has immense allure for texts of this period, as it signifies the ideal Gypsy for Anglo readers: a Romany Rye is often described as a non-Gypsy who associates with or "takes an interest in" ("Romany Rye") Gypsies and engages only with the idealized aspects of Romani culture (Dearing 167). The term is sometimes used interchangeably with the term *didicoi*, which is used to describe someone who has Romani lineage, but is not a "true" Gypsy in one way or another ("Didicoi"); it is the intersection of these two terms and definitions that best describes the use of Romany Rye in these dime novels as a descriptor for someone who is "Gypsy but not Gypsy."

³ Because these dime novels spell this phrase "Romany Rye," I will use this spelling. However, a somewhat common variant spelling of this is "Romani Rai."

Ivan Berrington is a perfect example of this: born to a “true” Gypsy woman and therefore having authentic Gypsy blood, his character contains all the allure of the mythical Gypsy bloodline, yet as he was not raised by Gypsies and was educated as a proper Anglo gentleman, so he does not have any of the supposedly bad habits of the Gypsies who live their traditional itinerant lifestyles. Ivan Berrington is labelled as a Gypsy, particularly in the subtitle of the story “The Gypsy’s Secret,” but a type of Gypsy that is most palatable as a protagonist for white Anglo readers: he has all of the titillating, mythical, and exoticized characteristics of the literary Gypsy but none of the dangers. This trope seen again in “Nemo, the King of the Tramps,” as the titular Nemo was raised as a rich gentleman, although he has Gypsy blood, and later goes to live with Gypsies – and, despite the fact that he was not raised as a Gypsy, he becomes the “King” of those peoples by virtue of the gentlemanly bearing of his birth privilege and his Gypsy blood. Jack, of “Nobody’s Boys” is an example of a variation on this trope: although he does not appear to have any Gypsy blood, he does have the “stain” of association with them at a young age, and yet was not raised among them. There are variations on this general trope, but what is consistent is that a palatable Gypsy protagonist for these dime novels is always Gypsy enough to be exoticized, but not Gypsy enough to be seen as dangerous. This trope is a Gypsy variation of “the man who knows Indians” trope present in other novels from the period such as the James Fenimore Cooper *Longstocking* series, which depicts a frontiersman who becomes jaded with industrialized society and goes to live among the Mohican people, representing an in-between between Anglo-Americans and Indigenous Americans that functions similarly to the Romany Rye. Notably, however, the figure of the Romany Rye has slightly different connotations, Gypsies being an immigrant – and yet again “Old world” – population, and as such places more

emphasis on Gypsy ethnicity. In *Breaking the Fetters*, Ivan Berrington's Gypsiness serves to make him an attractive and exotic romantic partner for Clara, but not Gypsy enough to have the negative qualities of Gypsies and thus be "Other." This emphasis on Gypsy ethnicity has significant resonances with the aims of the Gypsy Lore Society that began in the late nineteenth century, which obsessively attempted to create a genealogy of the "true" Gypsy by tracing them back to origins in the Indian subcontinent; and in both academic and popular discussions about Gypsies from that period (and, to an extent, even now), there was a degree of fascination inherent in Gypsy lineage and history that did not take into account the lived experiences, traditions, or agency of the actual Romani people.

Ivan Berrington, also, contains another important trope used in the construction of Gypsies as romance in the dime novels: the association between Gypsies and actors, disguise, and deception. Of course, the association between Gypsies and theatre can be traced back through historical Gypsy depictions that place a heavy emphasis on performance; it is implicit that Gypsies have innate talents for entertainment and spectacle. However, Ivan Berrington's profession as an actor not only speaks to the association between Gypsies and theatrical entertainment, but also deception: Ivan's Gypsy blood enables him to have special talents, not only for entertaining crowds, but also for deceiving individuals by successfully hiding his "inherent" Gypsy identity. His Gypsy blood also marks him as unusually attractive, which to some degree reflects a continuation of early trends that hypersexualized Gypsies: for example, his "large, dark, expressive" eyes are frequently emphasized as especially attractive and even romantically suggestive. Of course, the hypersexualization of Gypsies is always more apparent when we examine depictions of Gypsy women, and this

novel is no different. For example, consider this description of Lottie, the Gypsy who eventually stabs Clara,

She was the fortune-teller's daughter, dark-eyed, like the rest of her race and of a beauty above the common. She was well-knit, lithe, and graceful in her movements, and her habiliments were donned with a care and neatness which contrasted strongly with the other females. Her hair was dressed with studied regard; the red silk bandanna which covered it was clean and spotless; there was a string of amber beads upon her neck, and one or two rings upon her fingers. She was superior to the rest of them, and the difference was striking.

(5)

I would describe this as very nearly the perfect example of the hypersexualized Gypsy woman, except that this passage lacks a description of her hair, but a few pages later this changes; Lottie, when attempting to appeal to Ivan that he should love her instead of Clara, points out that “[Clara's] hair is flaxen, and her eyes are blue” before taking the following action:

... drawing herself up to her utmost stature, [she] pushed back the handkerchief which hid her own black tresses, and looked at him with those large dark orbs of hers, as much as to say ‘Here you have the pattern; the best and brightest of the Gypsy tribe!’ The gesture was quiet and modest, simply displaying the consciousness of the possession of typical beauty, and of a nature so much in contrast to the girl she spoke of. (8)

These passages almost read as if the author was simply crossing off boxes on a list: dark eyes and black tresses, rings and a red bandanna, lithe and the daughter of a fortuneteller. All of

these qualities serve to exoticize and Other her as an object of fetishistic desire. The construction of Lottie's character is typical for depictions of Gypsy women, which has immense impacts on the treatment of actual Romani women who are subsequently hypersexualized as a result of these depictions. This text is quite unique, however, in that Lottie's exoticized beauty actually has consequences for her within the novel's diegesis. While having a conversation with Herbert Cawsand, he sexually assaults her by pretending to read her fortune and then grabbing her, and he is stopped only when he is made aware that Clara (his fiancée) is nearby (see fig. 19). Lottie, of course, is given no sympathy for being so attacked. Instead, the text blames her by describing her, immediately before the assault, as "naturally a coquette" (6). In fact, she is then cast in the role of the villain when she stabs Clara, leading to her being "banished from the tribe" (13).

The character of Lottie in *Breaking the Fetters* is another manifestation of the construction of the Gypsy as romance: her role in the story serves its function as a narrative device, and little care is given to her treatment or fate at the end of the story save for that the plot reached its intended resolution. The rest of the Gypsies in the story are treated similarly, as the end of the story has no satisfactory resolution for the group. The story ends with Clara and Ivan (the not-quite-Gypsy) becoming engaged, the Gypsy camp being incited to "leave the state and find another settlement," and being paid off for a "compulsory shift of locality" (15).



Figure 19. The title illustration for *Breaking the Fetters*, depicting Cawsand's assault on Lottie. Note Clara (right, background) whose hair is covered, contrasted with Lottie's (left) unbound hair.

This brings us to the third and final dime novel that I will discuss in this chapter, *Nemo, the King of the Tramps; or, the Romany Girl's Vengeance*, written in 1881 by Captain Fred Whitaker and published (once again) by *Beadle and Adams* in *Beadle's New York Dime Library* series. The plot, like many dime novels, is quite convoluted, involving disguise, complicated family relationships, confusing sub-plots that are not especially well connected to the main plot, and the like, so I will attempt to summarize only the essential aspects that are most specific to the role of Gypsies in the novel here. The titular Nemo is the leader of a group of Gypsies who live side-by-side with a group of "tramps." Nemo meets a young boy called Jack, who turns out to be a woman in disguise and who is actually named Jacqueline Raynaud. Nemo and Jack/Jacqueline work up and put on a wildly successful and recurring play at the local theatre that depicts Oliver Calvert, a local railroad baron, being murdered by Jacqueline playing the Countess Cacucha, a "queen of the Gypsies." All of this is set against

the background of Pittsburgh railroad riots, and, at the end of the story, Nemo himself is revealed to be Harvey Calvert, the son of Oliver Calvert.

Denning's reading of this novel suggests that the Gypsies in this text are merely "a synecdoche for immigrant workers" (152); however, although the Gypsies in this text can be read in this context, I argue that their "Gypsiness" is essential to their role within the story, and therefore bears looking at. Many of the tropes that I have already discussed in this chapter – and throughout this thesis – are found in great supply in this dime novel. Gypsies are depicted as a feature of an idealized nature, for instance, placed "in the midst of dense woods [with] a green meadow of some five or six acres in extent, ... sparking in the sunlight" (3). They are also identified by their traditional trades: "the Gypsies have been horse-jockeys and farriers, time out of mind." The reveal at the end of the story that Nemo is not actually a Gypsy, but is the son of Oliver Calvert that just happens to have some Gypsy heritage, of course reinforces the privileging of the Romany Rye or "not-quite-Gypsy" trope; in this text in particular, this is intensified, as Harvey Calvert was raised by his own white family and only later in his life joins the Gypsies to become their king, suggesting that the white person that "turns" Gypsy is ostensibly superior to someone who begins their life among those people. The trope of the hidden king regularly recurs in the genre of Romance, which aligns with the Gypsy-as-romance form more generally, but in this text it serves a specific purpose: the figure of the "Gypsy King" is a highly mythologized trope, depicted in many nineteenth-century texts as the highest form of the idealized Gypsy. The fact that Nemo ascends to this rank asserts the superiority of the "not-quite-Gypsy" over even the idealized and mythologized Gypsy kings of previous texts, signaling the transformation of mythic Gypsy stereotypes to those of romance. The Gypsies in this text are once again strongly associated

with music and often shown performing – in fact, perhaps more than in “Breaking the Fetters,” performance is a central aspect of this text. Jacqueline and Nemo’s stage play is heavily emphasized in the text, both aesthetically and in plot importance. The play itself appears as full of significant tropes in the representation of the Gypsy-as-romance: the play depicts “Gipsy girls, slender and graceful, dark-eyed and dark haired, as far from the traditional stage gipsy as possible” (7), even as these Gypsy women conform note-for-note to the traditional literary Gypsy stereotypes. Following this is a lengthy passage that is perhaps the most over-the-top exoticization and hypersexualization that I have found in my research, with depictions of lively music, seductive dancing, and colorful clothing that I regret I do not have the space to include here; it is quite remarkable the extent to which this story takes all of the typical tropes and intensifies them for the depiction of this performance. And yet, the play does not exist just to depict the Gypsies, nor are the Gypsies in the story able to support a standalone plot; they are depicted so that they can further the agenda of the narrative. The theatrical elements of this dime novel also reinforce the association of Gypsies with disguise and deception. The proliferation and multiplication of disguises, name changes, and costumes in this story deserves a full-scale analysis of its own, not least in the sense that Jack/Jacqueline’s genderfluidity throughout the text has implications for queer readings that can be traced back to the tradition of depictions of transgender and gender nonconforming individuals finding sanctuary among Gypsies.

Despite all these immensely interesting representations of Gypsy stereotypes in this text that could sustain a full reading on their own, there is one particular facet of this text that is relatively unique: the use of the Romani language in the actual text of the story, translated in footnotes for non-Romani speaking readers. This is immensely interesting, as most of the

texts that I have found in my research and subsequently presented in this thesis show no markers of Romani authorship or readership. The presence of the Romani language within this text raises many questions about its production: was the author Romani, or had Romani family members? If not (or, even if so), were actual Roma consulted during the text's composition for help with translating English into Romani, and if that is the case, how much influence did such Roma have on the plot and the Gypsy depictions contained within this text? Or, if the author did not have a Romani consultant, where did they learn the language? Indeed, the question of language is immensely interesting, as Romani culture and language is generally recognized to be a notably "closed" culture, and the text actually demonstrates a knowledge of this fact. In a scene where a Gypsy character named Nan is travelling down a road, she waits until she is alone to sing a Romani song: "Like most of her people she was proud and jealous of her language, which she did not like to betray to people who did not know it already" (18). The text continues by giving the song that she sings in Romani, and translates it only in footnotes, forcing the reader to do the actual work of reading her song in Romani and then only later translating it for them. Once again, this raises the question: Did a Romani person teach the author this song? Furthermore, did they consent to have this song published, and the Romani language in the rest of the text translated, despite the clear awareness of the author that Romani people do not typically teach their language to outsiders? All of these questions, unfortunately, are difficult to answer given the paucity of records about the compositional history of this work.

Despite the unlikelihood of ever having the above questions answered definitively, there are a few aspects of this story that lead me to suspect that there was some degree of Romani participation in the production of this text. I will discuss the most thematically

significant one here, which is represented in the epilogue of the story: “A Romany Colony settled around Calverton where the rovers settled down, as the majority of Gipsies do in the United States, whenever they get a chance, and became basket-makers, cutlers, horse-trainers, weavers, and all sorts of things except agriculturalists” (32). This stands in stark contrast to the Gypsies in the other two novels that we have discussed, and indeed many of the texts of this period, where the Gypsies – either mysteriously or because they are compelled by authorities – disappear after the white characters in these stories achieve their satisfactory resolution, contributing to. This is one of the only texts in this category of Romance where the Gypsy characters are allowed not only to continue their existence after the story is over, but also to dictate the way in which they continue these existences: they have a choice to settle down, a choice of location, and a choice of trades. They are granted agency within the text in a way that many textual representations of Gypsies are not and exercise that agency in a way that definitively does not align with most stereotypical perceptions of Gypsies. The choice to settle down solidly contradicts the construction of Gypsies as voluntarily nomadic as a result of their romanticized free spirits, and much more realistically represents the situation of many Romani immigrants to the United States. Perhaps, then, the author of this text was simply more familiar with the Roma than many other dime novel authors, and wrote their ending based on that knowledge; or, perhaps, the Roma who may have been involved in the production of this text exerted a degree of agency and manifested their chosen lifestyle through this text by determining the fate of the Gypsies at the end of this novel.

These three dime novels, in their varying representations of Gypsies, construct these figures as narrative romance through the application of the tropes that I have discussed, and

in doing so fully subsume the Roma into this literary form. The synthesis of the categories of myth and news creates fully literarized Gypsies that exist solely as narrative devices for the texts in which they appear, erasing the actual, living Roma by supplanting them with these literarized depictions. The literarization in these texts and subsequent erasure that it enables persists into contemporary forms of popular media, and as a result of this, the marginalization of the Roma is often overlooked.

Conclusion

The central project of this thesis was to show, through extensive digital archive research and textual analysis, that depictions of Gypsy figures printed in the United States throughout the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries worked to literarize and contribute to the erasure of the Roma, thereby contributing to their disenfranchisement and persecution. Through engagement with these digital archives, I retrieved, organized, and presented in a comprehensible format long-neglected texts from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that depict Gypsies, a process that I documented in chapter one. The texts that I presented in these chapters, and the claims that I made about them in the process of analysis, are representative of a massive body of texts that are archived in these digital formats; it was necessary to create categorical distinctions based on dates of production, print formats, and thematic content of the texts in order to identify and emphasize their significant content. I separated these categories into chapters: chapter two, which deals with reprints and the construction of the Gypsy as myth, chapter three, which discusses newspaper articles and the formulation of the Gypsy as news, and chapter four, which examines dime novels and proposes the construction of the Gypsy as narrative romance. A key aim of this project was to make visible these texts that were essential in constructing and reinforcing Gypsy stereotypes in the United States, with the aim of tracing the roots of Romani oppression and analyzing the print-based mechanisms of this subjugation in order to help discourage their continuing reproduction in contemporary popular culture.

In my first chapter, I detail the process of my digital archive research and the challenges that I encountered during this process. The three archives that I utilized (*America's Historical Imprints*, *America's Historical Newspapers*, and the *Nickels and*

Dimes database) consist largely of texts that are regarded as ephemera, causing them to be less frequently discussed in academic literature compared to the more expensive print forms and canonical texts of the period. Because of the tendency to represent Gypsies in these ephemeral print forms, I proposed the term parallel amnesia to describe the similar ways in which the Roma and ephemeral texts are regarded as insignificant, discarded, and eventually forgotten by culture, as well as how the literarization of the Roma has enabled their treatment in ways corresponding to these ephemeral texts. In conjunction with their ephemerality, however, the texts in these databases are largely comprised of popular print forms such as newspapers, miscellanies, and cheap stories, which by virtue of their accessibility and wide readerships have significant potential to influence U.S. American concepts of race and class.

In this chapter, I discussed the challenges of digital archive research. In nearly all of the searches I did, I encountered a significant problem in collecting textual records that reference the Roma as a result of the technological limitations of keyword searching algorithms, which necessitated me to limit my search to texts that contain the word Gypsy. In addition to technological limitations, I also selected this search term due to the infrequent use of the term Roma by non-Romani authors (who produced the overwhelming majority of the texts that I found in my research) during the period, as well as a more theoretical reason: according to the terminology distinction proposed by Paloma Gay y Blasco, where Roma refers to the actual “conglomerate of populations that would identify themselves as Gypsy, Roma, Gitano, Tsigane and so on” and Gypsy refers to “exoticizing and Orientalizing representations,” using Gypsy for these keyword searches is actually more accurate, due to the fact that most of these texts are not interested in representing actual Roma but instead constructing literarized, stereotypical depictions. I discussed the specific research methods

for each analysis chapter: a straightforward combing through of all of the records contained within *America's Historical Imprints* and the *America's Historical Newspapers* records up to 1822, a more limited sampling-method search of *Historical Newspapers* articles (to account for the massive boom in texts during the beginning of this period), and a very simple tag-based and "title keyword" search through the *Nickels and Dimes* database. I also discussed potentially interesting trends in the broader data, such as the apparent consistent interest in Gypsy representations irrespective of the distribution of actual Romani populations, the concentration of imprints in large cities, and the overall prominence of Gypsy depictions in terms of the overall number of U.S. American imprints.

In my second chapter, I propose the first category that I use for my thesis: the texts from this period, collected from the *America's Historical Imprints* and the *America's Historical Newspapers* archives from 1773-1822, construct the literarized Gypsy as a mythological figure, predicated on the presumed absence of the Roma in the U.S. and their mythologized presence in Europe. The majority of U.S. American reprints from this period consist of reprints of British texts, a consequence of the contemporary print marketplace that explains the reproduction of British Gypsy stereotypes in U.S. culture. I argue that the mythic Gypsy is constructed via several important facets: the stripping of the Gypsy of any individuated qualities, the construction of Gypsy figures as simultaneously genuinely magical and farcical, the comparison of textual depictions of Gypsies to significant European myths, and the use of these mythicized Gypsies as objects of entertainment rather than serious and intellectually worthwhile subject matter. Significantly, the mythic Gypsies in these texts, by virtue of their supposed absence, are not depicted as genuinely threatening and serve as safe explorations of the Other, yet of the qualities of the mythic Gypsy serve to

literarize and dehumanize the actual Roma, resulting in the invidious function of these stereotypes. In this chapter, I discuss the relevance of miscellanies to this category of texts and suggest that the diverse array of collected texts that comprise this genre is representative of the reprinted stereotypes that make up much of the thematic content of this category. I discuss the more specific features of the depictions of mythicized Gypsies in these texts, namely the alignment of Gypsies with animals and other natural settings, the tendency to represent Gypsies in song or poetic verse forms, the performativity of the mythic Gypsy, and the depiction of Gypsies as impoverished or mystical beings depending on the text – among various other tropes and stereotypes. Generally, the mythic depictions that I show in this chapter serve to flatten the Gypsy into objects of entertainment, suitable for white consumption: they are powerful enough within the space of the texts to be compelling to readers yet are not accorded power outside the mythic space of the texts, and furthermore are consistently represented as absent in North America, erasing the actual Roma.

In my third chapter, I discuss the construction of the literarized Gypsy as factual news; this reading is predicated in my engagement with the texts from the texts contained within the *America's Historical Newspapers* archive from 1816-1866. The texts within this section, written in the United States, document the response from white U.S. Americans during the first visible migrations of the Roma into the country. The texts within this section begin as depicting Gypsies as objects of curiosity and fascination during the very first migrations; later, as the Roma began to immigrate in larger numbers, these representations turned more hostile. These texts also represent Gypsies as “facts,” as opposed to objects of entertainment, which intersects with the fear and distrust associated with the novel proximity of these formerly mythicized racialized Others. The novelty of Gypsies is emphasized within

these texts, as are their racialized appearances, traditional trades, and nomadic lifestyles; the emphasis on these traits indicates persistent anxieties regarding the proximity of these Others and their non-hegemonic lifestyles to white society. The texts in this category also manifest a variety of perspectives regarding immigration generally and the Roma specifically, as there is significant variation in the attitudes of many of these texts towards these subjects. However, the bulk of texts in this category serve to represent Gypsies as an existential threat to white U.S. American structures of race and class, among other hegemonic constructs, culminating in the first distinctly U.S. American account of “Gypsy kidnapping.”

In my fourth chapter, I analyze texts from the popular fiction genre known as dime novels, collected from the *Nickels and Dimes* database, in order to argue that these texts represent the construction of the Gypsy as romance. The Gypsy-as-romance synthesizes the features of the Gypsy-as-myth and Gypsy-as-news constructions in order to present a Gypsy that is fully literarized and narrativized for the purposes of white authors and readers, erasing the Roma from the U.S. cultural consciousness and subsequently resulting in their mistreatment as embodied individuals. The Gypsies in these texts exist less as actual representations of the Roma and more as metaphors for the threatening and mythical aspects that Gypsies have symbolized in literature: racialized Others, commentaries on immigration, mystical fortune tellers and greedy thieves. I also discuss the trope of the “Gypsy-that-isn’t-a-Gypsy” in these texts, which is a result of the synthesis of these stereotypical representations: the not-Gypsy depicts whatever aspects of Gypsy stereotypes are relevant to the particular text in which they appear and sheds the others, leading to characters that occupy an in-between of Gypsy and white.

The construction of the literarized Gypsy as romance in these texts is the representational style that is most similar to many twentieth- and twenty-first century popular media depictions of the Roma. The legacy of these dime novel representations can be traced into Hollywood, popular literature, and new media depictions, and as such these depictions are particularly relevant to modern-day Romani studies. The culmination of all of the representational styles, stereotypes, and tropes that I have discussed so far, the Gypsy as a romanticized narrative figure has persisted in various forms of popular media; as a result of this persistence, the image that is evoked in many people's minds when they think of the Roma – or, more commonly, when they think of Gypsies – is that of this romanticized figure. In my analysis of these literary depictions, I have aimed to make visible and analyze the mechanisms of mythic, news-like, and romantic literarization in order to help discourage the reification of these stereotypes. However, further work in this area is still badly needed. As I have discussed, there is an absolutely massive extant body of texts that work to construct, develop, and reproduce these damaging stereotypes, and very little scholarship addressing them; my work with the digital archives, as I have discussed in this thesis, was time-consuming and intensive, and yet I only managed to look at a fraction of these texts. I have no doubt that there are many, many, patterns in these texts that I was unable to identify in my research due to the limitations of the project, and moreover, there are patterns that I did not have the space to develop in the space of this thesis.

Furthermore, the types of texts that I examined for this project, although they may have fallen out of active cultural consciousness, still have a very active legacy in modern popular culture, and those popular media texts also require analysis and discussion in order to address the very real discrimination that modern-day Roma face as a result of these media

portrayals: in the FXB Center for Health and Human Rights' 2020 "Romani Realities in the United States" report, "A majority of the Romani people [they] interviewed agreed or strongly agreed that, in general, American television shows portray a negative image of Roma. More than 80% of them had similar opinions about the negative portrayals of Romani people in the American news media" (8). In the same report, the authors describe the various facets of institutionalized anti-Romani racism in the United States, but one of the most striking statistics is this: "70% [of Romani respondents] said they usually hide their Romani identity to avoid being stigmatized, stereotyped and/or discriminated against by non-Roma" (26). And, in a culture where most people's knowledge of the Roma comes from discriminatory and idealized media depictions that "don't have anything to do with the realities in which Roma live and who they are" (57), this is an understandable – and unfortunate – reaction. The immediate consequences of these media representations, and, as an extension, the popular textual forms from which they evolved, are what make this area of study so critical and urgent: through analysis of these texts, we can work to make visible these injurious literary stereotypes, discourage their reproduction, and begin to rectify the damage they have caused.

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