

Author accepted version

Version of record at

Matthews, J. (2013). 'Tsiganes on the Brain': The 'Last Gypsy' as a Case of Archive Fever. *Immigrants and Minorities*, 31(3), 289-316. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02619288.2013.781812>

not version of record

### **'Tsiganes on the brain': the 'last Gypsy' as a case of archive fever**

The article identifies some of the ways in which the 'Victorian Gypsy' was constructed by a group of authors known as Gypsy lorists, and develops reading strategies that highlight the politics of their writing, in particular using Jacques Derrida's theorization of the archive. For the Victorians, it seemed that the Gypsy way of life would soon die out. The Gypsies' apparently imminent disappearance marks their world as delicate, natural and formerly pure. However, the structure of the archive means that the lorists' attempts to preserve their version of Gypsy culture are threatened from within: they hasten the forgetting of that which they would conserve and archivally silence Gypsy voices with their own. Claims of extinction have evidently been disproved, however, and new archives successfully augment what the lorists considered to be the last word on Gypsies in Britain.

In *The Jew, the Gypsy and El Islam*, published in 1898, Richard Burton asserts that something about the Gypsy (or Tsiganes as he refers to them) renders the imagination of rival writers 'most lively', to the extent that misrepresentations of both their subject matter and their own work appear like symptoms of a disease. Burton's concern was directed towards unlikely claims made by his contemporaries about their philological discoveries, which, he thought, lacked proof. Almost a century later, in an insertion to *Mal d'Archive* that does not appear in the translated *Archive Fever*, Derrida asks, '*Mais à qui revient en dernière instance l'autorité sur l'institution de l'archive?*': in the last instance, to whom does the authority over the institution of the archive return? <sup>1</sup> What do the words of a Victorian explorer and French deconstructionist thinker have to do with each other, and with the Romani people? These apparently unconnected thoughts might, in fact, be used productively together to examine the politically textual effects of collecting examples of folklore, specifically the language and culture of the people ascribed the label 'Gypsies' in Britain. The disease to which Burton refers may be diagnosed as what Derrida calls 'archive fever'.

This analysis of nineteenth-century writing about Gypsies begins, then, with an assumption: there is no complete, neutral, historically accurate picture of 'the Gypsy'

in England and Wales waiting to be uncovered by readers of, in this case, the nineteenth-century archive; what we know in the twenty-first century of this Victorian figure is contingent on fragments, the texts that were privileged enough to be made legible in the archive and the context in which they were written, who wrote and why. What one finds in the archive and meaning derived from it, meanings that can have real consequences for anyone ascribed or ascribing to a particular identity, is what is meant in this article by 'politically textual effects'. To make these claims is certainly not to make the racist assertion countered by Katie Trumpener in her landmark essay that the Gypsies have no history.<sup>2</sup> Neither is my aim to question the relevance of contemporary Romani identity and the histories written of this culture's struggles and celebrations. On the contrary, just as Ian Hancock advises recognising who and what literary Gypsies such as Carmen and Esmeralda are, the strategy here is to identify the Victorian Gypsy as constructed by a particular group of authors and to develop reading strategies that highlight the politics of their writing. This is a move which hopes to prevent the continued misunderstanding of identities informed by centuries of stereotyping, something which is especially pertinent as Roma continue to be ejected from EU states largely, it has been suggested, for reasons of ethnicity and cultural difference.<sup>3</sup> This identification of a nineteenth-century construction is also not an attempt to jettison the works under consideration here from the archive, even if that were possible, nor to compare them to an irretrievable, authentic past, but to recognise them for what they are. Rather than provide hitherto undiscovered archival traces of Victorian Gypsy life, it reassesses the ways in which the sources with which scholars in this field are already familiar are read.

What will be termed here, for the sake of brevity, the 'nineteenth-century Gypsy archive' or 'lorists' archive' is largely represented by the work of three writers: Charles Godfrey Leland (1824–1903), Theodore Watts-Dunton (1832–1914) and Francis Hinds Groome (1851–1902). These folklorists collected examples of Gypsy language and culture in order to preserve it in the face of its perceived annihilation in

a rapidly modernizing Britain. They frequently referred to themselves as Romany Ryes (or, in some texts, *Rais*)<sup>4</sup> from the Romani for ‘Gypsy gentlemen’ and following George Borrow’s *Romany Rye* (1857). Their identification as a group may be said to begin with a now well-documented correspondence in the pages of *Notes and Queries* from November 1887 suggesting that a formal Gypsy Lore Society be organised to further the study of Gypsies. The archive that these men instituted was to be an aid to memory, so that the Gypsies would not be forgotten when the last of their kind vanished. Leland famously believed that by the 1880s the child had been born who would see the last Gypsy, for reasons explained in more detail below.<sup>5</sup> To interpret this corpus in the light of Derrida’s theorization of the archive, however, means that the lorists’ work can never be the textual saviour of a race that it sets out to be.

Derrida deploys the Freudian death drive in conceptualising the archive as a support to memory. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and, later, less hesitantly, in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud describes the death drive seeking to restore the units of the living organism to a state that existed before life, ‘an expression of the conservative nature of living substance’. This drive to restore a prior state demands a return to non-life — death — thus connecting in Freudian psychoanalysis the repetition compulsion and the death drive. While the manifestations of Eros are ‘conspicuous and noisy enough’, ‘the death instinct operate[s] silently’, seen only when it breaks out as destructive acts.<sup>6</sup> In the archive, an event is reproduced in writing or in another form of trace, with the possibility of continued repetition or ‘reimpression’ in the future. This repetition, a return to what came before, is associated, à la Freud, with death and destruction. The consequence, says Derrida, is that the condition for the existence of the archive (the retrieval of something from the past) is also what ‘menaces with destruction, introducing, *a priori*, forgetfulness and the archiviolithic into the heart of the monument’. The archive is produced as part of an impulse to conserve and the need to repeat. This need is ultimately destructive

as it not only drives towards death but takes place where forgetting, extinction and erasure silently threaten. 'The archive takes place at the place of originary and structural breakdown of the said memory'.<sup>7</sup> The lorists' Gypsy archive thus threatens the very culture they hoped to save, and it does so by silencing the chief actors in that culture, putting their own words in place of the Gypsies'.

There are more recent scholars whose work has a bearing on the reappraisal of the way we read the nineteenth-century Gypsy archive: David Mayall, Deborah Epstein Nord and Regenia Gagnier to name just three. Mayall's 2004 work, *Gypsy Identities, 1500–2000*, explores how the people have been represented and constructed across five centuries, taking in the unavoidable contributions of the Gypsy lorists. His earlier *Gypsy-travellers in Nineteenth-century Society* is concerned with the relationships between Gypsies and other travelling people and the developing capitalist state. One aspect of Nord's *Gypsies and the British Imagination* chimes particularly harmoniously with the arguments I make here; this is where she considers the point at which the Gypsy is obliterated in the writer's own search for expression of self, nostalgia for a golden age, or critique of modernity.<sup>8</sup> While Nord's chapter on 'Scholarship and Nostalgia in the Gypsy Lore Society' meticulously examines the discourses which informed the society's work, placing it in the context of nineteenth-century research into folklore and philology, it is not within its stated aims to consider the structure of such archives from the perspective of deconstructive psychoanalysis. Gagnier, in her article on 'Cultural Philanthropy, Gypsies, and Interdisciplinary Scholars', considers how, despite the difficulties of 'conjur[ing] up' figures such as Leland after 'the holocaust of Nazi Science [...] burned away his world', one might usefully interrogate the motives, politics and effects of Victorian philanthropy, in particular one with an interest in Gypsies. She brings the highly relevant work of Patrick Brantlinger to bear on the Gypsy lorists, describing how it 'makes clearer than most post-colonial critique since Fanon how closely extinction was the reverse narrative of Progress and civilization'.<sup>9</sup> While there are

clear echoes of Brantlinger's approach in *Dark Vanishings* (and thus of Gagnier's application of it to the case of Gypsies) in my own analysis, the emphasis here is on the extinction of a particular construction of the Gypsies as an unfortunate but inevitable and paradoxical risk of archivization.

### **The Gypsies and the 'Romany Ryes'**

In the nineteenth century, the lives of the Gypsies were, as far as many non-Gypsy commentators were concerned, detrimentally affected by three main factors: the rapid economic change in Britain from an agrarian economy to industrial capitalism; the resultant urbanisation and other social changes facilitated (or forced) by industrialisation; and, massively, by land enclosures. The figure of the Gypsy has been used extensively as a metaphor for pre-industrial Britain, frequently held up as the most obvious victim of the evils of enclosure. As Raymond Williams notes, however, the consequences of enclosure were serious for all those who lived in the country, and to localise its effects in the period of the Industrial Revolution is to construct a myth 'in which the transition from a rural to an industrial society is seen as a kind of fall, the true cause and origin of our social suffering and disorder'.<sup>10</sup> Those keen to romanticise Gypsy life, including the Gypsy lorists, commonly frame the loss of Gypsy culture as just this sort of fall; the Gypsies potently represented the hazards of modernity as they now had even fewer places to camp and live their colourful lives. The race (and, distressingly for the lorists, its language and culture) was thought to be in grave danger. Such a view chooses to ignore the ways in which Romani culture, amongst other traditional cultures, adapted to survive in this changing environment.

The term 'race' had a variety of meanings in the nineteenth century, but it is used here in the sense employed by the writers the article considers: that of the Gypsies as a distinct group of blood-related people with Indian origins whose race determines their appearance and behaviour, giving them innate qualities that are

immediately recognisable (to the commentators subscribing to this idea) as those of the Gypsy. This recognition is tautological: the Gypsy displays certain traits because he or she is a Gypsy, but this is also what *makes* him or her a Gypsy. An authentic and continuous Gypsy culture could only be lived, the lorists believed, by those who belonged to the Gypsy race. Interestingly, the lorists seemed to develop an exception to this rule for themselves, as they ardently describe their success in 'passing' as Gypsies and thus complicate their own theories about the purity of language and cultural practice.<sup>11</sup>

People described as 'Gypsies' were present in Suffolk, Bristol, Hereford and Cornwall from the early sixteenth century, the first in Britain having arrived in Scotland from Spain around 1500.<sup>12</sup> Andrew Borde's *Fyrst Boke of the Introduction of Knowledge*, completed in 1542, contains a sample of 'Egipt speche', generally acknowledged as the first written example of Romani in England, and in the Leeds Parish registers of 1572, the baptism of 'Elizabeth, child of Anthony Smawleye, the Egypcion' is entered on 29th June.<sup>13</sup> An 'Acte concernynge outlandysh People, callynge themselves Egyptians' was passed in 1530, possibly, suggests Mayall, in response to an influx of Gypsies into Britain during the reign of Henry VIII. It was followed by 'An Act for the punishment of certayne Persons calling themselves Egyptians' in 1554. The Gypsies, as Mayall points out, 'left behind very little in the form of written records', at least records which they had made rather than those of the authorities in which they appeared. The texts available for analysis (whether by 'texts' one means these early laws or the romanticised nineteenth-century descriptions on which this article focuses) are, by a vast majority, written by middle-class, male non-Gypsies.

As Mayall notes, the lorists 'distanced themselves from the present-day reality of Gypsy existence and looked only for the myth and mystery of Gypsies in the past'.<sup>14</sup> The protagonist of William Sharp's 1895 novel, *The Gypsy Christ*, acknowledges the hybridity of the term 'Romany Rye', saying that it is 'not exactly a

“gentleman-gypsy,” as commonly translated, but rather an amateur-gypsy, or as a “brother” once phrased it to [him] “a sympathising make-believe gypsy”.<sup>15</sup> This description of ‘amateur’ Gypsies hints at the exploratory activities of the Ryes: they would befriend Gypsy families or individuals, learn their language and partake, for a short period, in their way of life, mining their stories and words for clues that might answer the ‘problem’ of Gypsy origins.<sup>16</sup> They enjoyed what they saw as the ‘freedom’ of the great outdoors, camping in tents, cooking over open fires and tramping across the British countryside. No doubt this life was appealing when one could return to a comfortable and well-appointed home when the weather changed for the worse. Borrow seems to have been the first to adopt the title of Romany Rye in his semi-autobiographical *Lavengro* in 1851, but George K. Behlmer suggests that John Hoyland, who published *A Historical Survey of the Customs, Habits and Present State of the Gypsies* in 1816, was, in fact, England’s first Romany Rye.<sup>17</sup> Borrow and Hoyland were rarities in their time, but from the mid-nineteenth century the field of folklore started to draw on philology and added a liberal dash of bohemianism to form the idiosyncratic fusion that was Gypsy lorism. They are represented here by three prominent figures in the movement.

Charles Godfrey Leland, inaugural president of the Gypsy Lore Society, had a self-confessed ‘tendency to “idealism” or romance’ — appropriately for my argument this was something he attributed to an earlier inflammation of the brain — and learned the Spanish Gypsy dialect from Borrow’s *The Bible in Spain*. (It should be noted that Borrow’s lexicons are notoriously inaccurate but Leland would later improve his vocabulary through contact with Gypsies). Despite his adventures with English Gypsies, Leland conceded that even his ‘gypsy experiences’ were not as great as those of Francis Hinds Groome.<sup>18</sup> Groome was an encyclopaedist and contributor to myriad publications on the subject of Gypsies. He is perhaps best known for proposing that Gypsies bridged the gap between Indian and European folk traditions. Michael Owen Jones describes Groome, after Matthew Arnold’s poem of



the same name, as 'a "scholar Gypsy", a Gentile always welcome to Romany tents'. Theodore Watts-Dunton suggested that Groome's skill as a philologist 'was ten times that of Borrow, whose temperament may be called anti-academic, and who really knew nothing thoroughly.' These later Ryes, then, who saw themselves as serious 'collectors', hoped to cast off Borrow's deliberately eccentric, enormously egocentric, unsentimental, chaotic style in favour of discipline and ordered detail, despite their passion for the liberty they believed Gypsy life offered. While Borrow's conceitedness can be at best amusing and at worst offensive, the result is writing that prioritises experience as the author moves through the world, encountering individuals or cultures about which he waxes lyrical. He does not set out to institute a school or field of study. The lorists, on the other hand, though admirers and friends of Borrow, albeit with full acknowledgement of his 'angularities',<sup>19</sup> were keen to frame their work rather differently. Watts-Dunton, the third writer in this trio, contributed to publications such as the *Examiner*, the *Athenæum* and the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, wrote poetry and fiction and edited Borrow's work.

These three writers were not alone in their pursuits. A properly Derridean exploration of the lorists' archive would minutely detail its institution, its location and influence, its current place and how one may gain access. Other scholars (including Nord, Mayall and Gagnier) have certainly collated and interpreted information on the lorists. There is yet further scope for reading the politics of this organisation and its writing, in particular by delving into the archives held at Liverpool University thanks to associations John Sampson (philologist and librarian), R.A. Scott Macfie (businessman and recorder of dialects and folktales) and Dora Yates (dedicated scholar of Romani culture) had with the institution. However, there is space here only for a synopsis of the Society's activities, as the main focus of the article is on reading some exemplary texts produced by its members. Following its formal beginnings in the 1880s, the Gypsy Lore Society started its own journal, underlining the Society's scholarly intent. It located the Gypsy Lore Society firmly in the field of international

folklore studies, not least by featuring advertisements for *La Tradition* and the *Journal of American Folklore*. The Society's members included, as well as the three writers discussed here, Burton and the Archduke Josef of Austro-Hungary (a 'living storehouse of Gypsy lore').<sup>20</sup> Both Society and journal still exist, though in somewhat different forms: the journal is now the peer-reviewed *Romani Studies* and the Society is based in the United States. Nord notes that being a lorist was both an external activity and an internal identity.<sup>21</sup> It is unusual to find a lorist discussing his work without enthusiastically confessing the extent of his affinity with Gypsies, and this attitude did not end with the waning of the Society's membership: auto-didact and central figure in the lorist movement John Sampson dedicated his Gypsy anthology, *The Wind on the Heath*, in 1930 'to all the Affectionated'. The lorists felt they had a duty to save examples of Gypsy culture, and would promote the culture by tracing the origins of the people (through their social practices, language and tales) as a way of guaranteeing the authenticity and purity of that which was archived.

For the Victorians, it seemed that the Gypsy way of life would soon die out. Leland's fears echoed those of many in the Gypsy lorist movement, and he felt that he and his fellow lorists were collecting examples of folklore before it was too late because, he believed, 'with general culture and intelligence we are killing all kinds of old faiths'. Philologists B.C. Smart and H. T. Crofton (the latter of whom was president of the Gypsy Lore Society at the beginning of the twentieth century) described 'hearing archaic terms and obsolete inflexions' in Romani, which, 'like the bones and eggs of the Great Auk, or the mummified fragments of a Dodo, are the relics of extinct forms', and which should be treasured as 'the broken utterances of an expiring language'. This type of extinction discourse is identified by Brantlinger as a 'specific branch of the dual ideologies of imperialism and racism'. The Scottish doctor and anatomist Robert Knox maintained in 1850 that the Gypsies are of 'vast antiquity, and are dying out'. He would not mourn them: 'of races which cultivate not the earth, which manufacture nothing, which progress not in art nor in science, we

have already enough upon the surface'. The proleptic elegy, as Brantlinger elaborates, in contradistinction to Knox's attitude sentimentally describes, from the point of view of the white writer, the inevitable decline and extinction of non-developed, apparently uncivilized peoples as they are overtaken by white European modernity.<sup>22</sup> This dominant mode of extinction discourse may be found in the work of the lorists. Mourning is expressed before (and, indeed, instead of the fact of) the people and their culture passing into history, so it takes place in expectation of extinction but with the confidence that their death is unavoidable.

In order to make sense of Gypsy culture, comparisons with other peoples were frequently made by Victorian writers (referring to the Arabs of Europe, the Bedouins of the commons, negroes and American Indians) but Romantic writers such as Horace Smith (1779-1849) had proclaimed that 'None, none but [the Gypsies] can now be styled/ Romantic, picturesque, and wild,/ In this prosaic era.' They were, he insisted, the 'sole freebooters of the wood', separate from 'King, Church, and State'.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, analytically speaking it might be suggested that the construction of the Gypsy *is* different from other others imperilled by the geographic or spatial march of mechanised empires; it was not an invading overseas empire that threatened the Gypsies but a perceived *epochal* shift in British culture on home soil. The Gypsy has often been termed an 'other within', dominated in theory and practice by hegemonic institutions and communities.<sup>24</sup> In this case, the Gypsies' status as insider-outsider (rather than the overseas other) allows for a lament towards the felt negative changes wrought on pastoral Britain by historical developments. The Gypsies' otheredness renders these changes visible to the lorists.

The lorists' impulse to conserve a culture perceived to be under threat means that their writing is characterised by the confidence of the self-fulfilling prophecy, silencing the Gypsy. Leland's attitude is hinted at in a letter quoted by his niece and biographer, Elizabeth Robins Pennell: 'It strikes me as one of the little ironies of life, that the Gypsy, smoking and dreaming the years away, should have excited his

lovers to such a delirium of industry'.<sup>25</sup> The implication is that the Gypsy is incapable of compiling his or her own archive and it is therefore thanks to the work ethic of their *gorgio* (the contemporary term for a non-Gypsy) brothers that any trace of them remains at all. It is this silencing that points the way to a Freudian (via Derrida) reading of the lorist's combined archive, a vast body of work that takes in letters, non-fictional essays and articles, novels and poems. It is to this corpus of texts that the historian of Gypsies in Victorian Britain traditionally turns at some point in her research and one of the reasons for recommending a rereading of this archive is precisely that ubiquity in the story of Britain's Gypsy past.

As the industrialisation of Britain gathered pace and the legislative net designed to deal with vagrancy drew tighter, a traditionally nomadic Gypsy life became less feasible, as did many formerly commonplace modes of life. The roadside verges on which these 'brethren of the dark blood and the tents' made their camps can be seen, retrospectively, to symbolise an existence not only situated on the margins of society, but one that seemed to teeter on the brink of annihilation.<sup>26</sup> As Nord notes, there was a shift in sentiment as the nineteenth century progressed. The immediate loss expressed by the Romantic poets as common land was enclosed had changed by the time the lorists were writing. There was now a sense that the old communities and traditions had already disappeared and so should rightly be treated with a nostalgic attitude.<sup>27</sup> The insular Gypsies were a trace of what had, elsewhere, been consumed by history's progress.

Leland's fascination with the 'quiet, solemn sunset' of the Gypsy way of life seems to insist that one read the lorists' oeuvre as a protracted and pre-emptive work of mourning, not just for the Gypsies themselves, but for a lost rural idyll.<sup>28</sup> As the Gypsies faded away, their dying words were to be recorded, catalogued and interpreted not for their benefit but for the interested *gorgio* observers left behind. Words and sketches produced by outsiders would stand in the stead of a people. As representatives of a romanticised, pre-industrial past, distinct from the changes

taking place in the civilized world, the Gypsies in the lorists' archive conform to the idea of the 'noble savage', expressing the deeply conservative attitudes of their recorders and betraying a desire to return to a previous state, a repetition of that which has gone before. Sadly, as individuals who are, ostensibly, so winningly enthusiastic, earnest and philanthropic in their work, Leland, Groome and Watts-Dunton are, as the producers of a particular genre of writing on a particular 'race', both infantilizing and disempowering in their textual politics. They posit the Gypsies as authentic in an increasingly manufactured world, what Leland calls this 'artificial age'.<sup>29</sup> The Gypsies are simple and independent as economic life seemed to be increasingly complicated, and close to nature as the urban encroached. The best-known literary expression of this attitude comes in Matthew Arnold's 1853 poem 'The Scholar-Gipsy', where he describes how the infection of mental strife and a hectic world are in danger of spreading to the 'fair life', a simpler way of being, that the Scholar-Gipsy has found in roaming the countryside.<sup>30</sup>

Though they are rarely connected, apart from a shared occasional subject-matter and mutual feelings about the loss of marginal cultures in Britain, there are similarities between the work of Arnold and that of the lorists, particularly seen in Arnold's 'On the Study of Celtic Literature', which took the form of lectures at Oxford in 1865–6. Arnold was far from sentimental about the loss of old British tongues. Despite enjoying cultural variety, he felt languages such as Cornish and Welsh to be a barrier to a cohesive English-speaking whole. He saw, like the lorists, this homogenisation as a symptom of 'modern civilisation', but unlike them he believed that 'the change must come, and its accomplishment is a mere affair of time'. It is with an 'alas!' that he notes that 'there is nothing to hinder us from effacing the last poor material remains of that Celtic power which once was everywhere, but has long since, in the race of civilisation, fallen out of sight'. He also notes, of relevance to the observations made in this article, that 'civilized nations, though very prone to ascribe to barbarous people an ideal purity and simplicity of life and manners are by no

means naturally inclined to ascribe to them high attainment in intellectual and spiritual things'. Brantlinger identifies extinction discourse as a form of sentimental racism, but he and Arnold show that it is not only that; it may be used to frame apparently endangered groups in both elegaic and painfully pragmatic terms. Arnold's thoughts demonstrate, again, that it was not just natives of overseas imperial colonies who were framed by extinction discourse, but also marginalised groups at home. While Arnold's request for a Chair in Celtic Literature and his insistence that 'the spread of the English language in Wales [was] quite compatible with preserving and honouring the Welsh language and literature' may seem a guarantee to maintain the culture rather than predict its annihilation, we should remember that his interest was not in a living language but one preserved in aspic.<sup>31</sup> His call is for an archive and its interpreter, not for vibrancy and continuity. The discipline, as with Gypsy lorism, deliberately stands in the place of a thriving culture, whether it ostensibly mourns that culture or not. The lorists, meanwhile, saw the loss of a separate language among Gypsies not just as symptom of inevitable decline, but as one of the contributing causes.

Leland's fears about the speed of the race's extinction lead him to give the lorists similar advice to that likely offered by Arnold: they should '*collect* as much as [they] can, while it is still yet extant, of all the strange lore of the olden time, instead of wasting time in forming idle theories about it'.<sup>32</sup> The danger in this urgent approach is that Leland assumes his examples of 'strange lore' are self-selecting, rather than the result of his own prejudices, well-meaning as they are. Nowhere in this article do I wish to suggest that the lorists had anything but benign intent. Leland was, as Gagnier points out, profoundly interested in the common good, exemplified in his central role in the Home Arts and Industries Association in the 1880s, an organisation committed to social responsibility.<sup>33</sup> Of more interest here, however, is the *effect* of the lorists' archivization. To assume that the Gypsy archive is neutrally produced and involves no determination of boundaries (what is in and what is out, what is worth

remembering and what is best forgotten) is to neglect the politics of archivization and the fact that texts 'are only kept and classified under the title of the archive by virtue of a privileged *topology*': we are helped to remember certain things because they have been kept by the powerful, the learned, those with a place to keep things.<sup>34</sup> Individuals with agendas, with failings, with blind spots and passions, have chosen a slice of what will become the recorded past.

In *The Gypsies* Leland identifies the group as 'the human types of this vanishing, direct love of nature, of this mute sense of rural romance', a muteness that seems to encourage the *gorgio* scholar to fill this representational void by conserving this particular human type and the romantic ruralism it represents, and thus a muteness for which we only have Leland's word. As Derrida points out, however, silence is not the same as absence: the analyst is silent to allow the analysand to reveal him or herself; powerful ghosts are silent but also, unavoidably, *there*.<sup>35</sup> Rereadings of the lorists' work in this light (and there are many more to be performed) begins to make a space for the retrieval of Gypsy voices even as such writing seems to consign them to an improper history that is not their own. Expressing the connection between Gypsies and nature, underlining their cultural innocence, Leland assures the reader that Gypsies 'are human, but in their lives they are between man as he lives in houses and the bee and bird and fox', as if their humanity were somehow in question.<sup>36</sup> Images that zoomorphise and silence the Gypsy highlight the political effects of the intention to describe the Gypsies' apparently last days. As Leland *et al* mourned the premature departure of the Gypsy from their world, they painted a picture that the twenty-first-century newspaper reader might recognise when reading of the tragic death of a child: forever young, perennially innocent, embodying the lost hopes of the adults that survive. Brantlinger asserts that 'the metaphor of the savage as futureless child is related to discourse about economic development, based on the assumption that societies, like individuals, grow up or mature'.<sup>37</sup> The Gypsies, of course, are not included in the maturation of the British

economy that industrialisation symbolized within the dominant economic discourses of the period, other than as its victims. As a rural anachronism, the Gypsies are rendered as at once animalised and childish objects. By writing the Gypsies, the lorists write them off.

In a passage of *The Gypsies* so striking in its rhetoric that Nord also discusses it in her book, Leland explains that:

The child and the gypsy have no words in which to express their sense of nature and its charm, but they have this sense, and there are very, very few who, acquiring culture, retain it. And it is gradually disappearing from the world, just as the old delicately sensuous, naïve, picturesque type of woman's beauty — the perfection of natural beauty — is rapidly vanishing in every country, and being replaced by the mingled real and unreal attractiveness of 'cleverness', intellect and fashion.<sup>38</sup>

The child, the Gypsy and the woman are subordinated subjects in this technological consumer society which favours the white, adult male and is personified, despite their protestations, by Leland and his colleagues. The cultural silence of the Gypsy seems to invite the lorists's intervention but their writing displaces the Gypsies' autoarchival power.

The Gypsies' apparently imminent disappearance from the world (a perpetual imminence held in place by the very act of writing about it) brings Leland to align Gypsies with nature and thus oppose them to culture and intellect. For Leland, the very fact that a race can be wiped out or watered down by a dominant culture marks it as delicate, natural and formerly pure. That all these features are unavoidably threatened by the strength and development of the white industrialised world also serves to emphasise that world's progressive power, just as Arnold asserted. As Nord notes, 'intent on preserving and maintaining the imagined purity of Gypsy culture, the scholar and lorist insist on the contaminating powers of English life, of modern life'.<sup>39</sup> For the lorists, the extinction of the Gypsies represents a tragic side-effect of the narrative of progress in Victorian Britain. However, the language they use to describe this tragedy constructs it as the inevitable conclusion to the story of the uncultured, naïve Gypsy race.



In a dedication to his collection of poems, *The Coming of Love* (first edition 1898), Watts-Dunton describes the book as his 'chief favourite' because 'it paints the life of the better class of gypsies (the "Griengroes", now so near extinction in this country) with more verisimilitude' than any of his other work. 'Its subject', he says, 'seems to give it some chance of surviving'.<sup>40</sup> The meaning of the dedication is ambiguous: is it the Griengroes or the book that survives? I cannot help but read, perversely, Watts-Dunton as suggesting that the extinction of this particular group of Gypsies allows his writing to survive because it will soon be the only trace of the Griengroes, thus guaranteeing him an audience by becoming a mythology. Its continued interest to readers is contingent on its subject's disappearance; writing displaces and replaces the Gypsy. The dedication also reflects the lorists' obsession with racial purity, the contamination of which is seen as part of the Gypsies' decline and one of the failings of modern society, expressed more generally in the period as 'degeneration'. In Watts-Dunton's novel, *Aylwin* (1898), Henry Aylwin's friendship with 'the better class of Welsh Gypsies' is supposed to surprise 'those who associate all Gypsy life with the squalor which in England, and especially near London, marks the life of the mongrel wanderers who are so often called Gypsies'.<sup>41</sup> The 'mongrel wanderers' give the racially pure Welsh Gypsies a bad name. Similar rhetoric is frequently deployed in twenty-first-century Britain (and not just among non-Gypsy admirers of an 'exotic' culture), with anti-Gypsy/Roma sentiment blamed on perceptions of Irish Travellers and new travellers. For Derrida, the hunt for uniqueness and authenticity is a compulsive, nostalgic desire: archive fever. The 'original' is always, he posits, divided. The lorists lament the loss of the authentic originality of the Gypsies, but the idea that they, as writers, could ever fully represent this authenticity, whether to preserve it for history or for more artistic reasons, is a feverish dream.

### **Keeping Stumm: Death and the Archive**

The lorists attempted to arrest the demise of the true Gypsy by capturing that culture's last authentic moment in writing. This archive for the future is hopelessly (perhaps gloriously) inadequate not because of a failure of effort on the part of these Romany Ryes, but because the archive is always a *repetition* and thus 'indissociable from the death drive': 'the archive always works, and *a priori*, against itself.'<sup>42</sup> In other words, the structure of the archive, as elaborated by Derrida, is not only the condition for the possibility of the lorists' project but also the very thing that threatens it. The paradox of archivization is made legible for these late-century Ryes in an incident where Leland comes up against a similar linguistic problem to George Borrow and betrays a Gypsy secret. In *The Romany Rye*, Lavengro learns a word whose meaning must, for the sake of its survival, be repressed. The word 'patteran' (or, more commonly, *patrin*) is understood by both Lavengro and the other Gypsies to mean a trail left by travellers to show friends (and only friends) who follow them which route they took: 'The word for leaf was patteran, which our people use now for trail. [...] The gypsies of old were in the habit of making the marks with the leaves and branches of trees'.<sup>43</sup> Mrs Herne distrusts Lavengro's interaction with her people to the extent that she tries to poison him: his textual explication could destroy a form of Gypsy communication by disclosing the secret. Lavengro's archival impulse is problematic because he wants to record the word but doing so erases its significance; for Lavengro archivization could, quite literally, mean death. A similar contradiction at the heart of memorial writing is performed in Groome's angry response to Leland's book on the Romani language. Groome writes, in a letter to Leland that is republished in the latter's biography:

I am disappointed, for your book contains some deep, very deep Romani. Well, the result, I take it, will be the hastening of that rapid vanishing of the language of which you speak in your preface, and with the language of the people as a people.<sup>44</sup>

As Leland tries to immortalise the people he studies and the language that they speak, he betrays that which many scholars considered to have helped the Gypsies

retain their separateness and thus any degree of cultural and racial purity.

Reproduction (in the form of the printed book) as part of the drive to conserve is, as Derrida describes, indissociable from destruction. This theme returns in Francis Hindes Groome's novel *Kriegspiel: The War Game* (1896, discussed further below); the sway held over the Gypsies by the murderous Dr. Watson to act as stooges (his 'unintelligent agents') in his machinations emanates from his deep knowledge of their language and the power of suggestion made possible by familiarity with their beliefs; 'the reason they are willing to serve my ends, is ridiculously simple: I know their language, I can *rokka Romanes*'. He has learnt Romani from a rare text, of which the Gypsies themselves seem to have no knowledge and therefore credit him with omniscience.<sup>45</sup>

It is ironic that such a character features in the lorists' oeuvre, enacting the destructiveness of a textually-captured culture. Watson's motives in learning about Gypsies are entirely malign (part of a bizarre plot to reinstall the House of Stuart to the British throne), but neatly demonstrate the more general problematic of non-Gypsies gaining textual mastery over a language and culture, the extinguishing effects of archive fever. The lorists clearly had other intentions, but their writing nonetheless has potentially ruinous results.

Watts-Dunton, for his part, paints a nostalgic and romanticised picture of the Gypsies as sensitive and emotional, close to nature, innocent, childish and unspoilt. In *Aylwin*, a novel Catherine Maxwell describes as 'a strange amalgam of gypsy lore, the occult, mesmerism and Romanticism',<sup>46</sup> Henry Aylwin's mother associates 'the word "Gypsy" with everything that is wild, passionate, and lawless'. While the sympathetic characters and the narrative voice are distanced from this attitude, the imagery nonetheless helps constitute the figure of the Gypsy available in the text. Rhona Boswell, one of the Gypsy characters of the novel, is described as having a 'laugh [that] seemed to ring through the woods like silver bells'. Henry Aylwin, the narrator of the novel, adds that 'the laughter of most Gypsy girls is full of music and

of charm'. The Boswell's camp is found at 'Gypsy Dell, a romantic place in Rington Manor'. The romance surrounding Rhona comes partly, as in Leland's writing, from her childishness. She is playful, dancing round 'more like a child of six than a young woman with a Romany Rye for her lover'. This construction leaves open little space for the Gypsy woman to be anything other than a juvenile or the sexual partner of a man who objectifies her race. As a group, the Boswells and the Lovells are associated with the idyllic Welsh childhood of Winifred (the central non-Gypsy heroine), a happy time of innocence before her descent into madness after seeing her grave-robbing father's corpse. The innocence of the Gypsies, though more moderated in Watts-Dunton's novel than in Leland's work, is nonetheless emphasised and, again, aligned with nature.

At a particularly picturesque point of a journey, Aylwin comments, 'the loveliness indeed was so bewitching that one or two of the Gypsies — a race who are, as I had already noticed, among the few uncultivated people that show a susceptibility to the beauties of nature — gave a long sigh of pleasure'. In contrast with Leland's assertions, the link made here between nature and the Gypsies is *in spite* of their categorisation as an 'uncultivated people', not because of their apparently innocent simplicity. The suggestion is that most races understood as a *part* of nature do not have the capacity to admire it at the critical distance achieved by those who are more civilized.

The physical, particularly inherited, characteristics of Gypsies are, unsurprisingly, emphasised from the beginning of *Aylwin* and throughout. Henry Aylwin, despite coming from an aristocratic family, had a Gypsy ancestress, and his skin is:

as much like a young Gypsy's colour as was compatible with respectable descent, and yet not a Gypsy's colour. A deep undertone of "Romany brown" seemed breaking through that peculiar kind of ruddy golden glow which no sunshine can give till it has itself been deepened and coloured and enriched by the responsive kisses of the sea.

Moreover, there was a certain something in his eyes that was not Gypsy-like — a something which is not uncommonly seen in the eyes of

boys born along that coast, whether those eyes be black or blue or grey; a something which cannot be described, but which seems like a reflex of the daring gaze of that great land-conquering and daring sea.

This description teases, somewhat. Has Henry inherited anything of his forebear's complexion, or is this entirely the product of an outdoor life? His Gypsiness breaks through the 'respectable' surface; or does it? The reader has already been told that these physiological details are imparted by the narrator (an older Henry) 'on account of certain questions connected with race that will be raised in this narrative'.<sup>47</sup> Should the reader expect a 'Gypsy' temperament in the boy, then? What purpose can the narrative serve by saying that there is something 'not Gypsy-like' in his eyes, a self-declared non-description? Nineteenth-century descriptions in all manner of texts, from encyclopaedia definitions to children's fiction, detail the gleam and glitter of the Gypsy's eyes to an obsessive degree. Even Leland, painting a 'pretty picture' of the people, heightens the Gypsies' mystique by alluding to 'their glittering Indian eyes', demonstrating his position between scholarship and mystification as Nord describes.<sup>48</sup> Watts-Dunton could not have avoided noting this formulaic device in the writing by which he was surrounded. Whether he emulates or parodies here is open to question. The only thing about this passage of which we can be certain is that, even as racial characteristics are introduced to open the novel, they are shown to be untrustworthy indicators of a person's appearance and behaviour. Watts-Dunton, deliberately or otherwise, records the instability of any naturalized category of the 'Gypsy'.

The romantic images of the novel are haunted by the fact that a simple, nature-loving, pure-bred people is camped on the verge of extinction. Not only must these characters represent the threat to their own lifestyle, but they come to be associated with a general sense of the loss of folk traditions. The novel's Sinfi Lovell displays some skill at playing 'a peculiar obsolete Welsh instrument called a crwth', a detail that symbolises this association. That practically the last person alive who can play the crwth, synecdochically representing Welsh folk culture, should also belong to a

threatened race multiplies the tragedy of modernity (and the Gypsies' paralysis in the face of this force for change). Even Sinfi's physical appearance suggests a time now past, as her hair is 'plaited in the *old-fashioned Gypsy way*'.

Sinfi is, undoubtedly, set up as a figure in opposition to the white, educated male, but Henry Aylwin's perspective on her unlearned subjectivity does not mark her as inferior:

In knowledge of nature as a sublime consciousness, in knowledge of the human heart, Sinfi was far more learned than I. And believing as I did that education will in the twentieth century consist of unlearning, of unlading the mind of the trash previously called knowledge, I could not help feeling that Sinfi was far more advanced, far more in harmony than I could hope to be with the new morning of Life of which we are just beginning to see the streaks of dawn.<sup>49</sup>

Sinfi's difference to Aylwin is related to what he sees as an imminent social change, but unlike Leland's view, it is not to be a 'quiet, solemn sunset' where the Gypsies are concerned, but a new dawn, a world where harmony with nature and intuition are worth more than facts and knowledge as it is traditionally understood. Does this mean, then, that Watts-Dunton's description of the Gypsies circumnavigates the mourning so evident in Leland's work? Does the future hold out a hope that negates the tragic extinction of the Gypsy? The answer is no; throughout the novel, the Gypsies are hopelessly infantilized and imperilled by the civilized world that overtakes them. In addition, the character of Henry Aylwin struggles between the draw of superstition in which his Gypsy friends believe, and the rigour of science and logic. The narrative's conclusion finds that his romantic vision of the coming twentieth century is, in fact, a false dawn. Racial pedigree, class, and education as an apparatus by which class values are perpetuated still matter. Henry must marry his childhood sweetheart, the village girl, Winifred (cured from a trauma-induced illness by the miracles of modern medicine) and Sinfi, a potential lover, must, metaphorically, sacrifice herself at the alter of this more appropriate match. Aylwin's apparently Gypsy-led sublime utopia proves to be a daydream from which he is all too happy to wake and return to a life where the *gorgio* might 'know' the Gypsy in a

way that, far from making Sinfi seem advanced, leaves her far behind. Sinfi is given a voice in *Aylwin*, but what her speech *means* is controlled by the narrator, Henry. He speaks poetically for her about her own future, her dialect being deficient to describe it even when the outlook about which he pronounces seems to promote her style of speech.

In the oeuvre of the Romany Ryes, however, there is not just a silencing of the Gypsies; there are also curious moments of silence *about* Gypsies. In Groome's *Kriegspiel*, Charles Glemham struggles to enunciate the truth about his dead wife, Ercilla. 'She was a — foreigner', he explains, 'she wasn't, wasn't — not like an English girl, you know'. Similarly, in G.J. Whyte-Melville's 1879 novel, *Black But Comely*, dark, Gypsy-born Jane Lee puts a rumour about that 'she was a Hungarian, an Italian, a Moorish Spaniard'.<sup>50</sup> It is not her otherness that needs to be suppressed, but the specific horror of her existence as a Gypsy in polite society. As the Romany Ryes encounter the textual impossibility of conserving without destruction, so here the compulsion to name and know the Gypsy fails in its delivery.

In attempting to conserve their conception of the Gypsy, caught in the grip of archive fever, the Romany Ryes speak for him or her. They assume control of their subject, relegating the Gypsy to the role of silent, innocent child who has no power over the forces that threaten him or her with extinction. As the Ryes search for a lost time into which they might escape from the pressures of modern life, they construct a Gypsy who seems to be an anachronistic remainder, but one that surely cannot last for long. This fast-disappearing Gypsy is racially pure, unintellectual and simple; these traits are the reason for their demise and the excuse for their exoticization. The Ryes wish to restore a prior state, a return to the blissful ignorance of a pre-industrialised world and the retrieval of its unblemished emblems. However, this impulse is part, as Freud explains, of the death drive. The coexistence of conservation and death in the Romany Ryes' work is no ironic coincidence: the one is implicated in the other. The fact that these writers propose that the only future for

the true, pure Gypsy lies in the publication of the Ryes' books, in their reimpression, is what sets the Gypsy up as a victim under threat from modernity. The archive of proleptic elegies anticipates and enacts destruction because the very need for an archive presupposes that the Gypsy as he or she currently exists might be forgotten.

In his autobiographical travelogue, *In Gipsy Tents*, Groome attempts to distance his recollections of Gypsy life from the romantic embellishments of his contemporaries, by claiming that 'his' Gypsies are genuine:

[His] Gipsy women are not the Gipsy women of the theatre; they do not wear short red petticoats, worked at the bottom with black cabalistic signs, still less silk stockings or antique sandals on their feet, or turbans on their heads.

Groome's Gypsies, by contrast (or so he claims), are indicated by the 'sight of the thin blue smoke, curling mysteriously among the green boughs'. Their eyes, typically, have 'a veiled fire peculiar to the race, a sort of filmy languor that blazes up with passion but which, even while unexcited, exerts still a strange, serpent-like power of latent fascination'.<sup>51</sup> Like references to the eyes, descriptions of campfires are ubiquitous in writing about British Gypsies in this period. For the authors, it stands for the camp as a whole, evoking a curious outside-domestic in the wake of social changes where the meanings of hearth and home were altering. The lorists seem to have found a certain orientation with a people moving from place to place, in the midst of what Nicholas Saul calls, in his dissection of contemporary representations of Gypsies in Germany 'unstoppably disorientating progress'. This image of the fire does more than point to a peripatetic homeliness, however; it refers to the possibility of extinguishing it. Saul also quotes and comments on the words of Carl von Heister from 1842: the Gypsies 'are now poetic because they represent the last picturesque relics of another age in today's prosaic epoch of steam and iron'.<sup>52</sup> As a way of life defined by a campfire is apparently overtaken by one powered by a furnace, the flame at the centre of the Gypsy camp is snuffed out.<sup>53</sup> Anticipating Leland, Heister wrote: '*Man muß sich beeilen, solcher Bilder als Gegenwärtiges fest zu halten, da sie*



*nur zu bald erlöschen und der Vergangenheit angehören werden*’; one must hurry to hold on to such images [of Gypsies] as in the present, as they will too soon be extinguished and become part of the past. Across Europe, then, the image of extinction was associated in the nineteenth century, albeit obliquely, with the campfire, itself a signifier of Gypsy life. My contention here is that the capturing of such images for a future in which the referent is presumed not to exist involves a textual-archival politics evident in structure, content and effect.

The lorists were not completely disingenuous about their role as outsider scribes, either: Watts-Dunton adds that ‘a gipsy hates to be watched’, something he considers ‘excessive delicacy’. The lorists aim to make known (sometimes overtly poetically and at other times denying partiality) the Gypsies’ language, physical appearance, emotions, tent-life and folklore. Everything about the Gypsy must be displayed for *gorgio* eyes, as they slip (in Leland’s words) ‘like the wren in and out of the shadow of the Unknown’. His project is to bring the Gypsy out of the shadows and in to the realm of Western knowledge. Leland does not think it ‘worth while’ to explain to the Gypsies that ‘their ancestors, centuries ago, left India’. As he elaborates, ‘I knew my friends, and they did not know me’.<sup>54</sup> To partly answer Derrida’s question in *Mal d’Archive*, Leland and his colleagues take responsibility for the institution of the Gypsy archive and find no need to consult the people themselves. A responsibility also now lies with the reader to assess, as this article seeks to, the claims of this feverish archive.

After much persuasion, Groome published his ‘Gypsy novel’ — a self-conscious contribution to the lorists’ archive of Gypsy material — *Kriegspiel*. He dedicated the work to Watts-Dunton. It was disastrously unpopular, and this cannot be entirely blamed on the ignorance of reviewers (though Groome would have it that way). For most of its length, the novel is exciting and engaging. It contains everything one could ask of a Victorian plot: the delusional anti-hero Watson with his deaf-mute ‘blackamoor’ servant and a fetish for gadgets; questions about the viability of

hypnotism and mysticism; a hero who embodies the debate about the future of the English aristocracy. There are even some strong female characters (although, inevitably, they do not end well). However, the last portion of the novel is almost unreadable, losing its pace and following so many diversions that the eventual *dénouement* seems irrelevant. Watts-Dunton felt that, despite the novel's accuracy and romance,

Groome had given no attention whatever to the structure of a story. Incidents of the most striking and original kind were introduced at the wrong places, and this made them interesting no longer.<sup>55</sup>

I do not claim that the reason Groome's novel fails is entirely because its Gypsy subject matter causes the archival text to decompose; there are also convincing practical reasons for the novel running out of steam, not least one of Groome's frequent illnesses causing him to lose interest in the project and refuse to make any amendments. However, both Katie Trumpener and Abi Bardi make convincing cases for the decisive and disruptive textual power of the fictional Gypsy. Trumpener points out that 'everywhere the Gypsies appear in nineteenth-century narratives, they begin to hold up ordinary life, inducing local amnesias or retrievals of cultural memory'.<sup>56</sup> It is true that the novel decidedly loses its way at the point in the narrative where Lionel Glemham escapes from the evil Dr. Watson with the help of a Gypsy, Sagul Stanley. As she takes charge, order crumbles. The future of the Glemham line has already been threatened by the fact that Lionel's mother, Glemham's deceased first wife who haunts the novel, was a Gypsy called Ercilla Beschalé. The very idea that Lionel may make a life with Sagul and 'revert' to Gypsyism is intolerable both to him and the narrative. For it to recover from this stumble, Sagul must be written out of its resolution and proof must be found that Lionel is a *gorgio* on at least his father's side and thus entitled to his inheritance. The Gypsies may not hold a stake in the future, and control over their own narrative is denied them.<sup>57</sup> The Gypsy is, indeed, 'reduced' to an effect of the text,<sup>58</sup> or in the language I am deploying here, she is an effect of the lorists' corpus of Gypsy texts, an archive that in the very act of preserving

Victorian Gypsy life destroys itself from the inside, causing an amnesia concerning the figure it wants to remember.

*Kriegspiel* is an example of a fictional narrative, but it is also a synecdoche of the lorists' oeuvre. As Glemham reflects on the circumstances in which he met Ercilla to his old friend, the Reverend Discipline, he stumbles, as alluded to earlier:

“Her people were —” (Glemham seemed to be groping strangely for his words) “were stopping there. Their place” (he made an odd dash at the word “place”) “was close by. And they carried me in. [...] She was a — foreigner”.

The narrative is full of such hiatuses, a symptom of the archiviolithic, the silent operation of the death drive as the lorists' conservative impulse to preserve takes effect. Groome's efforts to tell a Gypsy tale rely on many of the literary tropes associated with this Victorian figure: Ercilla is described in stereotypical terms, with outré outfits and a desire for freedom, her sexuality coded in her habit of riding bareback; once married and housed in bricks and mortar, she is described as being like a 'poor wild bird in a cage'.<sup>59</sup> Many saw the novel itself as a failure, but within the narrative Groome's inclusion of hesitations and omissions makes legible the problematic of preservation. If the novel is accepted as representative of what happens in the lorists' writing, we see the double bind. Like any discourse, ostensible coherence (for example, 'this discipline has observed that Gypsies are x, y and z') masks gaps and contradictions. Telling the story of the Gypsies for the future, as the lorists confidently believed they could, means putting on pretensions of unity (exemplified by Leland's annoyance about variations in the English spelling of Romani words and even the word 'Gypsy').<sup>60</sup> The narrative drive of *Kriegspiel*, its mysteries, accidents and intrigue, is similarly reliant on the embarrassed, malevolent or tragic covering over of things that cannot be said. It is fiction, but allows the reader to see how stories (including epistemological ones) may not be simply the rich tapestry they first seem, but rather a series of holes woven together. At the same time, this discursive bluff of coherence displaces alternative ways of recounting, silencing the Gypsy and making him or her the object of retrospective study rather

than a member of a living, changing culture. Most tellingly, in the text that I claim typifies this particular archive Ercilla the Gypsy appears dramatically yet posthumously. She is reinterred at the Glemham pile of Fressingham after her widower has come to terms with his past life, but when Charles disappears on the anniversary night of his wedding to his second wife, Dorothy Discipline, his preserved body is eventually uncovered in Ercilla's coffin. Her body has been replaced, quite literally, with that of the aristocratic white male. The tragedy of Ercilla and Glemham's marital misunderstandings, a tragedy on which much of the later narrative hangs, is predicated on the fact that Ercilla cannot convey her thoughts to her husband while he is away with his sick mother: she cannot write, cannot tell her own story, cannot take control of her own archive. She gets as far as writing: 'My own dear sweet heart i have some thing to tell you witch i no you will glad to hear that i am that way i tried to tell you but could not i think you will come back soon i hope that—'. Typically, at this point the letter breaks off with 'that unuttered hope'.<sup>61</sup> Ercilla's hope, her investment in the future, finds no place in the archive. Further, she dies giving birth, and thus does not see the Gypsy contribution she bequeaths to the Glemham line.

In the scene with the Reverend Discipline, Glemham compares himself to King Cophetua, a familiar literary image from Shakespeare and Tennyson and one that had been famously figured by the Pre-Raphaelite painter Edward Burne-Jones in 1884. This is just one of many ways in which the work and lives of this bohemian group of artists overlapped with the lorists' circle; Dante Gabriel Rossetti, for example, was introduced to Groome's wife Esmeralda Lock, painting her several times, and he is gently satirised as the painter D'Arcy in Watts-Dunton's *Aylwin*, perhaps voicing the unspoken romantic and erotic desires of the lorists themselves: when the Gypsy heroine Sinfi spends time being cared for by D'Arcy but out of her mind, he asks Aylwin: 'has it ever occurred to you how fascinating a beautiful young girl would be if she were as unconscious as a young animal?'.<sup>62</sup> Despite their ostentatious masculine gaze, it is unlikely that the lorists would have been quite so explicit in their

objectification of the female Gypsy publicly or in print (private letters are another matter); nonetheless, here in the lorist-created Gypsy archive is the silenced, non-sentient Gypsy. The second phase of Pre-Raphaelitism, from the 1860s to the 1890s, has much in common with Gypsy lorism beyond the personal connections and obvious aesthetic influences. Its chief protagonists were, according to Christopher Wood, 'high Victorian dreamers' who still aspired to many of the values of the Brotherhood in its earlier incarnation, such as fidelity to nature achieved through observation, thorough studies of one's object in situ and often out of doors and, above all, appeals to the rituals of a former or mystical age. Their romantic imagery coupled with a fervour for what they saw as the truth of their work bring them incredibly close to the coexistence of science and fantasy in Gypsy lorism.<sup>63</sup> This is the character of the lorists' representations; the archival *effect* is a consistent stalling in the story of the Victorian Gypsy as told by these men — both in individual works and when one assesses the archive as a body.

In contrast to *Kriegspiel*, Watts-Dunton's *Aylwin* was very popular, running to several editions (though Groome did not 'at heart care much for it', it seeming to him 'so un-real'. For the sake of apparent disciplinary unity, however, he praised it in a review).<sup>64</sup> In the traditional novel form, narrative usually offers diachronic possibilities to its characters, for example as part of a *Bildungsroman* plot. To whom are the diachronic possibilities offered in this novel? Predictably, a living future filled with possibility lies with *gorgios*. Aylwin and Winifred first promised to marry when Aylwin's elder brother was still alive, despite Winifred being of a lower class than Aylwin. When Aylwin unexpectedly inherits the family fortune, he must prove that the love-match is worth investment, not least to his mother, who represents conservative Victorian opinion. Taking the text literally, there are two reasons why Winifred sees options for development in her future, while the primary Gypsy character, Sinfi Lovell, does not. Following Dr. Mivart's medical advice, Sinfi takes on the burden of the increasingly severe fits suffered by Winifred. Winifred has been affected, whether

actually or psychosomatically, by a curse. Mivart, having studied at the Salpêtrière Hospital, decides that the best course of action is to transmit 'the seizure to a healthy patient by means of a powerful magnet'.<sup>65</sup> The debilitating periods of existing in a trance-like state are thus transferred from *gorgio* to Gypsy. Science holds her captive. A more magical explanation for the martyrdom of Sinfi persists, however. Sinfi's '*dukkeripen*', or destiny, dictates that she will fall in love with a *gorgio* who will break her heart. Her love for Philip Aylwin is doomed from the start. Sinfi represents the Gypsy in the lorists' nineteenth-century written archive, caught between scientific rationalism and exotic mystification. Neither form of representation, or archival strategy, allows her to live on dynamically.

Charles Godfrey Leland, Francis Hinds Groome and Theodore Watts Dunton were not Gypsies, though they assume in their writings that they know the people enough to pass as such. They write *for* the Gypsies from the perspective of white, educated men. They have the power to write and be published, the power to speak and be heard, a power denied the Gypsy. In their desire to archive Gypsy life before it died out, they did more than record: they *produced* the figure of the Gypsy: sexualised, romanticised, doomed. It is not outside forces that will quench the Gypsy flame as the lorists view it, however; it is their own archive fever. Their compulsive, repetitive and nostalgic desire to chase the authentic, original Gypsy (a figure that can be theirs alone as a rare breed of scholars interested, just in time, in a people about to be lost) silences their 'friends' and denies them investment in the future. Intriguingly, the rhetoric of loss lives on. In conversations and interviews with Roma, Gypsies and Travellers today, in amongst celebrations of better education and improvements in permanent and semi-permanent sites, laments for the 'old ways' and traditional travelling life are often heard. The tone has become something of a convention and the loss of the past is a familiar part of the Gypsy and Traveller self-identifying narrative (as it is with many identities). The difference between these expressions of loss and those written by the Gypsy lorists, is that organisations such

as Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month, publications such as *Travellers' Times*, personal histories such as Rosie Smith and Lindsay Marsh's *Old Ways, New Days*, and young people's enthusiastic and informal groups on social networking sites allow a people to construct and comment on their own archives. While the same drives necessarily rule the desire to archive as those of the lorists, the multiple (and necessarily contradictory) histories being written and voiced do not come to a tragic full stop. Attempts are rarely made to step outside of a Gypsy/Romani identity so that it may be ordered and recorded for the consumption of scholars or hobbyists with 'Gypsies' as their pet subject. Questions of authenticity are still pursued, but for the interest and pride of the people who are writing about themselves and their families, rather than for reasons of preserving a pure link to an uncontested past. There is still a politics of the archive, but it need no longer be one of domination by hegemonic voices. The very existence of the projects listed demonstrates that tales of extinction were greatly exaggerated. There may be no absolute cure for archive fever, but it need not be terminal.

#### Notes

1. Burton, *The Jew, the Gypsy and El Islam*, 186–7; Derrida, 'Prière d'insérer', in *Mal d'Archive*, 1. Throughout the article, the label 'Gypsy' is used where it (or 'Gipsy') would have been deployed by writers in the nineteenth century with the acknowledgement that it is now often used as a term of abuse and has been rejected by many Romani people. 'Romani' and 'Roma' are used to refer to twenty-first-century identifications with this ethnicity (the former being more commonly used in Britain and the latter when discussing wider Europe), and the Romani language. The exceptions to this are when original terms have been maintained within quotation marks.
2. Trumpener, 'The Time of the Gypsies'.

3. See, for example, 'Gypsy circus is next on France's expulsion list', *The Observer*, September 26, 2010.
4. See, for example, the 1908 letter from Augustus John to F. Scott Macfie quoted in Hancock, 'The "Gypsy" Stereotype and the Sexualization of Romani Women', 184. The preface to the first number of the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* comments that 'there lives not the Romany Rye that has not something new to impart to his fellow-students'.
5. Leland, *The Gypsies*, 16.
6. Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 36; and *Civilisation and its Discontents*, 119–122.
7. Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 11–12.
8. Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination*, 17–18.
9. Gagnier, 'Cultural Philanthropy, Gypsies, and Interdisciplinary Scholars', 15; 12. Revised as ch. 4 'The Unclassed and the Non-Christian Roots of Philanthropy' in *Individualism, Decadence and Globalization*.
10. Williams, *The Country and the City*, p. 96.
11. Examples can be found throughout the lorists' autobiographical writings, but see for instance Leland, *Memoirs*, II; 262.
12. Kenrick, *Gypsies: From the Ganges to the Thames*, 71.
13. Fraser, *The Gypsies*, 10-11; Freda Matthews, 'Gypsies in Local History'.
14. Mayall, *Gypsy Identities: 1500–2000*, 78; nn. 14–15; *Gypsy-travellers in Nineteenth-century Society*, 7; 5.
15. Sharp, *The Gypsy Christ*, 8–9.
16. *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, 1, no. 1 (1888), 1.
17. Behlmer, 'The Gypsy Problem in Victorian England', 236–7.
18. Leland, *Memoirs*, I, 6; II, 276.



19. Jones. 'Francis Hindes Groome: "Scholar Gypsy and Gypsy Scholar"'; Watts-Dunton, *Old Familiar Faces*, 290.
20. Leland, 'Review of the Archduke Josef's "Czigány Nelvatan"', *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* 1, no. 1 (1888), 48.
21. Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination*, 128.
22. Leland, *Gypsy Sorcery and Fortune Telling*, xii; Smart and Crofton, *The Dialect of the English Gypsies*, ix; Brantlinger, *Dark Vanishings*, 1; 3; Knox, *The Races of Men*, 157.
23. Smith, 'Arabs of Europe', 15.
24. See, for an example of this term in academic assessments of representations of Gypsies, Dearing, 'Painting the Other Within'. For the construction of Gypsies as others, historically and more recently, see Bhopal and Myers, *Insiders, Outsides and Others: Gypsies and Identity*. For more detail on the subordinate position historically occupied by Gypsies in Britain, see Mayall, *Gypsy-travellers and Gypsy Identities*.
25. Brantlinger, *Dark Vanishings*, 3; Pennell, *Charles Godfrey Leland: A Biography*, II; 146.
26. See, for example, Mayall's descriptions of the effect of the various Pedlars Acts, the 1876 Commons Act, the 1885 Housing of the Working Classes Act and the 1889 Local Government Act in *Gypsy-travellers in Nineteenth-century Society*; Leland, *Gypsies*, iii.
27. Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination*, 45.
28. Leland, *Gypsies*, 13.
29. Leland, *Memoirs*, I, 262.
30. Arnold, 'The Scholar-Gipsy', I. 224.
31. Arnold, 'On the Study of Celtic Literature', 297-8; 317; 392.
32. Leland, *Gypsy Sorcery and Fortune-telling*, x; original emphasis.

33. See Anderson, 'Victorian high society and social duty' for more detail on the HAIA.
34. Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 3; original emphasis.
35. Leland, *The Gypsies*, 13; Derrida, *Archive Fever*, p. 62 and, regarding ghosts, throughout.
36. Leland, *Gypsies*, p. 12.
37. Brantlinger, *Dark Vanishings*, 66.
38. Leland, *The Gypsies*, 12.
39. Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination*, 68–9.
40. Watts-Dunton, *The Coming of Love*, vii.
41. Watts-Dunton, *Aylwin*, 248.
42. Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 11–12.
43. Borrow, *The Romany Rye*, 75.
44. Pennell, *Charles Godfrey Leland*, II, 148–9. Leland, however, assured readers of *The English Gypsies and their Language* that 'I may hold myself fully acquitted from the charge of having acquired and published anything which my Gipsy friends would not have had made known to the public', vi.
45. Groome, *Kriegspiel: The War Game*, 282.
46. Maxwell, 'Theodore Watts-Dunton's 'Aylwin' (1898) and the Reduplications of Romanticism', 1.
47. Watts-Dunton, *Aylwin*, 35; 29; 30; 378; 174; 4.
48. Leland, *Gypsy Sorcery*, 2.
49. Watts-Dunton, *Aylwin*, 93; 141, emphasis added; 255.
50. Groome, *Kriegspiel*, 53–54; Whyte-Melville, *Black But Comely*, II; 69.
51. Groome, *In Gipsy Tents*, (Edinburgh: Nimmo, 1880), 322–329.
52. Saul, *Gypsies and Orientalism in German Literature and Anthropology of the Long Nineteenth Century*, 68; 8.

53. Implicit in any analysis of this kind is a recognition of the horrifying ends to which furnaces were put by the Nazis a century after von Heister wrote.

54. Watts-Dunton, *Old Familiar Faces*, 27; Leland, *Gypsy Sorcery*, 2; Leland, *English Gipsies*, 25; *Gypsies*, 255.

55. Watts-Dunton, *Old Familiar Faces*, 282–3.

56. Trumpener, 'Time of the Gypsies', 364. See also Bardi, *The Gypsy as Trope in Victorian and Modern British Literature*.

57. The resolution of the story is not quite as complete as my synopsis suggests, for the woman to whom Glemham hopes to return once he proves his respectable identity has, in his absence, become a nun and refuses to break her vows.

58. Trumpener, 'Time of the Gypsies', 364.

59. Groome, *Kriegspiel*, 53; 31.

60. Pennell, *Charles Godfrey Leland*, II, 124; 200.

61. Groome, *Kriegspiel*, 33.

62. Watts-Dunton, *Aylwin*, 217.

63. Wood, *The Pre-Raphaelites*, 95; Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination*, 143.

64. Letter to John Sampson, December 4, 1898. Liverpool University Library, Gypsy Lore Society Collection.

65. Watts-Dunton, *Aylwin*, 464.

## References

- Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, 1, no. 1, (1888).
- Anderson, Anne. 'Victorian High Society and Social Duty: The Promotion of "Recreative Learning and Voluntary Teaching."' *History of Education*, 31, no. 4 (2002).
- Arnold, Matthew. *The Poems of Matthew Arnold*. Ed. Kenneth Allott. London: Longmans, 1965.
- . *Lectures and Essays in Criticism*. Ed. R.H. Super. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1990.
- Bardi, Abigail. *The Gypsy as Trope in Victorian and Modern British Literature*. PhD Diss. University of Maryland, College Park, 2007.
- Behlmer, George K. 'The Gypsy Problem in Victorian England.' *Victorian Studies*, 28, no. 2 (1985).
- Bhopal, Kalwant and Martin Myers. *Insiders, Outsides and Others: Gypsies and Identity*. Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2008.
- Borrow, George. *The Romany Rye*. London: Dent, 1961.
- Brantlinger, Patrick. *Dark Vanishings: Discourse on the Extinction of Primitive Races, 1800–1930*. Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2003.
- Burton, Richard. *The Jew, the Gypsy and El Islam*. Chicago and New York: Stone, 1898.
- Dearing, Stewart. 'Painting the Other Within: Gypsies According to the Bohemian Artist in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries.' *Romani Studies*, 20, no. 2 (2010).
- Derrida, Jacques. *Mal d'Archive*. Paris: Galilée, 1995.
- . *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. Trans. Eric Prenowitz. Chicago, IL and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998.
- Fraser, Angus. *The Gypsies*. Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1994.

- Freud, Sigmund. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. London: Hogarth, 1955, repr. 1978.
- . *Civilisation and its Discontents*. London: Hogarth, 1961, repr. 1978.
- Gagnier, Regenia, 'Cultural Philanthropy, Gypsies, and Interdisciplinary Scholars: Dream of a Common Language.' *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 1 (2005).
- . *Individualism, Decadence and Globalization: On the Relationship of Part to Whole, 1859–1920*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
- Groome, Francis Hindes. *In Gipsy Tents*. Edinburgh: Nimmo, 1880.
- . *Kriegspiel: The War Game*. London, New York and Melbourne: Ward, Lock and Bowden, 1896.
- Hancock, Ian. 'The "Gypsy" Stereotype and the Sexualization of Romani Women.' In *"Gypsies" in European Literature and Culture*. Ed. Valentina Glajar and Domnica Radulescu. Studies in European Culture and History. New York and Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.
- Jones, Michael Owen. 'Francis Hindes Groome: "Scholar Gypsy and Gypsy Scholar."' *The Journal of American Folklore*, 80, no. 315 (1967).
- Kenrick, Donald. *Gypsies: From the Ganges to the Thames*. Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2004.
- Knox, Robert. *The Races of Men: A Philosophical Enquiry into the Influence of Race Over the Destinies of Nations*. 2nd ed. London: Renshaw, 1862.
- Leland, Charles Godfrey. *The Gypsies*. London: Trübner, 1882.
- . 'Review of the Archduke Josef's "Czigány Nelvatan."' *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, 1, no. 1 (1888).
- . *Gypsy Sorcery and Fortune Telling*. London: Unwin, 1891.
- . *Memoirs*, 2 vols. London: Heinemann, 1893.
- . *The English Gypsies and their Language*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1893.

- Matthews, Freda. 'Gypsies in Local History'.  
<http://www.grtleeds.co.uk/History/Leeds.html>.
- Maxwell, Catherine. 'Theodore Watts-Dunton's 'Aylwin' (1898) and the Reduplications of Romanticism.' *Yearbook of English Studies*, 37, no. 1 (2007).
- Mayall, David. *Gypsy Identities: 1500–2000: From Egipcians and Moon-men to the Ethnic Romany* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004).
- . *Gypsy-travellers in Nineteenth-century Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.
- Nord, Deborah Epstein. *Gypsies and the British Imagination, 1807–1930*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.
- Pennell, Elizabeth Robins. *Charles Godfrey Leland: A Biography*. 2 vols. London: Constable, 1906.
- Saul, Nicholas. *Gypsies and Orientalism in German Literature and Anthropology of the Long Nineteenth Century*. London: MHRA and Maney, 2007.
- Sharp, William. *The Gypsy Christ and Other Tales*. Chicago, IL: Stone and Kimball, 1895.
- Smart, B.C. and H. T. Crofton. *The Dialect of the English Gypsies*. 2nd edn. London: Asher, 1875.
- Smith, Horace. 'Arabs of Europe.' In *The Wind on the Heath: A Gypsy Anthology*. Ed. John Sampson. London: Chatto and Windus, 1930.
- Trumpener, Katie. 'The Time of the Gypsies: A "People without History" in the Narratives of the West.' *Critical Inquiry*, 18, no. 4, Identities (1992).
- Watts-Dunton, Theodore. *The Coming of Love: Rhona Boswell's Story and Other Poems*. London: John Lane, 1907.
- . *Old Familiar Faces*. London: Jenkins, 1916.
- Whyte-Melville, G.J. *Black But Comely or, The Adventures of Jane Lee*. 3 vols. London: Chapman and Hall, 1879.
- Williams, Raymond. *The Country and the City*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1973.

Wood, Christopher. *The Pre-Raphaelites*. London: Seven Dials, 2000.

not version of record