THE "CIVILIZED TRAP" OF MODERNITY AND ROMANIAN ROMA, 1918-1934

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Introduction

Konrad Bercovici, a Romanian-born American immigrant and self-styled author of "gypsy romances," wrote in 1926 that, "instead of imitating the other peoples, [Gypsies] are being imitated now by all those who want to snatch an hour's happiness from the woefully civilized trap in which we live."[1] This was not a new perception concerning the imaginations of Europeans and Americans; for centuries peoples identified as "Gypsies" had been granted a position in discourses surrounding danger, liberation, freedom and sexuality. Perceived as natural creatures who intrepidly rejected the rigors of modern life or conversely as enigmatic, dangerous figures lingering at the margins of civility, they alternately served, within the boundaries of the imagination, as both cautionary tales about the perils of rebuffing social norms and as an inspiration for rejecting the trappings of the bourgeoisie After the end of the Great War, the latter discourse, as Bercovici pointed out, grew in importance. Yet, at the same time that travel writers began to use Gypsies as a trope with which they challenged the burdens of modernity, intellectuals within Romania, self-identifying themselves at first as Țigani and later as Romani, began to organize in order to guarantee a place for themselves in modern society. This conflict, between reality and the imagination, was challenged by nascent Romanian Romani organizations, which proposed a new image of Roma as eager members of Romanian society. This engagement with modern life was difficult to understand for those who utilized the imagery of nomadic Gypsies to highlight the rigors of the "civilized trap" of interwar life. The juxtaposition of the works of two Western European interwar travelers to the Balkans, Walter Starkie and Emil Otto Hoppé, with the platforms and publications of the two largest Romanian Romani organizations provides an opportunity to examine the struggle to create a modern Romani identity in a period when critics of modernity desired them to remain firmly locked within the romantic imagination.

In 1914, the cultural celebration of modernity in *fin-de-siècle* Europe gave way to the raw, brutal face of progress in the trenches and forests of the continent. Following the Great War, the increasing sense of the alienation of the individual, the moral threat of sexual liberation, the failures of liberal democracy and the rise of political extremes, internal diasporas and economic hardships all worked to create a new breed of tourist who sought answers to society's woes through travel to the peripheries of Europe. For those traveling through the Balkans after the War, Romania's perceived premodern charm was no longer merely enchanting, it was a last vestige of a simple community undefiled by the travesties of the modern world. "What is more important, both to Roumania [*sic*] and the world, is the preservation of its true character…it has limitless possibilities from its untired human stock, who have come safely through the 19th century in their pristine state," Sacheverell Sitwell asserted in his account of a four-week tour, *Roumanian Journey*.[2]

Many interwar travelers to Romania sought out "encounters" with nomadic Roma.

[1] Konrad Bercovici, *The Story of the Gypsies* (New York: Cosmopolitan Book Corporation, 1928), 14. For the purpose of this work, I am highlighting the juxtaposition between "Gypsy," a category imagined by Western "gypsiologists" working within a romanticized discourse, and "Țigan." "Roma" were a self-identifying group of intellectuals in interwar Romania. These terms are used here to underline the conflict between the imagination and reality in this period.

[2] Sacheverell Sitwell, *Roumanian Journey* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938), 4.

Interwar fascination with Roma stemmed largely from a legacy of Gypsiology in Europe and the United States. Excited by what they perceived as a pure, undefiled, simple people who faced cultural extinction at the hands of modernity, Gypsiologists, academics from a variety of professions and a range of ability, created organizations that sought to preserve traditions and languages they defined as "Gypsy" from obliteration. Men and women, encouraged by the adventures of the likes of George Borrow and Charles Godfrey Leland, their 19th-century forbears, traveled to camps throughout Europe, armed with a few words of Romani and the travel journals of their heroes.[3] George Borrow, the subject of countless reviews, biographies, and responses over the past century, was the most well known of the 19th-century Gypsiologists.[4] Bored with his training as a lawyer and armed with philological skill, Borrow wandered for months in the English countryside, a journey that would form the bases of his most fantastical, romantic works, *The Romany Rye* and *Lavengro*. His legacies did not die with him in 1881. Founded in 1887 in England by American and British academics, the Gypsy Lore Society reflected a growing, but hardly nascent, popular interest in Roma. Concerned largely with philology and folklore, this organization sought to uncover the cosmos of the "true Gypsy" in Europe, who, Wim Willems observes, "were assumed in social, moral and racial respects to be far superior to other travelers, and in print had grown into aristocrats of the road."[5] This pack of academics journeyed into the field, producing works of scholarship that mixed the reality of their interactions with Roma with the fanciful, romantic sensibilities of Victorian gentility.

By the interwar period, works by Gypsiologists had influenced the perceptions of a number of travelers to the Balkans.[6] One of the premier examples of this trend is Walter Starkie's *Raggle-Taggle: Adventures with a Fiddle in Hungary and Roumania*. Starkie, an Irish academic, came across prisoners in Italy some months after the end of the Great War, and was entranced when he realized they were Romani musicians. Although he "made a blood promise"[7] to them that he would soon visit their Transylvanian homeland, Starkie quickly became absorbed in the banal return to normalcy that peacetime awarded him: "The dream would soon fade away before the grim realities of modern city life with its toga of respectability, its duties to the common weal, its self-conscious mediocrity."[8] Unsatisfied, Starkie left his position as a professor of Spanish at the University of Dublin in 1929, in order to "try to live a vagabond life of a Gypsy minstrel who has to rely for his livelihood on his fiddle…to investigate as an amateur, not as a scholar, the wealth of folk music and folk legend that was so essential a part of the lives of those peoples who still listen with rapt attention to the blind rhapsodist sewing together the old songs."[9]

Travel to the East did not merely offer Starkie the opportunity to observe Roma. It also provided him the opportunity to *become* Gypsy, at least for the duration of his travels. This added the same dash of panache that his forbears brought to their works: a sense of romance, adventure, and style. Passing as a Gypsy, however, was not easy. There were costumes to procure and travel plans to make. Starkie borrowed clothing from his family's

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[3] For more on early Gypsiologists see Angus Fraser, "A Rum Lot," in *100 Years of Gypsy Studies*, Matt T. Salo, ed., Cheverly, Maryland: The Gypsy Lore Society, 1990, and Wim Willems, *In Search of the Gypsy: From Enlightenment to Final Solution*, London: Frank Cass, 1997.

[4] See, for instance, Michael Collie and Angus Fraser, *George Borrow: A Bibliographical Study*, Winchester: St. Paul's Bibliographies, 1984. For a critical analysis of Borrow's life and works, see Wim Willems, "George Borrow 1801-1881, the walking lord of Gypsy lore,"*In Search of the True Gypsy: From Enlightenment to Final Solution*, London: Newbury House, 1997.

[5] Wim Willems, "The heirs of George Borrow," *In Search of the True Gypsy: From Enlightenment to Final Solution* (London: Newbury House, 1997), 172.

[6] A number of new works concerning travel to the Balkans were published during the interwar years, many of which highlighted "encounters" with nomadic Roma in their pages. See, for instance, D.J. Hall, *Romanian Furrow*, (London: George G. Harap & Co. Ltd., 1939); Maude Rea Parkinson, *Twenty years in Roumania* (New York, E. P. Dutton), 1922; Derek Patmore, *Invitation to Roumania* (London: Millan and Co., Ltd.), 1939; or Sacheverell Sitwell, *Roumanian Journey* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons), 1938.

[7] Walter Starkie, *Raggle-Taggle: Adventures with a Fiddle in Hungary and Roumania*, E.P. Sutton & Co., Inc., 1933, ix.

[8] Starkie, 6.

[9] Starkie, ix.

gardener, for he wanted to make his new persona clear to other travelers. He felt self-assured, unselfconscious and capable in this borrowed clothing, a new man excited by the dangers awaiting him, unlike the overburdened, bourgeois men he criticized.

Clothing was not the only conundrum Starkie faced upon the commencement of his journey. Border crossings posed an issue, but luckily, he was a British subject: "I wonder do the vagabonds have passports?" he mused, "Mine was perfectly in order."[10] Dangers abounded on the road ahead, but all, he declared, was worth it:

> Now it is not so easy to follow the example of George Borrow in a Europe teaming with police and customs officials, where the vagabond is looked on with suspicion. Nevertheless, there are compensations for the man who leaves the hotels and main roads to consort with waifs and strays, and the principal one is the sensation of complete freedom among the kings of nature as Cervantes called the Gypsies.[11]

Being a vagabond, to Starkie, required both the structure of a well-ordered passport and the "sensation of complete freedom." With both, one can became a "king of nature." He apparently did not see any discrepancy between the two ideals. His costume and papers in order, Starkie was ready to leave. Freedom and excitement were just around the corner.

When Starkie arrived in Transylvania, he immediately set out to play his fiddle and meet some Gypsies. Fortune, however, soon abandoned him. Strolling down a rural road, he came upon a group of rather sinister looking characters, and was promptly mugged:

> There was a shout and from all sides there gathered a host of naked children, naked-breasted women, dogs and villainous men. They did not understand the words of Romany I fired at them, but they thought I was a luscious object to prey upon and they felt me all over, thrust their hands into my pockets, pushed me about and acted generally like a pack of mangy dogs smelling a juicy bone. I felt helpless…The stench of their grimy bodies mingled with the smell of garlic

stifled me, and I could feel on my neck the soft flutter of countless bugs and life that had forsaken the verminous Gypsy rags. [12]

Starkie was stunned by such behavior, and completely unprepared for the event, regardless of his talk of the excitement and danger of the open road. Suddenly his used boots and jaunty attitude were no match for his passport; for an instant, his faith was shaken, and he became one of the sweating, pale tourists he so despised. Here were Gypsies for whom Borrow had not prepared him. These were not the romantic, aristocratic Gypsies of his imagination, but the gritty, poor nomads of his nightmares. Where was the nobility, where were the sensual girls, the campfires and music? He realized, however, that it was precisely because it was not the 19th century that he could survive such an attack with his ego intact:

> Nowadays, it is very difficult to act the romantic part in tourist-ridden Europe. To have been romantic I should have lain bleeding on the ground after my struggle with a great number of Gypsies. Then, gathering the pieces of my violin which had been broken in the fight, I should have crept to the nearest village and telegraphed for press reporters to take down my grim story which could be published in the papers the next day with the heading in capitals: "English professor mangled by Gypsies after fierce struggle. Professor acts the minstrel but fails to soften heart of Gypsy Amazons who leave him on the plains of Hungary."[13]

Starkie was self-ironic about his encounter and the romantic ideals instilled in him by the Gypsiologist literature. His first contact with Gypsies was an astounding failure; not only was everything he expected wrong, but he had been easily bested by the dangerous "Amazons." This moment becomes a crisis point between the modern, Western man – intellectual, earnest, yet soft – and Gypsies, whose natural strength and wiles can only be understood by relating the group to an organic, mythical tribe untainted by modern life. The fact that he chose to label them as "Amazons" is quite important. Here is a typical Orientalist moment in the work: he utilizes female

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[10] Starkie, 10.
[11] Starkie, ix.

[12] Starkie, 32-33.
[13] Starkie, 34.

imagery to understand a group. Unlike early Orientalists, however, he did not use this to weaken the Roma, but rather to cast them as a formidable enemy. Like the modern women in the cities of the West who had supplanted men and become masculinized, redoubtable creatures, so too were the Roma an exotic, emotional, instinctual, and ultimately feminine group, Starkie believed.

He quickly regained his composure. Within days, Starkie was traveling with the Roma throughout Romania. "My journey, however, was not all raggle-taggle; occasionally, I mixed with high folk as well as low; sometimes I went straight from a hovel of Gypsies to a *cénacle* of professors and artists," he writes. "But all the time I felt that I was following on the heels of the wandering folk, picking up here and there odd scraps of their lore."[14]

There was a clear divide between the countryside and the city in his work. When he is almost robbed by a relative of his host, he scoffed that, "when the *busnó* goes on Gypsy trips he leaves the bulk of his money and valuables under lock and key in the nearest big town, for he is superstitious enough to believe that one should not tempt providence."[15] Likewise, when he reached Cluj, all his pretensions of vagabonding were put on hold. He took out his checkbook from the Bank of Ireland and cashed a check in order to maintain an urban lifestyle appropriate to his station. In Western European cities, atavism was directly proportional to modernity; the simplicity of the countryside becomes a stage where actors fulfill their fantasy of a pure, undefiled, unburdened

lifestyle, while the civility of the city forces the traveler back to a structured and stable reality. The vagabond's carefree lifestyle ended, then, at the outskirts of Paris or London. It was different in Cluj. This old Habsburg city offered the modern amenities Starkie required while traveling and yet it was still possible to be a vagabond at night. Romania offered travelers a sense of exoticism in an environment that was familiar and close to home. For an interwar traveler used to the speed and comforts of the modern age, this was an imperative.

If Starkie had such a horrible first impression, what made him stay, and travel with Gypsies? Primarily, he seemed sincere in his belief that vagabonding offered modern Europeans a rare chance at freedom. The appeal of the Gypsies and their lifestyle was built on their perceived spatial and emotional unpredictability. Gypsies also seemed to him organically different from the tourists and the soft intellectuals in the West. These were "real" people, who lived by emotion and wits, who enjoyed life precisely because it was unburdened. By traveling with them, and writing about them, Starkie not only thought he became *like* them, he believed he grew *better* than them; he believed that he acquired all the benefits of their lifestyle while retaining the civility of a European.

Starkie's discussions of Gypsy behaviors made this point clear. His virile, verminous, dangerous attackers and the other men in the work were all one-dimensional characters who confirmed Starkie's abilities and provided ethnic flare to his tales of adventure and travel. His discussions of Gypsy women highlighted what he perceived as flaws in the moral fiber of the group. Here were dark, fiery and petulant girls unburdened by honor and decency who reveled in their own sensuality. Comparing them to their sweet Romanian counterparts highlighted their raw sexuality:

> It is curious what a contrast those Gypsy girls present to the peasant girls of the country: the latter is invariably subdued and modest even to excess in the presence of strangers. Unless she is with girls of her own age she does not raise her voice; not so with those Gypsy girls; they were full of boisterous, animal spirits. They skipped about the street, they climbed up lamp-posts, they chased one another like cats… as for female modesty there was not a sign of it. I found that certain words of the Gypsy language were familiar to them such

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[14] Starkie, ix-x. Busnó means "non-Gypsy" in a Spanish dialect of Romani. Translating Starkie's Romani is difficult. His frequent references to George Borrow might indicate that he was using Borrow's works, or at the very least his dictionary, *Romano Lavo-Lil*: *Word Book of the Romany or English Gypsy Language* (London: Murray), 1874, to translate Romanichal during his travels. Borrow, the most famous British "gypsiologist," utilized a variety of Romani dialects and created grammatical constructions for the language in his works. For a critique of Borrow's use of Romani, see Ian Hancock, "George Borrow's Romani," in *The Typology and Dialectology of Romani*, eds. Yaron Matras, Peter Bakker and Hristo Kyuchuko (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company), 199-214.

[15] Starkie, 199.

as *bashavav*, *mol*, and *lubnyi*. As far as I could infer, both of them considered that to be a *lubnyi*, or whore, was the most satisfactory occupation for one of their sex.[16]

Gypsy women, according to Starkie, saw themselves as sexual creatures at the disposal of men. This was an extreme version of the stories about the accommodating nature and availability of native women that ran through the colonial works of male travelers. These were less the fragile girls of the countryside and more the sexually ambiguous modern women of the city. The Gypsy women in Starkie's book think nothing of adultery, of jumping from bed to bed, of earning money through sex. It is fascinating, however, that Starkie only translated a single word for his audience: *lubnyi*. His translation fashioned this segment of the work into a conservative cautionary tale; here were immodest, sexually aware girls, who, much like their Western European counterparts, had taken charge of their bodies and reveled in lewd pleasures and desires.

Starkie believed deeply in a "brotherhood of the road" where one needs only "a tiny spark of talent" to succeed: "You need to have some little individual trait of originality: if you can sing a song, juggle, play a tune on the fiddle, read fortunes from the Tarot cards, tell fairy stories or explain magic charms, you will be welcome in any circle…Walking alone is sad at times, but once you can get into your wanderer personality there is immense joy in conversing with yourself as you walk along."[17] Shifting quickly from organic assessments of Gypsies he encountered to the rather positive assertion that talent was a means of inclusion in the society of the open road, Starkie was asserting that any man could be a "gypsy" as long as he had the drive to cease being a tourist and the bravery to strike out on his own. Gypsies, then, provided the impetus for a European to live by wits and emotion, at least for a week or two, to get out of the squalor of the city and strike out into the fresh air, to live a lifestyle free of consumer needs and modern burdens, where the pleasing danger of a fistfight and loose women always awaits.

Not all travelers to Romania in the interwar years sought out such adventures.

Traveling in much higher style, Emil Otto Hoppé, a noted photographer of German origin who spent most of his life in England, published his own account of a journey through Romania, *In Gipsy Camp and Royal Palace*. The work mixes the account of his short tour with photographs and sketches of the people and landscape of the country. Hoppé's social position was made immediately clear to the reader: the book's preface was written by the internationally famous Queen Marie of Romania, who idealized the Romanian peasantry while reveling in modern, yet atavistic, comforts at her "authentic" Romanian castle at Bran.

Coming to Romania with the eye of an artist, Hoppé looked forward to seeing the bands of Gypsies he had read about in the works of Gypsiologists. After missing several opportunities to meet them, his traveling companions finally took him to a Gypsy camp. He was enraptured by what he saw. "'Lavengro' and 'The Scholar Gipsy' have poeticized such indigious [*sic*] savages, whom the average London 'Bohemian' would not touch with a forty-foot pole," he scoffed. "And yet, despite of their barbarity and uncleanliness, there is something defiant and untrammeled about these nomads, which is a kind of criticism, in its sheer vitality, of the *languers* [*sic*] of a tired civilization."[18] Immediately he viewed Gypsy society and culture as a commentary on modern life. The author contrasted the emotions and essence of the nomad to the dull, exhausting nature of modernity. Here was a group the writers expected to completely agree with critiques of modern society. Indeed, they project the tacit agreement upon the actions of the Roma they meet. Yet, how can a group who had not experienced the "*languer*" of modernity be critical of it?

Hoppé's descriptions elevated Gypsies to the status of an ancient, noble culture that had decayed over the centuries: "Easily the most picturesque wanderers by the Rumanian country-side are the Tziganes or gypsies. Their camps are always on the waste ground, mostly on the outskirts of towns and villages. Their habitations are of the most filthy and miserable description – which rather takes the gilt off the gingerbread of

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[16] Starkie, 188. George Borrow translates *lubbeny* as a "harlot," *mol* as "wine," and *bashadi* as "a fiddle".

[17] Starkie, 206.

[18] Hoppé, 43. He is referring here to the works of Borrow.

sheer romanticism."[19] This is quite similar to the reaction of 19th-century travelers who arrived in the Balkans expecting to witness vestiges of ancient Greek civilization in the peasantry and who left the region somewhat bewildered.[20] For Hoppé, Gypsies live on the margins between antiquity and reality. They were dangerously beautiful: "Mahogany-skinned, with deep black eyes like the ripe berries of the deadly belladonna, and classically cut features of such perfection as one sees on Greek cameos, they fight for the choicest morsels as their writhing fingers dive into the steaming pots."[21] He was repulsed by the poverty of their camps, but entranced by the striking figure they cut. His assessment of Gypsies was intrinsically linked to the lens of his camera: they were photogenic and visually stimulating yet pitiful in their beauty.

He presented descriptions of the nature of men and women in the Gypsy camps that detracted from the perfection of their visages. The men "loaf around, indolent, haughty, yet cringing," he intoned. He went on with his critique:

They are of medium height, very agile and muscular, and have more care than the old women for their heads…Although they have little moral courage, and show, in some wise [sic] the abasement of slaves, they are insensately proud, and they refer to anyone not a gipsy as a *Gadsio* (a boer or peasant), or *parno*, meaning white; whereas they speak of themselves as *Manush* (human being).[22]

His assessments of the Gypsy camp – the feminized men lazing about the fire and the animalistic wretches crowded at the stewpot – resemble the typical Orientalist discourse about native peoples. The nobility of their profile, he believed, was not matched in their psychology. Here were childlike, petulant people who lived uncomplicated lives, unburdened by rationality, who saw themselves as the last humans in a world full of peasants. Hoppé then quickly turns his acid

pen to his own society. Gypsies did have some merits. Unlike modern Europeans, they needed little to survive:

The requirements of the Tzigane are primitive and elemental. Music and play, drinking and thieving, love and laughter are his sole passions. He is led only by his unrestrained instincts…He has a keen sense of humour, but he is violent and quarrelsome, although never vicious, and his actions are governed by momentary impulses rather than premeditated thought. He is very much like a troublesome child, and one can hardly hold him responsible for his actions.[23]

Emotional, dangerous and emotive, Gypsies dwelled in an uncomplicated sphere, with no needs other than wine and song, and no expectations heaped upon them. Gypsies were "never able to adapt to any settled mode of life,"[24] and chose instead to pick up odd jobs while satisfying their wanderlust. He was, then, completely different from his European counterparts and inspiring to those who wished to remove themselves from similar burdens.

As with Starkie, the image of women became central to Hoppé's interpretation of the group. The author found them fantastical:

In her early youth, up to twenty years of age, the Tzigane girl is wonderfully beautiful. She has exquisitely chiseled features of rich brown tint, and the glittering orbs of her almond-shaped eyes rival in blackness her ebon hair. She has smiling voluptuous lips, her waist is slender, her hands and feet are small, and her supple limbs move rhythmically in lithe swinging steps…In repose she is like a bronze statue, but like all Romany women, she has the taste of a magpie, and she wears splinters of broken glass or cheap metal ornaments, albeit with the pride of an Eastern queen."[25]

Again, there was the classical imagery, again corrupted by animalistic, savage impulses – this time, it was the greediness of a bird with unrefined tastes. Like the men, she was unburdened by wealth and civility; pieces of glass and metal adorn her, yet she had no idea of their worth. Hoppé does not take this Orientalist image as far as Starkie, but there was, however, a

[19] E.O. Hoppé, *In Gipsy Camp and Royal Palace: Wanderings in Rumania*. New York: Scribner and Sons, 1924, 42.
[20] See Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1994) and Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*.
[21] Hoppé, 43.
[22] Hoppé, 43.

[23] Hoppé, 47.
[24] Hoppé, 48.
[25] Hoppé, 44.

recurring theme of raw sensuality in his discussion of younger women; here was the overtly sexual girl who awaits the British traveler.

Older women garnered more respect from the photographer. "The Tzigane mother shows immense love for her children: the more little ones she has the prouder she feels," he states. "It is returned by her children almost to the point of veneration. This mother-love is one of the finest traits in the character of a harried and despised people."[26] Earlier in this piece, when recounting the events of his first meeting with Queen Marie, he made a similar comment about the royal matriarch.[27] Motherhood becomes an equalizing factor between the most disparate groups; it was such a primal instinct, such a primitive urge, that it made queens of Gypsies. An admiring commentary, but it was nonetheless equally disparaging. Women, to Hoppé, were best and most natural as mothers.

He was likewise impressed with the old women who functioned as fortunetellers. Again he linked this skill to their primeval traits: "Living in close contact with Mother Earth, knowing by intimate contact for centuries her secrets, the gipsy fortune-teller recognizes and diagnoses the symptoms of passion and love, hope and fear, which are betrayed by those to whom she tells the future."[28] Surprisingly, he was quite gentle on these women: "one cannot lightly dub her a humbling or hypocrite, and dismiss her undoubted powers of divination merely as 'coincidences,' or cases of 'thought transference.' After all, is there anything more surprising in this wood magic than in the marvels of modern science, like X-rays, Wireless, and so forth?"[29] Magic becomes a link between the modern and the unmodern; both were mystical periods where science and magic were conflated. These old women became links between the European past, present and future, giving hope that something remains of the premodern civilization now obscured by modernity.

Hoppé found the most positive application of what he saw as the organic nature Gypsies to one endeavor – music. "They are wonderful musicians, entirely self-taught, and playing by instinct and ear alone," he states, "If there is anything in the theory of heredity, they are probably born with fiddle-strings in them."[30] It was precisely because of their nature that the Gypsy musician was so capable, he believed: "Fitful as is the Rumanian gipsy's character, so is his music. Tempestuous and infuriated strains succeed sobbing and moaning melodies. Weird hopelessness and languorous abandonment follow each other in quick succession."[31] It was in their music that the *Gadje* (non-Gypsies) could hope to have a taste of such emotions, such freedom: "They have an extraordinary effect on their listeners, who frequently are almost crazed by eldritch notes as the children of Hanover were by the witchery of the Pied Piper."[32] It provided the same release for the British travelers as it seemed to do for the Romanian peasant: "Englishmen and women in a dancing-room, where one of these bands is playing, shed nearly all their reserve and approach as near abandonment as the Anglo-Saxons can conscientiously go. It is surprising that none of the London producers and entrepreneurs have endeavoured to smuggle over to London a genuine Tzigane band, but the difficulties in the way are almost insuperable as far as the real Tziganes are concerned."[33] Hoppé never clarified whether they would have such an effect on patrons in London. Music was a means by which the tired European could experience the vitality of a Gypsy life, to live in such a moment for a brief time until the band stopped playing. While the basis for most interwar discussions of Gypsy musicians is fueled by organicism, Hoppé moves from a discussion of the nature of musicians to the remedy they offered the weary European. He promoted quite the sensual cure, which he guaranteed would rouse the premodern European from his or her static state. Of course, this could only happen in the Balkans – in London Gypsies did not have the same effect, he asserted.

While the works of Hoppé and Starkie seem quite different, the underlying themes each author explored were strikingly similar. Each comfortably played the role of adventurer for the ready-made audiences of travel literature. It was a respected genre for eager middle class readers who generally accepted the authority of the author as a guide. The public traveled in their imaginations on a tour of exotic traditions, wild celebrations and romantic trysts, all while safely ensconced in the

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[26] Hoppé, 45.
[27] Hoppé, 70.
[28] Hoppé, 46.
[29] Hoppé, 47.

[30] Hoppé, 48.
[31] Hoppé, 48.
[32] Hoppé, 50.
[33] Hoppé, 51.

warmth and comfort of their homes, trusting in the expertise of their guide.

Each author presented a unique voice that highlighted his experiences in Romania. Starkie offered stories that cast him as the new version of Leland and Borrow. Unlike his Gypsiologist predecessors, however, Starkie presented himself as a modern intellectual who rejected romantic notions of the Gypsies and instead set out to discover his inner vagabond while rejecting the impact of modernity on the bodies and souls of European men. Gypsies, according to Starkie, had something to offer Europeans; by removing oneself from many of the burdens of modernity, a man could revert to his premodern, masculine, independent, sensual, yet, of course, always refined self. Hoppé traveled through Romania under vastly different circumstances. He was a wealthy, well-known photographer courted by the royal family upon his arrival in Romania and who toured the country in a manner befitting his elevated social position. He described Gypsies with the eyes of a photographer whose objective was to capture their essence while playing with his own understanding of civility and modernity. Again, there was admiration for the group as a specimen of a culture whose emotional nature has not been obliterated by time and machine. The negative depiction of Romanian Gypsies as exotic, childish, slovenly, menacing and sexualized are unsurprising, and mimic many interwar interpretations of non-Western cultures by travelers, and they, as travel writers, are catering to the expectations of audiences craving adventure and danger.

When the works of Starkie and Hoppé are juxtaposed against the aspirations of nascent Romani interwar organizations, a more nuanced understanding of the complexities of interwar critiques concerning the pitfalls of modernity, and just who is 'allowed' to be modern, emerges. These works initially seem to neatly fit into the scholarly understanding of Orientalism. Edward Said's work on European perceptions of the "Orient" provided a foundation upon which many historians have deconstructed perceptions of those painted as "others" and their relation to how Europeans defined themselves.[34] Underlying the

relationship of writer and subject is an elitist perception that profoundly objectifies – the biting, intentional commentary on modernity Starkie and Hoppé perceived in the lifestyle of Gypsies, for example, was Orientalist in form and function. The authors were unable to separate their own interpretations from the opinions of the Roma themselves. These critiques nevertheless add to an understanding of how marginalized groups are utilized to assess as well as create. The "Other," that is, could be used to formulate one's own identity and to censure one's own society at the same time.

The application of Orientalism to the Balkans, however, must be handled with caution. Maria Todorova notes that the Balkans can be cautiously considered "semicolonial, quasi-colonial, but clearly not purely colonial."[35] Both Todorova and Katherine Fleming insist that Orientalism is concretely located within an actual colonial framework, therefore posing severe problems in its application to a region that was not colonized by the West.[36] The Balkans' "liminality, their status as an 'inside other,' their own claims to European primacy, their geographical location (on the borders of but nevertheless within Europe), Western Europe's uncertainty as to where to place them — all make the Balkans ripe with theoretical possibility," Fleming writes.[37]

A strict focus on the imagination also creates the burden of re-marginalization by the very scholars who are attempting to approach the "Other." Fleming acknowledges the importance of Said to Southeastern European history, while attempting to shift the focus away from studies that seek to locate the region strictly within the imagination: "In the absence of engagement with post-Saidian cultural-historical concerns," she writes, "the Balkans, and their study, will … remain 'remote,' 'inaccessible,' and largely based on fantasy. With such engagement, however, the Balkans may emerge as more central than we ever had imagined."[38] Likewise, by repeatedly examining minorities in the Balkans, particularly

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[34] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chattus and Windus, 1992). The terms "Western" and "Eastern" are problematic at best when used as homogenous categories, but work

well as essentialized foundations for the complex issues in this work.

[35] Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 16.
[36] K.E. Fleming, "Orientalism, the Balkans, and Balkan Historiography," *American Historical Review*, vol. 105 n.4 (2000): 1218-1255.
[37] Fleming, *ibid.*, 1252.
[38] Fleming, "Orientalism, the Balkans, and Balkan Historiography," 1255.

Roma, within the frame of Orientalism, scholars have unintentionally assigned them roles solely within the imagination. Recent works focused on Roma *vis-á-vis* the imagination slightly acknowledge this issue in their introductions, but continue this tradition.[39]

The focus on the construction of negative binaries found in dominant discourses also discourages any attempt to include Romani voices into the general historical narrative. It is well established that cultural identity is formulated through the construction of "others" found within and outside of groups. What is often left unclear is the issue of response. Orientalist language can be utilized in a variety of ways by a multitude of players at different levels of society. While it is not so surprising that Western European writers used Orientalist discourses in regard to Gypsies, Romani intellectuals in turn utilized positive and negative perceptions of Gypsies in order to gain some form of social and political agency.[40]

A more intricate presentation of interwar Romani identity and voice, when juxtaposed against the expectations and desires of interwar travelers, allows for a discussion of the how anxieties in the 1920s and 1930s about modernism were reflected in the Western European response

to how "unmodern" peoples reacted to modernity and progress. While Hoppé and Starkie saw an implicit critique of modernity in Gypsies, middle-class Roma were embracing the promises of a more democratic atmosphere in order to secure a stronger position in Romanian society. At the same time that Hoppé, Starkie and a variety of other travelers were publishing accounts of their tours through the country, Romani intellectuals were beginning to push for greater acceptance and integration into Greater Romania.

The gradual emancipation of Roma in Romania from slavery ended in 1861, and the lack of social and economic programs following manumission, the agricultural economy of the late-19th century, as well as the decline in need for their traditional modes of employment, resulted in poverty and the stagnation of their position at the margins of society.[41] By the turn of the 20th century, this situation created a general atmosphere of discontent within groups of professionals who increasingly sought to identify themselves as a collective within Romanian society deserving of protection under the law. After World War I, small groups of Romani intellectuals began to meet to discuss the place of the Roma in Romanian society which, as historians have recently pointed out, was increasingly focused on creating a homogenous Romanian identity for a newly enlarged Romania.[42] Although Romanian Roma were acknowledged as an ethnic group with their own language by the Romanian government, they were initially marked as candidates for assimilation.[43] While the 1923 Constitution guaranteed equal rights and freedoms for national minorities, Roma, unlike Romanian Jews, were not officially

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[39] See Abby Bardi, "The Gypsy as Trope in Victorian and Modern British Literature," *Romani Studies*, Vol. 16 Issue 1 (2006): pp. 31-42; Deborah Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination, 1807-1930* (New York : Columbia University Press), 2006, and Claudia Berger, "Understanding 'The Other'? Communication, History, and Narration in Margriet de Moor's *Hertog van Egypte*," in *The Role of the Romanies: Images and Counter-Images of 'Gypsies'/Romanies in European Cultures*, Nicholas Saul and Susan Tebbutt, eds. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004.

[40] My analysis here draws on critiques of historiographical attempts (such as those undertaken by the Subaltern Studies Collective) to restore the voice of the marginalized subaltern to the historical record. A number of theorists, most famously Gayatri Spivak, have challenged the representation of a unified subaltern voice that arises in such work and problematized the accepted understanding of empowerment. Gayatri Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in Cary Nelson and Larry Grossberg, eds. *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988) p.271-313.

[41] For example, the 1864 Rural Law specifically benefited peasants through land redistribution of boyar estates, yet the law wholly ignored the recently freed slaves. See Mihaela Murdure, "From the Gypsies to the African Americans," 62.

[42] See Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building and Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), 1995 and Maria Bucur, *Eugenics and Modernization in Interwar Romania* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press), 2002.

[43] This was not a new endeavor; the most brutal campaigns of forced assimilation against Roma, intended to create "New Hungarians," were carried out under the Habsburgs in the 18th century. See David Crowe, *A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia* (London: I.B. Taraus Publishers), 1995.

recognized, a fact that was complicated by the high rates of assimilation of Roma into Romanian culture by the turn of the century. This, coupled with high rates of poverty, low rates of education, and their increasingly marginalized status in society, spurred on a small group of middle class Romani intellectuals to attempt to improve their lot.[44] Economic issues were the initial motivating factors for the creation of localized Romani unions. Musicians were particularly concerned with the influx of foreigners into the country; several complaints were lodged with local officials throughout the 1920s and 1930s asserting the rights of local musicians over those arriving from other cities.[45]

By 1933, the agendas of these unions shifted; rather than operate as singular units consumed by the needs of individual trades, some leaders became convinced that more would be achieved for the Romanian Roma at large with the formation of a unified organization. This new focus on the creation of a general Romani organization coincided with the harsher economic climate during the worldwide economic depression after 1929, as well as a shift in Romanian nationalism from a more inclusive nature which sought to integrate minorities into Greater România to an exclusive ethnonationalism by the end of the 1920s. In March, 1933, N. Niculescu,

the president of the Musician's Trade Union in Romania, traveled to Brăila and a variety of towns in Moldova in order to push for a general union for musicians in Romania. During this period several Romani associations sought to construct a concrete and usable identity while focusing the majority of the efforts specifically on cultural and social rights. These were not insignificant organizations; the largest and most important of them, the General Union of the Roma in Romania, had, by 1937, 40 county branches, 454 local bureaus, and counted 784,793 members.[46]

In September 1933, a Romani intellectual emerged as the head of the first general Romani organization in Romania. Calinic I. Popp Șerboianu, a theologian, was born in 1882 in Argeș. A professor of French, Greek, and Latin, Șerboianu was also a consummate traveler; he spent the 1920s in America, England, and finally France, where he published a general history of Roma, *Les Tsiganes: Histoire-Etnographie-Grammaire-Dictionnaire* (The Gypsies: History-Ethnography-Grammar-Dictionary)*,* in 1930. After returning to Romania and a gaining position in the Orthodox Church at the Crasna monastery, Șerboianu founded a new organization that would agitate for the betterment of Roma as a whole.[47]

This new organization, the General Association of Țigani in Romania (A.G.T.R.), based initially on the membership of the trade union *Junimea Muzicală* (Musical Youth), presented its objectives in a pamphlet entitled "Appeal to All Țigani in Romania."[48] "For one hundred years we, *roma* or *țigani,* however we call

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[44] The 1930 census recorded 262,501 people who declared themselves to be of Romani descent (1.5 percent of Romania's population). Of these, 221,726 lived in villages and 40,775 lived in cities: *Recensământul general al populației României din 29 decemvrie 1930*, vol. II (*Neam, limbă maternă, religie),* București, 1938. By 1930, their population in Romania was probably somewhere between the official estimate of 262,501- roughly 3% of the total population of the country- and 600,000. Coming up with an accurate number is problematic at best, given the fact that many had settled and assimilated by this point and had distanced themselves from a Romani identity. Likewise, nomadic groups were ignored. Viorel Achim discusses these statistics in his chapter on the interwar period in *The Roma in Romanian History*, Budapest: Central European Review, 2004.

[45] *Arh. St. Cluj, Primăria municipiului Cluj, dos. 2705/1919, f. 1; Arh. St. Cluj, Primăria municipiului Cluj, dos. 2705/1919, f. 2; Arh. St. București, Direcția Generală a Poliției, dos.. 34/1922-1938, f. 1.*

[46] George Potra, *Contribuțiuni la Istoricul Țiganilor Din România* (București: Mihai Dascal Editor, 2002), 118.

[47] *Arh. St. București, Direcția Generală a Poliției, dos. 34/1922-1938, f. 60-61.* The police and gendarmerie files provide a rich, although problematic, source of information about these organizations. Every organization in interwar Romania had to apply for official approval before they could become legal entities. Part of this process was a full report from the police, and this police attention to minority organizations lasted until they proved non-threatening to the State. For Romani organizations, this meant that they were watched by the police well into 1936, with sporadic reports on their activities filed in later years.

[48] *Arh. St. București, Direcția Generală a Poliției, dos. 34/1922-1938, f. 30-32.*

ourselves, endured all humilities, were the most scourged, overlooked and wretched in Romania," they began.[49] The first segment of the pamphlet laid out the qualifications of the organization's leader, Șerboianu, as a man "of țigani origin…who understands the sorrow of his people, [who] wants to lead the people down the road to civilization, to aspirations free from political poisoning, and to see that the name "țigani" be used honestly and not scornfully."[50] Asserting that Șerboianu was a great scholar who wrote valuable works about Roma in German, French, and English, and a cosmopolitan traveler with connections to Roma worldwide, the organization initially tried to capitalize on the intellectual prowess of its leader.

The organization also detailed a twofold agenda focused on programs of assistance aimed at the social and cultural betterment of Roma as a group. The cultural program delineated in the pamphlet included the establishment of a newspaper, adult education programs, museums and libraries, daycare centers, the publication of books that would counteract stereotypes, conferences focused on education and the recovery of traditional songs, stories, and dance, scholarships for worthy students, stores that would support traditional trades, and books, food and clothes for needy children.

The call for social assistance programs in the following section presented a challenging course for the organization. They promoted free social and religious care, such as legal assistance; free medical care for the sick complete with home visits; homeless shelters; a hospital with an office for social assistance, and a children's shelter. Even more ambitious was the call for housing for the homeless in each county, city and village payable in the course of 20 to 30 years, and the establishment of an association that would encourage agricultural work in the countryside complete with a collective aspect that would supervise the legal and social responsibilities of its members, and a corresponding organization for urban workers and craftsmen.[51]

The A.G.T.R. was also interested in guiding the morality and choices of Roma. One segment of the pamphlet called for the

"colonization" of all "nomads," which was to be supported by gifts of land that, the organization believed, would ensure both stability and the eradication of begging and theft.[52] They also called for the establishment of tribunals and supreme courts guided by tradition whose sole responsibility would be to "resolve moral questions"[53] relating to domestic issues. Women were granted equal membership with men, and were to be accorded all of the social and cultural services offered by the organization, and educated women could be part of the councils. There would be separate groups for children, and boys and girls sections for children between eight and twenty-one years old. "Hurry and immediately join the Association, which is the only support for our lives today and tomorrow," they wrote. "Be strong, unified in heart and spirit, because we do not live only for ourselves, but for our children and for future generations. We welcome twenty-seven thousand new members today, from the country's different cultures, to prove the high enthusiasm for our ideas."[54] This is in stark contrast to the exotic flavor of Starkie and Hoppé's "encounters" in Gypsy camps. For Romani intellectuals, the wagons and campfires, indeed, the freedoms with which Starkie was so enamored, were symbols of poverty and degradation that must be reformed rather than coveted.

This initial plea was effective; there are a number of records from a variety of Romanian towns in the early 1930s about branch meetings of the A.G.T.R. or other Romani aid societies.[55] Two

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[49] *Arh. St. București, Prefectura Poliției Capitalei, dos. 123/1933, f. 2.*

[50] *Arh. St. București, Prefectura Poliției Capitalei, dos. 123/1933, f. 30.*

[51] *Arh. St. București, Direcția Generală a Poliției, dos. 34/1922-1938, f. 30-32.*

[52] The stereotype that all Roma were thieves or beggars was one of the many misconceptions that these organizations battled. In the heterogeneous Romani community, some people were either seasonally or always moving from region to region inside and outside of Romania. Due to the general belief that all Roma were nomads, many newcomers to towns and cities were immediately labeled by the local population and the authorities as such.

[53] *Arh. St. București, Direcția Generală a Poliției, dos. 34/1922-1938, f. 31.*

[54] *Arh. St. București, Direcția Generală a Poliției, dos. 34/1922-1938, f. 32.*

[55] For example, in 1933 mention is made of a meeting of the A.G.T.R. branch in Craiova, *Arh. St. București, Direcția Generală a Poliției, dos. 34/1922-1938; f.34* and Roma in Corabia met to establish the Mutual Assistance Society, *Arh. St. București, Direcția Generală a Poliției, dos. 34/1922-1938, f.35.* Trade unions created by Roma

other major organizations emerged on the larger public stage, as well. The first, the Neorustic Brotherhood, established in Făgăraș county in 1926, was the smaller of the two, but managed to publish two editions of a newspaper about the platform of the group and its position as a voice for Transylvanian Roma in 1934 and 1935.[56]

The second organization, an ultimately the largest of these interwar organizations, was a splinter group from the A.G.T.R. Gheorghe A. Lăzărescu-Lăzurică, born in 1892, a former member of the A.G.T.R., was a writer for Romanian newspapers and literary journals such as *Universul* (The World) and *Adevărul Literar* (The Literary Truth).[57] He, like Șerboianu, had strong connections to the West, and to Gypsiologists there; police reports note his connections to the Gypsy Lore Society in London and his regular correspondence with them.[58]After leaving the A.G.T.R., he formed his own organization, the General Union of Roma in Romania (U.G.R.R.) located in Bucharest. The organization's social platform was similar to the A.G.T.R., but the language of the group was strikingly different. Far from focusing attentions solely on their Romanianness, the U.G.R.R. sought to create a new, and proud, image of Roma in Romania, as both stalwart Romanian citizens and as integral members of society as Roma. Lăzărescu-Lăzurică marked this pride in his civic and ethnic identities in the most obvious way he could; in the early 1930s he hyphenated his name in order to

highlight his Romanian as well as his Romani identity.[59]

In October 1933, another pamphlet was published in București, calling for the support of all Roma at a meeting for the newly established General Union of Roma in Romania.[60] "We address you not by the title of 'țigani,' for it is a false and derisive name, but by our word "Romi," meaning men who are lovers of liberty, life's enjoyments and music," they wrote.[61] Taking the language of the A.G.T.R. to a new level, the Union highlighted a combination of civic responsibility, social reform, and ethnic cohesion:

> We number around one million souls, scattered throughout this country from villages to cities, carrying out with sanctity all the duties of the citizenry: we pay our taxes, we serve in the army, we have jobs, we are assimilated into Romanian society, we speak the language and practice Orthodox Christianity. We preserve Romanian songs, jokes, ballads, and traditions, as industrious and passionate chroniclers and collectors.[62]

Far from seeing themselves as marginal, the U.G.R.R. perceived themselves as holding a special place in Romania. As a group that presented itself as the archivists of Romanian culture in a period when the country was desperately trying to create a cohesive national identity for a newly expanded Greater Romania, the U.G.R.R. was attempting to solidify its position at the heart, rather than the margins, of Romanian society. It is also here that one can see an interesting link with, and a twist on, the work of Gypsiologists and travel writers such as Starkie, who for centuries had traveled to the region to

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did not disappear from the scene; the *lăutari* unions continued to appeal to the government for protection from foreign musicians (particularly jazz bands) who encroached on their territory. See for instance *Arh. St. București, Direcția Generală a Poliției, dos. 34/1922-1938, f.21.*

[56] Interwar Romanian Romani newspapers were always published in Romanian.

[57] *Universul* was a daily newspaper and *Adevărul Literar* was a journal concerned with literature and art; both were popular publications out of Bucharest.

[58] *Arh. St. București, Direcția Generală a Poliției, dos. 34/1922-1938, f. 44.* Any international correspondence between a minority organization and a Western European group interested in their welfare would have been of interest to the Romanian police, but this issue was only mentioned in passing in a general report on the organization.

[59] Lăzurică was a Romani-ized version of his surname. *Arh. St. București, Direcția Generală a Poliției, dos. 34/1922-1938, f. 44.* His ethnicity would later come under dispute, and he resigned from the U.G.R.R. because of the resulting scandal: *Arh. St. București, Prefectura Poliției Capitalei, dos. 123/1933, f. 80*; *Arh. St. București, Prefectura Poliției Capitalei, dos. 123/1933, f. 93.*

[60] *Arh. St. București, Prefectura Poliției Capitalei, dos. 123/1933, f. 3.*

[61] *Arh. St. București, Prefectura Poliției Capitalei, dos. 123/1933, f. 3*

[62] *Arh. St. București, Prefectura Poliției Capitalei, dos. 123/1933, f. 3.*

"recover" works that spoke to the atavistically European soul.

This did not preclude them from presenting their position as loyal Romanian citizens as well. "We are patriots and supporters of the monarchy and the state; we are not disloyal, we do not desert our obligations, we do not make pacts with Romania's enemies nor do we allow ourselves to be influenced by extremism, which is damaging to the Romanian state," they insisted. The pamphlet goes on to decry the major problems facing Roma in Romanian society: "These are qualities which outweigh any human frailties and, recognizing this, our fellow citizens must acknowledge that we do not often fail ourselves in the face of the law. *We are nevertheless scorned, blasphemed, and considered pariahs in society, lacking equal rights as men and citizens.*"[63] The issue at hand was not to create a new political party, but to focus on spiritual and social welfare and legal rights that would take nothing away from their civil responsibilities nor cast aspersions toward the State. Indeed, it was intended to change public perceptions of Roma in general.[64]

While Șerboianu maintained some presence on the scene until his death in 1938, the A.G.T.R. had trouble getting even the most basic license to exist as a legal entity, a requirement for any Romanian organization in the 1930s. This is partly to do with the enigmatic figure of Șerboianu himself; there were rumors repeated in police files concerning the organization and in some editions of the Romani newspapers that he had overstated his relationship with the Orthodox Church, and that he had, in fact, converted to the Uniate or Catholic church, a serious charge for the head of a group attempting to prove its "Romanianness."[65] He was also unsuccessful at gaining a larger Romanian swathe of support for his organization.

The U.G.R.R. proved much more adept at allying itself with important public figures in Romania. In the first large meeting of the organization in 1933, a number of important Romanians were noted as either present at the meeting or as "spiritual members" of the organization, including editors from *Adevărul*

Literar, Universul, Ilustrația Română and Cuvântul, the well-known writers Mihail Tican Roman and Adrian Maniu, an ethnographer interested in Roma named George Potra, representatives from the Romanian Orthodox church, and Corneliu Codreanu, the leader of the ultra-nationalist Legion of the Archangel Michael.[66] It is fascinating that they named Codreanu, a far-right leader who based his organization on a platform of xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and anti-communism, as a spiritual member of their organization. Codreanu even went as far as to supply them with 20 members of his paramilitary outfit to guarantee order at the first large meeting of the U.G.R.R.[67] The focus on social programs and continued assertions that the organization was apolitical aided in this type of support, and assured the organization of positive publicity in the press.[68] Every interwar organization in Romania was forced to register with the government, and many, including Romani organizations, were monitored by the police. This was surveillance represented both a response by the state to the tensions created by the inclusion of new territories after the Great War and nervousness about the growing power of ethnonationalist groups by the early-1930s.

The organizations' heavy stress on Romanianness in a period in which the state was so focused on creating a strong national identity was the most important element in solidifying such a broad show of support by powerful Romanians. Publications by the U.G.R.R. emphasized Romani allegiance to Romania, and particularly to Orthodoxy.[69] *Glasul Romilor* (The Romani Voice) not only provides an overview of the social and cultural platforms of the organization, but a glimpse of the greatest challenges Romani intellectuals felt were facing Roma in Romanian society and how they perceived their position in

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[63] *Arh. St. București, Prefectura Poliției Capitalei,, dos. 123/1933, f. 3.*

[64] *Arh. St. București, Prefectura Poliției Capitalei,, dos. 123/1933, f. 3.*

[65] *Arh. St. București, Direcția Generală a Poliției, dos. 34/1922-1938, f. 60-61 Arh. St. București, Prefectura Poliției Capitalei, dos. 123/1933, f. 80.*

[66] *Arh. St. București, Direcția Generală a Poliției, dos. 34/1922-1938, f. 49.*

[67] *Arh. St. București, Direcția Generală a Poliției, dos. 34/1922-1938, f. 46.*

[68] The organization was treated fairly in the mainstream press throughout the 1930s. It is not until after the 1937 election that, in response to the changing climate of politics in Romania, a noticeable difference can be seen in Romanian publications.

[69] See, for example *Glasul Romilor,* I, no. 1, 1-15 November,1934, 1, which directly links itself to Orthodoxy with news of a mass baptism of Roma on the first page.

interwar Romanian society, as well. The first edition, published in November 1934, firmly placed Roma within the narrative of Romanian history as an oppressed people who, once freed from slavery in 1854, were left to suffer at the margins of society in the country. The only recourse was to confirm their unwavering support of the State and their position as loyal citizens deserving of rights:

> We were and will remain supporters of the state and the Throne until death. Within our brother Roma we have never found of traitor to the State. We were always good citizens. We deserve therefore a better fate. We also deserve to be heard on the governance of our dear country … and to request our rights. We deserve to be heard and helped.[70]

The paper announced the social, cultural, moral, economic, and spiritual "Emanciparea și redeșteptarea tutorur Romilor din România" (Emancipation and Reawakening of all Roma in Romania) as a motto for the organization.[71] Far from hovering on the margins as vital critics of the "*languers* [*sic*] of a tired civilization," as Hoppé wrote, Romani organizations were challenging society to openly accept them.[72]

Editions of *Glasul Romilor* throughout the 1930s focused on the same three overarching themes of God, King and Country. Articles were written by a number of members, the Niculescu brothers, who were later declared president and vice-president of the organization, as well as some of the non-Roma "spiritual" members of the organization. Smaller sections were saved for discussions of organizational meetings, the history of Roma in Romania, and the social and cultural objectives of the organization. On the front page of each edition was a series of articles celebrating the work of the Union's "spiritual" Romanian members while giving due adulation to the King. Each annual also included a letter from the president of the association, Gheorghe Niculescu that outlined the basic ideals of the organization and provided an assessment of the year's actions of the U.G.R.R. Inside the paper, articles centered on Romani artists and writers shared the page with descriptions of the organization's cooperative

social efforts and the minutes from local meetings.[73]

One of the most interesting articles in this first publication underlined an important facet of interwar Romanian identity: religion. Trumpeting October 14, 1934 as an auspicious day, the paper detailed the baptism of one hundred "nomads" by the Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church in Ploești. Accompanying the article was a photograph of the Patriarch, several priests, and a nun interspersed with the leaders of the U.G.R.R. The baptized nomads are noticeably absent from the shot. Reconfirming their spirituality and their commitment to Romanian Orthodoxy on the first page of the first publication by the organization declared to all who saw the annual that Roma were participating citizens in the Romanian state, and, perhaps more importantly, concerned with upholding many important facets of Romanian interwar identity.[74]The nomads,through their baptism, are transformed through the efforts of the organization (and orthodoxy) from wild, uncivilized Țigani to Romanian Roma.

The intent to garner public support for Roma rested in part on a plan to "colonize" the same nomads that Starkie and Hoppé used in their critiques of progress and modernity. Indeed, the U.G.R.R. perceived nomads as a prime issue that negatively impacted Romanian public opinion of Roma. In their statutes, the organization made nomads a point of their agenda by planning to "entreat nomads to settle, in land on the periphery of villages or cities, that they no longer travel as vagabonds, nor will they be able to in the future to dishonor the Romani name, as a pariah in society."[75] As stated above, the A.G.T.R. likewise focused its attentions on nomads, calling for their colonization on parcels of land in order to ensure social order and ultimately to "civilize" them.[76] Discussions about nomads were a means by which Romani organizations could highlight their own modernness and distance themselves from the more negative stereotypes associated with the impoverished rural Țigani.

The Gypsy Lore Society, the same London organization which influenced the travels

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[70] *Glasul Romilor*, anul 1, no. 1, 1934.
[71] *Glasul Romilor*, anul I, no. 1, 1934.
[72] Hoppé, 43.

[73] *Glasul Romilor*, anul II, no. 4 (București, 1 May, 1937).
[74] *Glasul Romilor*, anul I, no. 1, 1934.
[75] *Arh. St. București, Direcția Generală a Poliției, dos. 34/1922-1938, f. 57.*
[76] *Arh. St. București, Direcția Generală a Poliției, dos. 34/1922-1938, f. 31.*

of Hoppé and Starkie and with which Lăzărescu-Lăzurică and the Niculescus were linked, reacted negatively to the progressive and rational projects and concerns of these new organizations.[77] In an article that served as a rebuttal to the aspirations of Romanian Romani organizations published by the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, William John Haley wrote a ten-page examination of the nascent movement. In it, he belabored the lack of focus on cultural preservation during the Roma Congress held by the U.G.R.R. in Bucharest in 1934:

> The aims of the Union are sweeping and varied, though I regret I cannot find the preservation of the Romani language among them. Indeed, the Union possibly does not want to preserve it. Gypsies, in the future, apparently are to be stamped into whatever national mould they happen to have for their environment, and to be stereotyped.[78]

It was inconceivable to Haley that Roma would assimilate, let alone choose a national identity over their ethnicity. Roma, too, it seemed, had joined the interwar "urge towards dull order."[79]

Haley could not bear to think that Roma were unconcerned with the same culture and traditions that the Gypsy Lore Society had worked so hard to "preserve" for 60 years: "It would be a tragedy to romance, to lore, and to culture if the old Romany strain were to be tamed, nomadism to give way to sedentarism, and if all the *bikkomengroes* were to become clerks."[80] The idea that Roma would choose to be participating members of civic society was so far removed from the romantic Western interpretation of Romani culture that it was inconceivable that the Romani organizations could be motivated in such a direction to the author. He capped his article with a tidy statement about his hope that the perceived mercurial, emotional nature of Roma would prove victorious over these modern, dull aspirations:

> "But somehow our faith in the impenetrable destiny of our friends 'out of Egypt' reassures us that the old Romany characteristics will triumph over all such modern veneers in the end, and that things will never become quite so bad again."[81] Regardless then of how modern Roma appeared, they were still Gypsies at heart, Haley believed. Regardless of Haley's assertions about the inevitable "triumph" of "old Romany characteristics" over the lure of "modern veneers," the U.G.R.R. continued to exist, with a technical break during World War II, through 1949.[82] Haley's article, and the writings of Starkie and Hoppé, serve to illuminate the avid interwar desire that some atavistic vestige of the European, premodern soul could resist even the most lurid calls of modernity. If Gypsies, Cervantes's "kings of nature," succumbed to these "civilized traps," what hope did anyone else have? The idea that Gypsies existed outside of their romantic imaginings did not strike these writers; Gypsies existed for them solely as a running social and cultural commentary about the woes of modern civilization, and as such offered a promise of redemption for other Europeans. For them, Romani organizations merely highlighted the dangerous lure of progress, and as such could not be, and indeed discursively were not allowed to be, modern. At the same time, these organizations, particularly the U.G.R.R., utilized both the positive and negative stereotypes concerning Roma in order to present a non-threatening Romani face to the Romanian public, an image that posited Roma as intrinsic and valuable members of Romanian society. Rejecting the idea that Roma were unable to be modern participants in civil society, these organizations positioned themselves in opposition to rural Țigani and nomads and highlighted their modernness and their desire to actively participate in Romanian society.

References

[77] *Arh. St. București, Direcția Generală a Poliției, dos. 34/1922-1938, f. 44.*

[78] William John Haley, "The Gypsy Conference at Bucharest," in *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, 3rd series, vol. XIII (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1934), p. 184.

[79] Haley, "Gypsy Conference," 184.

[80] Haley, "Gypsy Conference," 185. This translation is unclear, but he may be using Borrow's dictionary for the term *boshomengro*, meaning "fiddler."

[81] Haley, "Gypsy Conference," 186.

[82] Many Romanian organizations were forced to cease their operations during the war, so there is no official record of the operations of the U.G.R.R. during this period. There is some evidence that they continued to exist in an unofficial capacity during this period, and they began to reassert themselves in 1948-49 as a socialist organization. *Arh. St. București, Direcția Generală a Poliției, dos. 87/1943 f. 392.*

Arh. St. Bucureşti, Direcția Generală a Poliției, dos. 34/1922-1938.

Arh. St. Bucureşti, Prefectura Poliției Capitalei, *dos*. 123/1933.

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