











# **‘Tales in a Tent’: John Sampson’s Representation of Romanies**

by

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A thesis submitted to the

School of Graduate Studies

in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Folklore / Faculty of Arts

Memorial University of Newfoundland

August, 2011

St. John’s, Newfoundland and Labrador

## Abstract

This analysis of an article published in 1892 examines the production of academic knowledge about Romanies in late nineteenth century Britain. This thesis investigates three aspects which arise from John Sampson's description of fieldwork: 1. the emergence and hegemonic dominance of the Gypsy Lore Society which published the article in its journal *The Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*; 2. John Sampson's performance of an idealized Romani Rai and its impact upon his research methods; 3. what the text itself reveals about the nature of interactions between Romani Rais and Romanies, with a particular focus upon how items of folklore and language are coded to convey a variety of meanings to different audiences. From this discussion, this thesis concludes that the performance of the Romani Rai was an essential motivator for Sampson's academic activities and, further, that this performance diminished the quality and content of the research collected.

## Acknowledgments

I'd like to mention Dr. Martin Lovelace, whose insight and flair for editing improved this work immeasurably. Thank you for inspiring this thesis--and for your continuing support when I decided to take this project in a different direction than expected.



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1. "Tales In a Tent" by John Sampson

## Chapter One: Introduction

### 1.1 In which I attempt to explain what I am doing

Whenever some curious person asked about the subject of this thesis--at a party of graduate students or during a late night phone call with a friend--I would reply with variations of the following: I am writing about the production of academic knowledge about the Romanies since the late nineteenth century. In response, I might receive a blank stare or someone might ask after a pause, 'about what?' Each time, I knew how to clear up the confusion. All I had to do was throw out one word: 'gypsies.' Then the curious person understood--or thought he or she did. The word 'gypsies,' once spoken, evoked the multitude of portrayals of Romanies with which we are all familiar and which often represent our closest associations with the people upon whom we still project our escapist fantasies and fears of the unknown. I am certain you can immediately bring to mind at least one or two of the portrayals to which I am referring: the children's books and novels, the poems and ballads, the films and television programs which include a mysterious and elusive dark-skinned character as a stereotyped trope. Remarkably, the 'gypsy' stereotype has survived virtually unchanged for centuries; within these stereotypes reside the ghosts of the scholarly men and women who are at the centre of this thesis, men and women who organized in the late nineteenth century to amplify the reach and impact of their ideas and were so successful in their endeavor that the Romani identities portrayed in their work remain dominant in the public imagination today.

I hated to do it; I hated to use the word 'gypsy' to explain the work in which I was engaged. Yet, how many times, in the years and months before I began this avenue of research, did I excuse the many times my family and I have moved by declaring with a shrug of a shoulder that 'we're gypsies.' Furthermore, it was the romance of 'gypsy' which urged me to take up this line of study. I still recall the 'thrill' I felt in class that day when my professor commented that a story we were analyzing was probably a 'gypsy' tale and cited as a clue its unusually detailed descriptions of traveling. I do not attribute to that professor my own misconceptions at the time--the ideas I brought to the word 'gypsy' were informed by the very stereotypes which are referred to above and analyzed in some detail throughout this thesis--but I do credit his chance comment with leading me down this road. Though it was the romantic 'gypsy' which brought me here, it is the reality of Romani lives and Romani activism which informs this thesis and which continues to hold my attention.

Because I hated to use the word 'gypsy' in any explanation involving the thesis I was writing I would sometimes elaborate upon that simple explanation, depending upon who I was talking to. I might explain that to many Romanies, particularly Romani knowledge producers or activists, the word 'gypsy' was pejorative. I might even go on to say that to many Roma, the use of the word 'gypsy' was as offensive as the use of the word 'Indian' is to some aboriginal peoples and activists. Interestingly, both words came about because of erroneous conclusions about each group's country of origin, 'gypsy' being a corruption of Egyptian, the country from which they were believed to have



migrated. The conversation rarely went further than that. For most people it was enough of an ontological (or paradigm) shift to understand that the ‘gypsies’ of storybooks were actually Romanies with complex histories, identities, and lives outside the movies and books in which they most visibly appeared.

But, when talking with one or two curious people, I mentioned the newspaper articles I had noticed since choosing my thesis subject, the news stories which demonstrated the continuing relevance of a thesis focused upon the deconstruction of Romani identities formed in the last two centuries. The stereotyped identities I analyse in my thesis are still providing an excuse for racism and exclusion today, I explained.

I pointed to stories such as the Reuters article which appeared in *Time* magazine in the fall of 2010 about France’s expulsion of a portion of its Romani population, beginning with the words “[t]hey are the underclass, the outcasts.”<sup>1</sup> Ironically, the story noted that this was occurring five years into EU’s Decade of Roma Inclusion campaign. The BBC story about the same event notes that expulsions have been occurring all over Europe and quotes The European Roma Rights Centre as saying that the expulsions, “reinforce discriminatory perceptions about Roma and travelers and inflames public opinion against them.”<sup>2</sup> Canada’s participation in racism against Roma people was noted in a story in the *Nanaimo Daily News* which quoted the executive director of the Roma Community Centre as saying “[e]verybody is yelling and screaming at France, but Canada is doing

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<sup>1</sup> Cendrowicz, Leo, “E.U. Tries to Stop France’s Crackdown on Gypsies,” *Time.com*, September 10, 2010, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2017508,00.html>

<sup>2</sup> “Q&A: France Roma expulsions,” *BBC News*, October 19, 2010, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-11027288>

exactly the same thing. The difference is Canada is doing it in a legal and nicer way.”<sup>3</sup> His comments were made in response to then immigration minister Jason Kenney’s decision to ‘crackdown’ on Roma refugee claimants from the Czech Republic, reducing the acceptance rate of claims from over eighty per cent to almost zero.

I had many challenging conversations about my thesis. Each conversation only further convinced me of the contemporary necessity of the project of identity deconstruction, which, in my thesis, takes the form of an analysis of the production of knowledge about Romanies. This thesis, in its own small way, seeks to uncover the roots of some of these maligned identities, and, through this deconstruction, to make room for new definitions of Romani identity.

## 1.2 What exactly is this project and how does it relate to folklore?

While combing through microfilm editions of *The Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* (hereafter *JGLS*) in the archives in the basement of Memorial University, I encountered a text by one of the founders of the Gypsy Lore Society (GLS), University of Liverpool librarian, linguist and gypsologist John Sampson (1862-1931). I was immediately struck both by Sampson’s skill with words and how much Sampson revealed about his interpretations of the work in which he was engaged and his reflections upon his

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<sup>3</sup> Syed Badiuzzaman, “Roma asylum seekers give up on Canada,” *Daily News*, November 3, 2010, <http://www2.canada.com/nanaimodailynews/news/story.html?id=3772463>

performance of the role of 'Romani Rai'<sup>4</sup> in the course of his research. From that moment on, this text, titled "Tales in a Tent," became my focus.

The thirteen-page text offers a description of an evening of fieldwork, during which Sampson participates in an informal storytelling performance event. Published in 1892, the text briefly describes the journey to the Romani campsite, reflects upon the role of the Rai, recounts portions of conversation, narrates tales that were shared, and relates the less-than-ideal manner in which the evening came to an end. The text offers a glimpse into the production of knowledge about Romanies and gives prominence to the Romani Rai performance, which was an essential part of the work of gypsilogists associated with the GLS.

This thesis uses "Tales in a Tent" as a vehicle through which to prove that the Romani Rai performance was part of the John Sampson's motivation for engaging in research among Romanies, and, further, that this performance interfered with the quality and objectivity of the research collected.

Sampson's research was part of a wider historical context in the late nineteenth century, during which "[t]he study of folklore was formulated by antiquarian scholars, who, in the main, came from the lower middle class" (Abrahams 1993, 3). Gypsilogists and folklorists were not entirely one and the same; not only were their objects of study different--folklorists studying mainly rural and/or peasant groups and rarely, if ever, taking interest in Romanies--but the approach of each discipline to research was also

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<sup>4</sup> The term 'Romani Rai', or simply 'Rai,' refers to a gypsilogist who made claims to acceptance among the Romani population and who shared a particular set of beliefs about Romani culture. Its meaning is discussed in detail in chapter three.

slightly different, the performance of the 'Romani Rai' identity on the part of the researcher being the major difference identified and analysed in this thesis. However, both disciplines sprung from the 'invention' of social science research and the application of objective science to the study of how the past manifested itself in the ways of mainly rural people.

Contemporary definitions of folklore have shifted so much since the discipline began that, "[i]t has long been a cliché that there are more definitions of folklore than there are folklorists" (Dorson 1983, xi). However, folkloristic boundaries today are less likely to be framed by the subject/object studied than by the researcher's interpretive framework.

Antiquarian folklorist William Thoms wrote in the 1846 edition of *The Athenaeum* that folklore was "the generic term under which are included traditional institutions, beliefs, art, customs, stories, songs, sayings, and the like current among backward peoples or retained by the less cultured classes of more advanced peoples" (Dorson 1983, xi). Thoms makes three assumptions that were common to folklore and to gypsology in the late nineteenth century: that folk were different from the 'civilized' folklorists who studied them; that items of folklore studied were survivals from the past and not relevant to modern society; and, that folklore was orally transmitted. While the study of Romani folktales would fit within Thoms' definition, this current study of the production of academic knowledge does not.

Folklore has changed in response to contemporary theoretical forces. It is unacceptable today to (openly) define a group of people as less-civilized than another group and to conduct research for the purpose of reinforcing that assumption; the idea that ballads and folktales are survivals from the past is mentioned today only as part of folklore's history; the once-clear boundaries between oral and written have been blurred to such an extent--and shown to interact so much--that it no longer makes sense to exclude the written from modern definitions of folklore. From its relatively narrow origins, the discipline of folklore now studies, "[a]ny group of people whatsoever who share at least one common factor" (Dundes 1965, 2). Expressive culture, so often used in conjunction with folklore (Feintuch 2003), is no longer limited to certain activities, but is acknowledged to embrace all of human behavior. Modern folklore has been identified as the study of

human interactions on all levels of society, be the participants illiterate, unlettered, or highly educated. Folklorists today are concerned with creations that result from the relationships of human beings within a particular cultural matrix. Folklorists today recognize that the same sort of forces operate in urban, educated societies as in rural, isolated, unlettered societies. (Dorson 1983, xii)

Within this definition the focus shifts from the folklore text or object being studied, to the group of people in which this piece of folklore is an actor, reflecting upon themes such as identity and culture. The current study rests easily within this wider definition, the group studied being that of gypsologists, and the expressive behavior being the production of academic knowledge, in particular the production of a fieldwork description.



In their 2004 book *Identity and Everyday Life*, ethnomusicologist Harris M. Berger and folklorist Giovanna P. Del Negro argue that contemporary folklore research is defined by conceptions of everyday and identity. These two concepts, they argue, have fluid, undefinable boundaries which are best understood as interpretive frameworks.

Recognizing that “the interpretation of everydayness is always ideologically construed and locked in a dialectic with various kinds of opposites” (Berger and Del Negro 2004, 13), they argue for a definition of everyday which depends upon the context of the analysis. Within the scope of the study attempted here, more restrictive definitions of everyday would exempt from its domain this study of a privileged class of educated researchers. But, Berger and Del Negro’s contextual definition is valuable not only in defining the production of academic knowledge as everyday in the context of the group of people for whom this was indeed an everyday part of their work, but also in that their definition provides insight into the ideological factors which mark the difference between the everyday and the special. They write: “Even the most unique events in the life of an individual or a society can be taken as everyday if properly contextualized” (Berger and Del Negro 2004, 11).

Here, Sampson’s fieldwork description is read as a textual performance for a particular group that is everyday in nature within the context of the common expressive practices of that particular group. Reading Sampson’s piece dually as a text and as a performance follows the example of contemporary folklorists who “treat texts as performances and performances as texts, blurring the distinctions between them and

extending the meaning of *text* to cover any object of interpretation. . . . Performances cannot be reduced to texts; rather, performances are texts" (Feintuch 2003, 79-80). Within such a framework, this study will avoid re-making such oppositional categories as high versus low cultures and educated elite versus uneducated lower classes, but will analyse Sampson's text to uncover the performance of everyday "value systems embedded in practice" (Berger and Del Negro 2004, 19).

Folklore has long been understood as an expression of identity (Berger and Del Negro 2004), and within this framework emerges the issue of how to "discuss identity without invoking deep stereotyping of those designated as stranger or enemy" (Feintuch 2003, 199). Berger and Del Negro seek to remove identity from the passivity implied in the above definition and to instead define identity as an interpretive framework employed by social science researchers—folklorists in particular. Within this framework, the study of identity avoids (as much as possible) the dangers of essentialism and moves instead toward a more critical domain in which both the construction of identity discourses and their experiences in social interaction are analysed. These ideas are in line with the goals of this study in which the chosen text will be analysed for three factors relating to identity: one, the construction of identity discourses about Roma; two, how these identity discourses ultimately reveal much more about the prejudices of their creators than about the Romanies they purport to define; and three, how the performance of the Romani Rai identity affects the quality and objectivity of research.

Why is it important to deconstruct the work of a group of educated men and women who became fascinated with a romantic interpretation of a group of people who lived on the margins of British society? A select few of these men and women created the GLS and its companion journal, the *JGLS*, in 1888, and together these two academic outlets acted as the dominant disseminator of knowledge about the Romanies in their time. Hence, studies which examine how this body of knowledge was produced are fundamental to deconstructing the stereotypes which resulted and, eventually, to altering the dominant discourses so that they speak, if it is possible, a truth which does not harm.

“Tales in a Tent” is representative of the greater body of work produced by the Victorian gypsilogists. As a personal description of fieldwork, this article details the production of academic knowledge through the research methods of a well-known and highly respected gypsilogist. Within this text is found the everyday work of an academic laboring on the edges of the burgeoning new science of folklore. The relatively informal style in which the text is written speaks to the ubiquity of the representations and ideas found within. Sampson is neither trying to make any particular academic argument about the Romanies, nor does the text seem particularly labored-over, although Sampson’s skill with words is obvious. Sampson’s main intention in this piece seems to be to present an amusing anecdote, although secondary motivations, such the display of an exceptional level of acceptance within Romani circles, undoubtedly come into play. In a meandering and unselfconscious stream of thought, this single text contains a myriad of evocative descriptions, representational decisions and style choices, all of which reflect common

conceptions of Romani identity at the time, which, for the most part, continue to dominate current perceptions of Romani people today. It follows then, that, although my focus is restricted, there is much to pick over in those thirteen pages; much more, in fact, than I can take up in a single thesis of this length.

In his time, John Sampson was called the 'Rai of Rais.' His extensive knowledge and analysis of various branches of Romani languages shaped both the direction of research and popular conceptions of the Romanies: Sampson's philological research reinforced the contemporary theory of their Indian origins; Sampson believed, erroneously it turned out, that he had found the 'pure' Romani language. Sampson was essential in the creation of the GLS, and the *JGLS* was created, in part, to provide him a vehicle in which to publish his research. Sampson was central to the recruitment of GLS members, recruiting eminent British artist Augustus John (1878-1961), whose portraits of Romanies filled the pages of the *JGLS*, and British academic and long time editor of the *JGLS* Dora Yates (1879-1974) to the society, among others. Much admired by his fellow gypsologists, Sampson was close friends with the well-known writer and gypsologist Francis Hindes Groome (1851-1902). While folklorist Michael Owen Jones wrote an article in outlining the importance of the work of Francis Hindes Groome (1967), Sampson has not to date been the sole subject of an article or book. Sampson is, however, mentioned in Jones' 1967 text about Groome. Sampson also receives brief mention in Richard Dorson's *The British Folklorists* (1968). It is clear that while Groome's research methods were singled out as being the most 'scholarly' (Mayall 2004),

Sampson's methods, while clearly respected, are more representative of the group of gypsologists as a whole than are Groome's. Further, the chosen text by Sampson represents an unusually full description of an evening of fieldwork published in the *JGLS*. As such, the text by Sampson offers excellent ground upon which to build an analysis of the performance of the Romani Rai within the context of academic research.

### 1.3 Terminology: the words I choose to use and why

#### 1.3.1 'Gypsies' versus Romanies

Scholars of Romani studies have not yet reached widespread agreement regarding what to call Romanies who are the subjects of their studies, nor what to call themselves. Not all scholars discuss nomenclature choices in their texts, but more and more contemporary scholars are doing so.

Most often, the term 'gypsy' is still used by scholars today, either with a capital or a small 'g'. One reason for this default is that, as observed by Deborah Nord (2006) in her recent book about Roma portrayals in a wide range of historical literature, is that when quoting historical materials that are analysed today, it often seems simpler to use terminology consistent with that used in the quoted materials; switching back and forth between the terms through using historical quotes which employ the term 'gypsy' but using the term Roma oneself seems cumbersome, at first glance. In her introduction, Nord writes that although occasionally the word Romani is employed to refer to the language, and the word Romany to refer to the people, most often she uses the word "Gypsy":



even though it is a misnomer bestowed by non-Gypsies and has come to be understood as a term of opprobrium by many of the people it is used to describe. Because the word is used in most of the texts I am writing about, this simply makes my discussion of those works less confusing. (Nord 2006, 18)

While acknowledging the often pejorative nature of the term “gypsy” both inside and outside academia, Bhopal and Myers decided to use the term because “those groups we refer to and spoke to in our research choose to define themselves as such.... They also suggested that they would always be seen as Gypsies by society at large” (2008, 8). Moreover, while the negative connotations of the word “gypsy” were acknowledged, Bhopal and Myers found that those they worked with found some positive associations in that choice of self-identification. However, it must be acknowledged that the decision of the people involved in the study by Bhopal and Myers to identify themselves by the term ‘gypsy’ is not a decision shared by all.

In fact one of the foremost scholars of Romani studies, Ian Hancock, a Rom, now rejects the common use of the term ‘gypsy’ in his writing as a general term for his people, reserving the use of the term in discussions involving historical and contemporary stereotypes and/or racist representations of Romanies. Although much of his writing in previous years uses the term ‘Gypsy’ in many contexts, Hancock chooses to use “Romanies” and its grammatical variations, writing in one recent article that “[t]he general public is coming to understand that the literary ‘Gypsies’ (or more usually

'gypsies') are something quite different from the actual Romanies" (Glajar and Radulescu 2008, 189).

In a 1992 article analysing both historical and contemporary representations of 'Gypsy,' Katie Trumpener chose to use three different designations (possibly making the case regarding the confusion which can result from avoiding the use of the word 'gypsy'): Trumpener wrote "Gypsy" in quotation marks to denote Europeans who were dressed up as 'gypsies'; other cases of fictionalization (including literary) simply appeared as 'Gypsies' without the quotation marks; and when stressing the difference between such fictionalizations and the ethnic group, she employed Romani, while acknowledging it as a "homogenizing collective term" (Trumpener 1992, 847).

The many terms employed in various places have varying meanings and connotations, and many non-academic and academic "[r]eferences can be found to gypsies, Gypsies, Rom, Romany, Gypsy-travellers, Traveller-gypsies, and Travellers, without any explanation how or if these labels refer to differently defined groups" (Mayall 2004, 8). It is not within the scope of this thesis or this introduction to discover and explain the reasons between the different use of terminology, but it is important to acknowledge that these different terms refer to, if not exactly the same group of people, then relating branches of Romanies.

This thesis falls in with the work of Ken Lee, a self identified Rom and sociology professor. In an endnote to his 2000 article, Lee states simply that

'Gypsies' is a corruption of 'Egyptian', based on the erroneous belief that they originated in Egypt. As an exonym it is considered derogatory. The

appropriate ethnonyms, common to all Romani dialects are Rom (masculine singular), Romni (feminine singular), Roma (plural) and Romani (adjective); Romanes is the term used for the Romani dialect. The terms Romani people, or simply Romani or Romanies, are also used in English. Where possible I have used the appropriate ethnonyms. (Lee 2000, 149)

I follow Lee's lead for two reasons. The first is that it really is clumsy to switch from one term to another. But, because it is so widely acknowledged, in academic circles in particular, that the term 'gypsy' is derogatory and was created upon erroneous assumptions, I am reluctant to repeat that error in this thesis. Second, if a portion of this thesis seeks to use post and de-colonialist theories and to suggest that non-Romani academics should listen closely to the perspectives of Romani academics, then it follows that Ian Hancock's current usage of the term Romanies over 'gypsy' is the lead to follow. This is, in part, because, although some Roma do use 'gypsy' as a descriptive term, academia tends to err on the side of respect in its discourses about themselves as well as others. While other scholars have come to different conclusions about how to respectfully demonstrate both the knowledge of the word's origins and its pejorative connotations, I am most comfortable with the Rom/Romani/Romanies variations. This decision notes, as Nord did, that the "question of terminology is, to some degree, inseparable from the question of identity," and that the choice of terminology should be taken no more lightly than the analyses of identity in which the terminology appears.

### 1.3.2 Gypsiologist

The term gypsiologist in this thesis refers “to those who specifically have adopted and publicized the ethnographic perspective in carrying out their research on Gypsies” (Mayall 2000, 23), however I restrict its use to the historical sense, as explained below. Other terms for gypsiologists include: ‘lorist,’ ‘gypsylorist,’ ‘Tsiganologist,’ ‘Gypsy experts,’ ‘Romany Rais.’

In this thesis, the term gypsiologist will be employed to refer specifically to people engaged in the study of the Romani people during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. I use this term because this is a commonly-used term and one of the words which were popularly used at the time of the establishment of the GLS. For consistency, this thesis will use the term gypsiologist instead of the term gypsylorist, without expressing a preference for one or the other. When referring to the study of the Romani people in general, the term Romani studies will be employed, in order to signify three ideas: that research on this subject has been irrevocably changed in recent decades by critical analyses of the racism inherent in the work of the gypsiologists; that Romani writers and academics have expressed dissatisfaction with the often stereotypical associations of the term ‘gypsy’; and that the existing GLS in North America changed the name of its journal to *Romani Studies*. So, while the use of the word gypsiologists is “limited to a quite specific body of writing and analysis, ranging from the nineteenth

century lorists" (Mayall 2004, 23-24), the term is not used, as it is used by other scholars at times, including Mayall, to refer to "present members of the Gypsy Lore Society, and many contemporary researchers, writers and activists" (Mayall 2004, 24). The restriction of gypsologist to its historical sense is not meant to infer that racism and stereotyping is absent from contemporary scholarship in Romani studies; the definitional restriction is utilized to acknowledge the growing bodies of work by human rights activists and members of the Romani community and academics, which seek to overturn the racism employed, consciously or not, by early--and current--scholars of Romani studies.

## 1.4 Literature review

### 1.4.1 Introduction

Like the majority of students just beginning research for a thesis-length project, I often felt overwhelmed: there was so much to read; there were so many trips to the archive; there were so many e-mails back and forth between myself and Romani Studies scholars; there was so much I didn't know. The more I read on my chosen subject, the more convinced I was that my original topic (which focused upon a collection of folktales collected in the nineteenth century) had to shift somewhat in order to engage with the most up-to-date work that was available on the subject. This meant that I had to create a thesis about folklore-related research which relied, for the most part, on scholarly work that was not engaged with traditional folklore. This is not because scholars today are not engaged in folkloristic work involving Romanians. They are. Folklorist Donald Braid's

2002 book *Scottish Traveler Tales: Lives Shaped Through Stories* is a thorough and enjoyable exploration of the multiple ways stories are used to make meaning; anthropologist Stanley Brandes studied the folklore of Roma men in his book *Metaphors of Masculinity: Sex and Status in Andalusian Folklore (1980)*; anthropologist Carol Silverman (1995, 1996) wrote several excellent articles about her research with American Roma people, some of which focus upon narrative performance; and anthropologist Jelana Cvorovic (2006, 2009) has been publishing fascinating articles which analyze the meaning and use of narratives among Serbian Romani populations. Yet, these studies involved current research with existing Romani groups. My own topic involved analyzing work created in a different era. I could not extrapolate conclusions from work with Romani populations living today and apply that to a body of work about Romani people who lived in a different time and place; to do that would be to make the erroneous assumption that all Romanies everywhere and through time share a common culture and world view simply by being born Roma. So, I searched elsewhere for theoretical frameworks which would apply to an historical subject. This literature review summarizes what I found.

#### 1.4.2 Overview

I have to admit that I was delighted to discover that the search for relevant and current theoretical analyses led me straight to three ‘isms’—orientalism, decolonialism and gypsylorism. I had already completed a few assignments in a couple of different

folklore classes which explored these ideas in relation to other topics and had very much enjoyed what these critical theories offered. And, the production of knowledge about Romanies in the nineteenth century fit without any trouble into this theoretical framework.

This interdisciplinary theoretical framework deconstructs hegemonic discourses created by the colonizer about the 'other,' which have used the production of knowledge about the colonized to create power imbalances favoring the colonizer (Said, 1973). Recent work expands upon definitions of colonizer and colonized, notes the complexities of identity politics, and argues that new research can and should make room for research agendas created by the people who have been historically defined as 'other' (Deloria 2004, Hancock 2010, Le Bas and Acton 2010, Smith 1999). Ideas from this framework have been increasingly used by scholars who have taken the GLS, its gypsologists, or the construction of Romani identities over time as their subjects (Champagne 2002, Trumpener 1992).

This review follows two strands simultaneously: the examination of the relevant folkloric interpretations of gypsologists and gypsology; and the survey of the recent branches of study relevant to this project, which have as their aim the deconstruction of the discourses created by the work of the gypsologists.

#### 1.4.3 Identity

Much of the academic research involving Romani peoples since the late 1800s has been grounded in branches of philology, antiquarianism, anthropology, ethnology and folklore which seek to discover, explain and articulate Romany cultural phenomena. The quantity of research with this focus has had the effect of situating Romanies in an a-historical frame, or of creating “a picture of separateness and of a static and unchanging community” (Mayall 2004, 24). More recent academic inquiry is wider in scope, and so it can be said that the “last twenty years have seen a notable increase in the diversity of work on Gypsies being generated within a wide range of academic disciplines” (Bhopal and Myers 2008, 23). Yet, as late as 2002, one scholar noted that “[t]he late-Victorian birth of British gypsology has received little sustained scholarly analysis” (Champagne 2002, 126). Common to much of this research are two assumptions: the presence of a concrete and definable cultural difference between Roma and non-Roma; and that there is or was a single homogeneous culture shared by all Romani people (Bhopal and Myers 2008, Champagne 2002, Fraser, 2000). The definition of Roma has neither been clear nor consistent across research and disciplines, and so it follows, then, that the study of the Romani people and culture have been plagued by problems of identity, and that one of the



important academic debates ongoing is about how to define Romani people and Romani studies (Fraser 2000). One scholar observed wryly that:

Gypsy intellectuals and the linguists, sociologists, ethnographers, anthropologists, ethnomusicologists, folklorists and others now engaged in what is loosely labelled 'Gypsy studies' will for the most part continue to entertain the idea that, somewhere within the diverse range of populations sharing an itinerant lifestyle (past or present), there is a group, known variously as Gypsies, Roma, etc, with an identity and culture meriting consideration in their own right, however awkward to define they may be. (Fraser 2000, 29)

Academic debates regarding the definition and study of Romani people will be discussed in more detail, but are not central to the aim of my project. Identity in this project is positioned instead as both an interpretive framework and a discursive construct. At this point, it is enough to say academics have not yet agreed upon how to define who is, and who is not, a Rom.

#### 1.4.4 Folklore and gypsology

There exist to date very few folkloristic examinations of gypsology. Yet, to understand the context of the development of the GLS in 1888, it is worthwhile to understand the relationship between gypsology and the then-burgeoning science of folklore. Richard Dorson's *The British Folklorists* (1968) provides a detailed history of folklore studies in the nineteenth century. Dorson portrayed gypsologist Francis Hindes Groome as an important figure who was "the chief link between the Gypsy Lore and the

Folk-Lore societies” (1968, 271). Dorson paints a scene in which folklore, at the time of the GLS, was a discipline vying for acceptance as a science, whose practitioners were divided between evolutionist and diffusionist theories as a means of analysing folkloristic materials. Folklorists looking for evidence to support the diffusion of folklore found it in the work of the gypsologists, whose research sought to prove that Romani people were responsible for the spread of folktales across Europe. The work of gypsologists provided evidence that:

What Lang called survivals in German peasant tales were ‘living realities in Gypsy tents’ whose inmates sell their blood to the devil, see fairies, worship trees, renounce their favourite food, and cease to mention the name of a dead husband or father. Only sixteen years earlier an English gypsy girl had cut out the heart of a white pigeon and flung the live bird on the fire, to avenge herself on her Gentile lover. In gypsy tales these incidents were not relics of antiquity but daily occurrences. As for Lang’s objections against diffusion from India in historic times, Groome presented evidence to show that the gypsies accomplished that very feat. (Dorson 1968, 272)

Dorson’s survey of British folklorists reveals the broader context in which gypsology functioned in the late 1800’s, an era during which contesting theoretical frameworks were elaborated and debated, and new areas of science were developed.

In his introduction to his collection *Gypsy Folk Tales* (1899) Groome wrote that for twenty years, he had been “trying to interest folklorists in Gypsy folk-tales” (Groome 1899, [iii]). He went on to lament that this effort had been in vain, but pointed to the emergence of John Sampson as a leading gypsologist as a hopeful sign. (Groome also thanked Sampson for allowing Groome to make use of material from Sampson’s own

collection of folktales in order to complete the book.) Groome's small reference outlines the state of things: gypsologists remained somewhat remote from other folklorists, even while engaging in similar kinds of work.

Interest in the history of the 19th century gypsologists appeared in the 1960s as small subset within a wider interest among folklore researchers at the time in the history of folklore itself (De Caro 1976). Michael Owen Jones devoted an entire article to Groome. Jones (1967) evaluated the impact of Groome's work, discussed his place as a reluctant folklorist, and noted the scarcity of scholarship about Groome specifically. This scarcity has not been remedied to any great extent, and this scholarly gap pertains not only to Groome but to the original GLS gypsologists in general, and to John Sampson in particular. John Sampson was mentioned in Jones' article as a contributor to Groome's book, *Gypsy Folk Tales* (1899) and co-founder of the Gypsy Lore Society and its journal (1968, 271). Jones' intent was summed up in his last sentence, when he says that "[a]ll in all, it would be difficult to underestimate Groome's contribution to folklore scholarship" (Jones 1967, 78). Jones made a definitive link between Groome's work and the wider discipline of folklore, writing that "Groome indeed became the chief link between the Gypsy Lore and the Folk-Lore societies" (1968, 271), an observation which makes clear two facts at once: that folklore and gypsology were separate disciplines in and of themselves; and that they were closely related disciplines, influenced by similar academic influences and research methods popular at the time. Yet Jones admitted that:

Because his ideas often have been overlooked by folklorists and because Groome courted anonymity and loved the inconspicuous, thus making

documentation difficult, we have no formal statement of the factors stimulating his interest in folklore scholarship and of his relationship with the nineteenth-century British folklore movement. Nor have writers adequately described the intellectual legacy that influenced his notions. . . . (Jones 1967, 72)

#### 1.4.5 Critical approaches to gypsology

After the 1960s, scholars who analysed the historical origins of gypsology chose a different path. More scholars chose to consider the subject through a theoretical framework which was much more critical of its overall impact. A small but growing body of research has recognized the pivotal role played by the GLS and the *JGLS* in shaping the Romani discourses that remain to this day (Acton 1980, Champagne 2002, Fraser 2000, Glajar and Radulescu 2008, Hancock 1980, Hancock 2010, Lee 2000, Lee 2004, Mayall 2004, Trumpener 1992). There have been no extended studies which focus closely upon the construction of identity discourses through the work of one single gypsologist. (Dora Yates has been the subject of a handful of studies whose central aims were to explore her role as a celebrated member of the GLS. Groome and Augustus John have each been the subject of a biography, but neither study has this particular theoretical framework.) Certainly, John Sampson's work has not been analysed critically; this thesis is but one small step toward filling that gap.

Romani and non-Romani academics and human right activists first began to question the discursive construction of the Romani people imposed through the hegemonic dominance of the work of the gypsologists associated with the GLS in the

1970s. Sociologist Ken Lee noted that it was “not until the 1980’s that a more direct challenge to the discursive dominance of previous subject positionings of Romani people occurred” (2000, 147). Champagne offered a succinct summary of this shift in her dissertation:

Beginning in the 1970’s and 80’s, when the organized political agitation of Roma in Europe sparked scholarly works exposing the racism inherent in tendencies to identify the “true” Gypsy as romantic or villainous, historians, anthropologists, and sociologists of Britain’s Roma have touched on the GLS in the process of delineating histories of sedentary society’s perception of Gypsies. These accounts have focused on debunking the assumptions and stereotypes underpinning much of the GLS’ work--notably their politically limiting investment in the idea that some Gypsies were more “pure-blooded” (and worthy of protection) than others--as well as on their failure to act as political advocates for the Gypsies during a period of escalating legal assault against their way of life. (2002, 126)

It is important to note the early work of Romani scholars Thomas Acton and Ian Hancock in opening up a new avenue for Romani studies. In 1980 Hancock, a self-identified Rom, wrote ‘Talking Back,’ one of the first articles to critique the role of the GLS and its ‘gypsylorists’ in the control and dissemination of Romani discourses (Hancock 1980). (The essay is reprinted in his 2010 book *Danger! Educated Gypsy: Selected Essays*.) In the 1980 essay, Hancock asserted the need for Roma academics to study their own history if Roma are to adequately participate in creating and shaping the discourses of knowledge created about their own people. It is necessary, he said “if we are

to stop being gypsies and start being Rom” (Hancock 2010, 43). Of the gypsologists who have studied the Romanies over the years, Hancock wrote that:

It is difficult to know which group is the most damaging, those gadze who cling to the golden earrings stereotype, or those who know enough to acknowledge its falseness, but who nevertheless belittle or ignore what is happening outside of their own narrow, self-applied academic confines. Perhaps the latter, since they have more contact with the scholarly world and are therefore more frequently approached by other gadze as sources of information about the Rom. (Hancock 2010, 40)

To support his point, Hancock cited Romani studies professor Thomas Acton, whose work challenged conventional academic attitudes toward Romani studies in the 1970’s, most notably in *Gypsy Politics and Social Change* (1974). Although criticized for its non-academic approach, Acton’s book has remained important to Romani studies to this day. In a 1980 article, Acton, like Hancock, criticized the hegemonic nature of the work of the gypsologists who “remain the arcane priests of an oriental mystery quite removed from the thinking of educated Rom who are dismissed almost as a contradiction in terms” (Acton 1980, 3). And so, in the 1980s, began a body of scholarship whose intent it was to unpack the pictures and stories defining the Romani people as painted and written by the members of the GLS, past and present.

In subsequent decades, Thomas Acton’s research, activism and writing has continued to challenge constructions of identity and his work opened the door for more research in this direction (Mayall 2004). It wasn’t until a 1990 conference held in Leiden that “the idea of social construction was consciously and explicitly used in relation to

Gypsies” (Mayall 2004, 30) and three years later Acton organized a series of seminars which looked at similar themes. Acton arranged the edited conference papers into two volumes, *Romani culture and Gypsy identity* (1997) and *Gypsy politics and Traveler identity* (1997), which are referenced in almost every text taking up the issue of Romani identity. In the introduction to one volume, Acton refuted the typical a-historical portrayal of Romanies, writing that culture “is constantly developing, enabling the self-expression of our self-realisation, re-inventing as well as representing and reproducing our ethnic identities. This is as true of Gypsies as of anyone else” (Acton and Mundy 1997, 5).

In his critique of academic treatments of the Romanies, Acton’s interpretive framework was founded upon Foucault’s (1980) connections between knowledge and power. This thesis borrows much from Acton’s framework and agrees with his statement that “historical investigation, study and knowledge are not optional extras, the private indulgence of a few intellectuals and romantics—but vital for any group or individual seeking self-determination” (Acton 2003). Acton argued that, in light of centuries of persecution and racism, the Romani peoples themselves have the right not only to self-knowledge, but also to determine their own versions of their own histories and to decide how Romani identities are portrayed. This contention alone has been the focal point of much academic debate and argument.

Acton referred to this debate in a 2003 review of Ian Hancock’s book *We are the Romani People*, when he wrote that “Hancock’s broad brush approach will inevitably bring nit-picking objections from academics who cannot admit that Hancock’s real offence for

them is that he tries to write history from a Romani standpoint at all" (Acton 2003, 907). Hancock, English and linguistics professor and director of the Romani Archives and Documentation Center at the University of Texas at Austin, has often been a controversial figure but his work has, as hinted at by Acton in the book review, changed the direction of Romani studies by challenging the unexamined and comfortable academic power structures that continue to operate in the study of the Romani people today. Hancock is an academic, but his work takes on an activist edge. A self-identified Rom, Hancock "has two audiences: modernist Western intellectuals such as the readers of this journal, and also the developing Romani intelligentsia, those who are moving around the world trying to create international Romani organisations" (Acton 2003, 907). Hancock's work has been instrumental in bringing to the fore the almost forgotten histories of enslavement of the Romani people and their persecution under the Nazi regime during the Holocaust. Hancock's goals have not always been solely academic, but instead he has used the academic tools he has at his disposal to argue for the primacy of Romani interpretations of Romani history and culture.

Angus Fraser was a British civil servant who published extensively about the Romanies until he died in 2001. In one article he concluded that prevailing academic discourses about Romani origins and migrations would have to be reassessed in light of pressure from Romani scholars wanting to control the narratives of their own history (Fraser, 2000). This observation lays bare the tensions between Romani and non-Romani



scholars, an issue that is at the heart of this thesis: who controls the discursive constructs of Romani history, the stories which shape their identities.

The constructed nature of Romani identities is the focus of historian David Mayall's work involving the Romanies. His ideas directly link stereotypes with the society which constructed them, writing that "[t]he argument that how we see and relate to the 'other' can only be understood if we examine the society within which the discourses, representations and constructions of the 'other' are reproduced, is now almost taken for granted" (Mayall 2004, 29) and that "most writers dealing with the stereotyping of minority groups share the view that representations say more about the period when the image was produced than they do about the represented" (Mayall, 2004, 30). One chapter of Mayall's focuses closely upon GLS and gypsilogists; his critical stance closely informs my thesis.

Sociologist and geographer Ken Lee argued for the use of the term gypsylorism as a parallel to Orientalism. In an article in *Social Analysis*, he wrote that "[t]he hegemony of Gypsylorism, that extended period of discursive domination and subject-constitution of 'The Gypsies' that began with establishment of the GLS and *JGLS* in 1888, has not been subjected to the same level of scrutiny and deconstructive exposure as Orientalism" (Lee 2000, 147). He argued for the critical analysis of the hegemonic discourses created by the gypsilogists in the eighteenth-and-nineteenth-centuries employing the tools offered by Edward Said in his conception of Orientalism. I use Lee's theoretical framework and

build upon his precepts through the close textual analysis of Sampson's fieldwork description.

This thesis would not be possible without the theoretical foundations created by Michel Foucault, Frantz Fanon, and Edward Said. Foucault's interrogations of the interplay between power, discourse, and identity set the stage for further explorations in other disciplines. Frantz Fanon has been called the father of postcolonialism (Duncan, 2006). A black native of Martinique, he "experienced first hand the disconnect between his personal identity as a Black Frenchman and the racism he encountered in the White French society during his time in Paris "provided the fire that initiated what would become postcolonial theory in the hands of academics" (Duncan 2006). Fanon's books *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) detailed the divided sense of self which is the result of being colonised.

Postcolonial theory itself is indebted to Said's articulation of Orientalism, by which he referred to the domination of a people through the control of the creation and control of discourses. In Said's own words, Orientalism is "a discourse, by which European culture was able to manage--and even produce--the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period' (Said 1978, 3). Western academics, Said said, often disregarded the points of view of the people they were studying and exercised their power through the control of knowledge.

Postcolonial writers in subsequent years applied Said's Orientalism to other colonial relationships around the world and debated how to make space for the 'subaltern,' if indeed it could be done. Bhabha (1983) and Guha and Spivak (1988) "extended Said's ideas to produce arguments for more ambivalent relationships between coloniser and colonised" (Lee 200, 132). In his 2000 article, Lee extended Said's ideas to Romani studies.

Lee's text was among the first to directly link Orientalism to the realities of the Romanies; Lee positioned Gypsylorism as a first step toward the critical theoretical application of aspects of Orientalism and postcolonialism to the body of work produced by the gypsylorists, including John Sampson. Lee argued that the Romanies represented an internal other, and that:

a parallel and similar system of discourse to Orientalism, Gypsylorism, was developed in relation to 'The Gypsies'. Just as Said argued that 'The Orient' is an externally imposed discursive construct that represents an alleged underlying essential reality, so too I argue that "The Gypsies" is an externally imposed discursive construct that likewise represents an alleged underlying essential reality. Gypsylorism can thus be seen as that field of study that discursively constitutes as its subjects 'The Gypsies'. (Lee 2000, 132)

Lee defined Gypsylorism as the discursive construction of the Oriental other within Europe, maintaining that Orientalism was the discursive construction of the Oriental outside of Europe (Lee 2000). Furthermore, Lee pointed to the GLS and the work of its member gypsilogists as key to the construction and continuation of hegemonic discourses which defined Romanies.

The ripples which have resulted from Orientalism are still being felt: one has taken the form of decolonialism. Decolonialism emerged from arguments that post-colonialism, even when it was concerned with making space for the multiple voices, actually replicated the power dynamics it critiqued and pointed to the fact that most post-colonialists were white men who made their careers in Western academia. From this resistance sprang a theory which necessitates moving beyond Said's 'unmasking' process and the post-colonial replication of Western knowledge hierarchies; decolonialism calls for the production of knowledge based upon the epistemologies of the colonised group, and, further, requires participation from the members of the colonised group in the production of that knowledge. Like postcolonialists, decolonialists make use of Said's original concepts; however, decolonialists reject post-colonialism on the grounds that it implies that colonialism has ended and that it ignores the fact that, even where colonial rulers have left, the impact of colonialism remains.

There is a group of scholars who analyze literary representations of the Romanies within the framework of Orientalism. These representations are closely related to, and have dialogue with, the representations created by the members of the original GLS.

George Behlmer is credited as "the very first scholar to bring an awareness of the Gypsies' presence in Victorian Britain to an interdisciplinary audience in the humanities" (Champagne 2002, 11). His 1985 *Victorian Studies* article points to the two dominant but conflicting views of Roma in the imagination of Victorian Britain—one which vilified and one which romanticized the Roma. Behlmer argued that both of these

views worked to the detriment of the Romanies. Of the impact of the work of the gypsologists, Behlmer writes that the general non-gypsologist "condemnation of Gypsy culture was no more myopic than the praise of the Ryes" (Behlmer 1985, 251) and wrote that the members of the GLS were "undeniably ethnocentric" (1985, 252) in their approach. In Behlmer's analysis, because the anti-gypsy campaigners and the gypsologists both founded their ideologies upon the idea that Romani people were animals or animal-like, both groups effectively worked against the interests of the Romani people.

Comparative literature scholar Katie Trumpener offered what Champagne later called "a groundbreaking analysis" (Champagne 2002, 11) of the cultural construction of "the Gypsy" in the Western imagination. Trumpener draws upon the work of Ken Lee and traces how the imaginary process of othering, or the process of Orientalism, is paired, in the case of the Romanies, with real-life consequences. Surveying post-Enlightenment literatures of Britain as well as modern contexts, Trumpener's essay

traces a parallel movement in modern legal persecution of Gypsies and the way they are figured in literature--sometimes as romantic figures of pre-modern times, and sometimes as villains--but always tied to problems of cultural memory, figured as antithetical to the progress of the modern nation and the coherence of national identity. (Champagne 2002, 11-12)

Like Behlmer, Trumpener argues that the fact that objectification is "bound up in simultaneous idealization does little to obviate the immediate or enduring consequences of the distance it reinforces" (Trumpener 2003, 857).

Trumpener's text is an important addition to Lee's application of Orientalism to the history and present of gypsiology. Trumpener frames her essay as "a preliminary, tentative attempt to open up a field of theoretical and literary inquiry," and further, places her work within a greater context, one in which exists an absence of "literary, cultural, or political analysis of the racism and Orientalism historically surrounding the Western construction of the "Gypsy Question" (Trumpener 2003, 848).

Michele Champagne's dissertation drew upon the work of Behlmer and became part of the growth in scholarly analyses of Roma representations in literature. She focuses on what she terms "the structure of fantasy in nineteenth-century British writing about Gypsies" (2002, 15). Champagne argues that by studying the portrayal of Roma in literature, she can shed light upon under-examined relationships between itinerants and sedentary Britons and intersecting "ideologies of class, race, and gender as they are inscribed and contested in some of the most canonical literature of the period, as well as in the more obscure work of the late-Victorian Gypsy Lore Society" (Champagne 2002, 15).

Chapter three of her thesis takes as its subject the "transgressive fantasies" of the gypsologists of the GLS, with a focus on the well-documented impact of George Borrow--specifically his semi-autobiographical novel *Lavengro*--upon the gypsologists' notions of Roma, the gypsologists' motivations, and the work that the gypsologists eventually completed. Champagne makes connections between the conventions of middle-class bourgeois society against which the gypsologists rebelled and the romantic

portrayal of the wandering life of the Romani people, suggesting that “[g]ypsology functioned as a strategy for constructing a marginal, transgressive masculinity that simultaneously resisted bourgeois domesticity and consumerism, and consolidated the identity and authority of the middle-class man of letters” (Champagne 2002, 123).

Deborah Nord’s book, *Gypsies and the British Imagination*, is anticipated in a footnote in Champagne’s thesis which explains that Nord is “in the process of writing a book that expands her 1998 *Victorian Studies* article,” (Champagne 2002, 2). The article to which Champagne refers was “the first close textual analysis of Gypsies’ figuration in literary fantasy” (Champagne 2002, 12) and argues that the imaginative ‘othering’ of the Romani people was co-opted as a liberating identity for women writers of the Victorian era. Nord’s book, published in 2004, allows for a much wider look at the role given to the Romanies by a range of writers throughout various periods, including George Borrow, a particularly influential author upon the gypsologists of the GLS. Nord wrote a chapter-length analysis of the impact of the GLS and its gypsologists upon popular conceptions of Romanies. Nord differentiates the work of the gypsiorlists in Britain from that of their counterparts in Germany, observing that “[t]he Gypsy lorists’ discourse of purity did not open the door to virulent racism or persecution, but it did help to foster a relationship of separateness rather than identification between British Lorist and British Gypsy” (Nord, 155).

This historical criticism of research conducted in another time and society runs the risk of committing the very errors it criticizes. Yet a critical analysis is by its very nature

focused upon what was not correct and/or negative and in this way tends to ignore what was correct and/or positive. I hope that I have been able to deconstruct the stereotypes and working methods through which these stereotypes were created while still being able to “resist reductively denouncing those who helped to create them” (Tomko 2010, 551), as did Nord in her work. Nord presents a complex, multi-dimensional and thoroughly human portrayal of the writers and gypsilogists, whose work she analysed, and Nord’s influence upon my thesis can be felt in the emphasis I place upon Sampson’s complex life story and in the consideration it gives to the research Sampson did well.

As I was writing this thesis it became clear--not the least because it was pointed out to me by my thoughtful supervisor--that the criticisms I extend to Sampson, Sampson’s text, and the Rais can be extended to contemporary ethnographers engaged in contemporary research. None of us in academia are free from prejudice and we all carry our own cultural baggage and world views; we are all eager to ‘play’ the role of researcher, however we conceive of that role; and we all work from a desire to gain respect and recognition from our peers. It is difficult in the course of research not to ‘other’ or to objectify what is, after all, the object of one’s research. The focus of this thesis is not to address these issues in contemporary research nor to deconstruct the scientific method itself; these themes are explored at length in the disciplines of science and technology studies and the sociology of science. This thesis argues that the performance of the role of the Romani Rai interfered with the Rais’ research in a way that amplified both its mistakes and its long term impact upon the way people see and



understand Romanies' identity and way of life. However, while maintaining a focus upon the still-necessary work of deconstructing stereotypical identity discourses, the concluding chapter of this thesis does point to examples of new critical research methodologies which have been developed in order to address common concerns about the kind of research engaged in by generations of researchers.

## 1.5 What you will be reading

The organization of this thesis can be expressed in six words: one journal, one author, and one article. This structure came about organically; while writing, it became clear that these divisions allowed me to explore, one by one, the arguments and concerns which I believed most needed to be addressed. This thesis begins with by providing a macro-view of the society which published the journal in which the chosen text appeared, moves on to analyze the author of the text's life and work and, before concluding, provides a close analysis of the text itself.

While providing an overview of the origins of the GLS and the *JGLS* in Britain, chapter two shows how gypsologists consciously worked to maintain control of identity discourses about Romanies. In this chapter, some of the wider historical, geographical and cultural contexts in which Sampson wrote "Tales in a Tent" are illuminated. This chapter introduces decolonialism and gypsylorism as tools with which to deconstruct an historical body of academic research which worked to reinforce and amplify stereotypes about Romanies.

Chapter three examines the underlying power imbalances between researcher and research subject which were essential to the performance of the Romani Rai identity. Through the deconstruction of the underlying motivations and the belief systems upon which the Rais' research methods were founded, this chapter demonstrates how an ultimately unreliable body of knowledge was created about Romani culture and way of life. In this chapter, I analyse how the performance of Rai interacted with the research of one Rai, John Sampson. I argue that Sampson's methods were similar to those of other Rais, and that, like Sampson, the Rais as a group were more concerned with validating a specific belief system than with producing reliable research. Because of this, Rais were unable to notice, listen to, or to 'hear' the complex realities that were present in Romanies' lives and culture.

Focusing upon one text written by Sampson, chapter four analyses the description of fieldwork provided in the text. "Tales in a Tent" is positioned as a text that was written to be shared with other gypsologists for the purposes of strengthening the author's reputation as a Rai, sending coded messages to a small in-group made of specific gypsologists, and light amusement. Through the analysis of Sampson's choice of words, self-portrayals, portrayals of Romanies and use of coded messages, I maintain that Sampson was unable or unwilling to look beyond his preconceived notions about Romanies; fieldwork was much less about the construction of new knowledge than it was about re-living the 'dream' Sampson encountered between the pages of George Borrow's books about Romanies and finding evidence to corroborate the reality of that dream.

In a brief conclusion, chapter five traces the manner in which the ideas found in each chapter connect to form a critique of the production of knowledge about Romanies in the nineteenth century. Here I note that the fundamental belief system held by the Romani Rai prevented him from attempting to see from the point of view of his object of research, from engaging in a dialogue with the object of his research, and from framing the object of his research as equal to himself. This final chapter provides a reflexive assessment of the relevance of this research to ethnographers today and briefly considers how new critical methodologies aim to reconstruct how research has been done with groups who have been historically 'othered.'

## Chapter Two: In the Society of Gypsologists

### 2.1 Introduction

My mother is a Métis woman. On paper I am also, for all my blonde hair and green eyes would seem to belie that identity. This declaration marks the beginning of this second chapter to acknowledge my own investment in the direction I have chosen for this research. This thesis could have been approached in so many different ways. It was, I think, my personal experience with identity politics which caused me to strongly identify with the -isms which are the focus of this chapter. Who is Métis? What does a 'real' Métis look and act like? How much blood lineage is enough to claim the Métis identity and how much is too little? Who decides these things? My own experience with identity has been largely one of absence. What does Métis mean to most Canadians? With the exception of the execution of Louis Riel, school taught nothing about my mother's people and I did not grow up aware of any stereotypes about Métis, except, perhaps, in their relation to aboriginality and its politics. This is not to conflate the politics of identity construction of one Métis woman with those of Romanies. Simply, this is an admission of my own investment in this research and my personal investment in an outcome which looks favourably upon an indigenous research agenda--or, as articulated in the Romani context, Romani-centred research.

This chapter places the text within its overarching historical, geographical, academic, and cultural framework while applying postcolonial and decolonizing methodologies to deconstruct the impact of the GLS upon Romani studies. Here,

Gypsology is considered as one part of a much-larger system of dominance maintained by colonial powers, including Britain. While there were and are many systems which were used to assert and maintain power, Gypsology is linked to the maintenance of power through the control of the production of academic knowledge. While it is recognized that other academic fields, such as folklore and anthropology, were also engaged in the production of academic knowledge which was then employed to justify the maintenance of a position of power over the subject of study, I focus here upon deconstructing the production of knowledge in which one gypsologist was engaged. In this chapter, I will briefly trace the history of the GLS and investigate how earlier works influenced both the methodology and conclusions formed in the research of the society's members. Relying on the previous work of Romani studies scholar Ken Lee and his introduction of the concept of Gypsylorism, I will explore not only what the GLS chose to do, but what it chose not to do, in order to more clearly locate how the GLS positioned itself within Victorian British society. Finally, I will argue that "Tales in a Tent" fits within the academic framework of the GLS's struggle toward epistemic dominance within the field of gypsology and, for that reason, the deconstruction of that struggle and the text is the necessary step toward the creation of critical Romani-centered methodologies which give voice to Romani knowledge producers.

### 2.1.2 The possibility of a different Romani Studies

John Sampson's "Tales in a Tent" was published in a particular journal created by a closed society of gypsologists whose aim it was to produce a body of academic knowledge about Romanies. Without the society and without the journal, "Tales in a Tent" probably would not have been published--or even written at all. In short, if "Tales in a Tent" is to be analyzed, the context of the society which made possible its publication must be explored.

"Tales in a Tent," being an ethnography--a literary description of a day of fieldwork--by John Sampson, was published at a time when practitioners of the new fields of study in social sciences, including gypsologists, were attempting to apply scientific methods borrowed from the positivistic approaches used in the hard sciences to studies of peoples and cultures. Through the use of objective observation, it was believed that facts could be learned and applied universally in the same way that observation of, for example, rocks revealed a set of consistent facts which led to widely applicable systems of organisation. That this didn't work out perfectly for gypsologists who were studying numerous groups of Roma would not be a shocking discovery today; we have a much wider understanding of the ways in which cultures and people elude consistency and resist systemization. Furthermore, many of the critiques of gypsology which will emerge

from this thesis can be applied in varying degrees to practitioners of other academic disciplines in the same era and to academic research that is conducted today. The very nature of academic research implies, in most cases, a power imbalance about which we are much more aware, and more willing to acknowledge and grapple with, than in the past. My intention is not to single gypsologists out for criticism that could apply almost as well to other researchers. My intention is twofold: one, to cause the reader to reconsider his or her beliefs about Romanies through the deconstruction of the production of knowledge about Romanies; and two, through this deconstruction to cause the reader to analyze the historic and contemporary power imbalances that may be reinforced through the course of his or her own research and so to consider methods through which that imbalance might be lessened or alleviated.

The 'borrowing' of the scientific method from the hard sciences by the social sciences was motivated not only by the desire to conduct objective research, but to 'borrow' also the respect and trust which was much more widely and easily gained by practitioners of the hard sciences. To have folk-lore recognized as a 'true' science was one of the original aims of the Folk-Lore society, and gypsologists suffered no less desire to have their own research receive the same designation. Many of these early researchers were men with money and time for leisure. It is argued that folklore became more closely linked with academia early on while gypsologists worked outside of official university affiliations and were not held even to the academic standards at the time, however lax these standards may appear today (Nord 2006, Mayall 2004). There is some evidence that

folklorists wished to distance themselves from the kind of research in which the gypsologists engaged (Mayall 2004, 176).

The GLS gypsologists as a group existed in a space between the position occupied by academic researchers such as the folklorists and the non-academic researchers whose interest in Romanies took a more romanticized and literary or sensational form. Because of this liminal position, the gypsologists have been described as amateurs who did not live up to academic standards and as researchers who cared more for their academic standing than the objects of their research (Nord 2006, Mayall 2004). One point of view does not cancel out the other if one accepts the complexity of the position of the GLS gypsologists. It is true that by today's standards social science research in the nineteenth century could not be described as rigorous and academic standards were low and inconsistently applied across universities and disciplines; the social sciences were just being formed, after all. Yet, in that time, there existed variations in the 'rigor' of research methods. Here, academic rigor refers to a certain amount of accountability for one's method or research, systematic approaches, and logical conclusions. In that a more formal association with universities produced a certain amount of accountability and wider peer review (although not in the twentieth century sense), folklore research was seen to operate at a more 'scientific' level than gypsology. At the same time, as we shall see, the GLS gypsologists were acutely aware of the gap between their research and that of other disciplines and wanted to bridge that gap; inasmuch as the GLS gypsologists aimed to meet academic standards and claimed and/or



attempted to conduct academic research at a higher level than other gypsologists, they could also claim the respect and authority which came with academic research standards. In short, without having to meet the academic standards, such as they were at the time, because they did not have university affiliation, as a group they claimed academic authority. As such, they can be criticized for wielding academic authority at the same time as they can be criticised for their amateurish approach to research. This is not to say that other social sciences were invariably more rigorous or even terribly rigorous at all; it must be recognized that the other social science researchers at the time were also engaged in research which supported stereotypical identity discourses about other cultures and peoples. But in focusing upon the single text authored by Sampson, I am focusing upon the position of gypsologists. So, as much as one can argue that affiliation with academic institutions at the time actually worked to increase to any extent the quality of research and force academics to work within a set of standards which set them apart from non-academic researchers then one can argue that folklore research as a whole benefitted from this closer affiliation to academia. Again, this is not to say that no respected folklorist engaged in shoddy research or that no GLS gypsologist produced excellent research; that would not be true; I am writing about generalities here. To further complicate this discussion, some of the GLS gypsologists were linguists, whose contributions to the study of the Romanes language and dialects met the scientific standards of the day and continue to remain relevant to this day. It is when these linguists turned to the study of Romani people and culture, shaping and amplifying stereotypical identity discourses

which survive almost unaltered today, that their research methods and conclusions offer themselves up for critique and deconstruction.

Although the *JGLS*, in which "Tales in a Tent" was published, sought to claim academic authority for the findings of their research, neither the journal nor the majority of the society's members were linked to an academic institution. Rather, the journal was published as an outlet for the writings of a particular group of gypsiologists whose work was unlikely to be published in other folklore journals, either because there was a lack of interest in Romani material or because the style of writing and/or research methods did not meet the standards of the journals associated with academia. As noted in Chapter One, Groome lamented his inability to interest folklorists in Romani studies in the introduction to a book of folktales, but did not attempt to explain the reasons for this (Groome 1899, 1). Nord summarized the position of the GLS gypsiologists neatly when she wrote: "The lorists hovered between amateurism and semi-professional aspirations, a pattern common to a variety of late-nineteenth-century scholars whose work took place outside academic institutions" (2006, 130).

Within this historical and social context, it is possible to ask: could things have turned out differently? One way to discover the answer to this question is to consider what did not happen and/or what was suppressed at this historical location. Sampson's text was published by a society whose members were strongly influenced by earlier personalities who wrote highly romanticized accounts of their interactions with Romanies. Furthermore, it was published by a closed network of gypsiologists who

collectively vied to establish an epistemic control for the society through active and passive silencing of other voices--and whose different approaches, at times, had real potential to alter the course of Romani studies in a way that could have benefitted Romanies. What is considered in this chapter is shaped by Lee's contention that, "[t]hat which is ignored, avoided or deemed unsuitable for examination reveals, *precisely because it is rejected and suppressed*, the system that decides the possibilities of knowledge" (Lee 2004, 33).

Not often mentioned in any history of gypsology (and what Lee brought to light in his 2004 study) is the existence of a club which came to rival the GLS. Named the Gypsy and Folklore Club (hereafter GAFLC), this club's approach to gypsology was often in tension with the sort of academic respectability the GLS sought to project. Lee suggests--without necessarily supporting the aims, methods, or beliefs of its members--that the GAFLC was effectively and quickly silenced by members of the GLS; although considered less academic, the early inclination of the GAFLC to concern itself with Romani human rights could have led to a different history for Romanies and a better present. This chapter discusses the role of the GAFLC in more detail and argues, as does Mario Blaser in an article about competing ontologies, that "the potential futures we can aspire to are closely related to the kind of diagnostic of the present we perform" (2009, 874). The Romani Studies as represented in the *JGLS* created certain discourses and silenced others, shaping the 'potential future' of the course of Romani studies. That Romani studies could have been formed on different foundations not only provides a

different interpretation of the past, but as we shall see, provides a different way of looking toward the future.

## 2.2 The Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society

At the time “Tales in a Tent” was published, the *JGLS* had been in operation for three years. John Sampson had published eighteen notes, articles and folktales. Articles outlining his most acclaimed work about the ‘discovery’ of a secret Romani language had already been published, but he would continue to write *Dialect of the Gypsies of Wales* (1926) for decades. The edition of the *JGLS* in which “Tales in a Tent” appeared would be the last published for fifteen years, when funding was once again obtained to support the publishing activities of the society.

The journal associated with the first series of the GLS (in which “Tales in a Tent” appeared) was neither sold to the public, nor distributed to the public; the journal was available to members only. This created an insularity about which non-GLS gypsologists complained (Lee 2004, 42). However, in terms of the style of writing, the limited distribution resulted in a journal in whose pages contributing writers spoke to each other rather than to an outside audience--sometimes doing so directly in the form of notes addressing a particular GLS gypsologist. And sometimes, as will be explored in Chapter Four, in the form of coded language and/or references. One researcher noted that although the GLS gypsologists were well-educated, the journal itself “never had any formal

University or other academic affiliation, thus often escaping the degree of peer-review and scrutiny normally associated with academic publishing” (Lee 2000, 148).

The first edition of the journal was published in July of 1888. The first article set out the aims of the journal, the first of which were:

to gather new materials, to rearrange the old, and to formulate results, so as little by little to approach the goal--the final solution of the Gypsy problem. It has already been solved, but in so many and such diverse ways, that the true answer still remains a matter of doubt, if the true answer has ever yet been given. (*JGLS* 1888, 1)

As was the typical of the GLS gypsologists, Romanies were invariably linked with mystery; the ‘mystery’ of the Romanies was thrilling. Yet, the main part of the mystery referred to in the above quote had already been solved. Where did Romanies come from? By the time the GLS was established, research had already proved their Indian origins. Almost a hundred years earlier, two separate philologists (who are discussed in more detail later) had published works which showed that language comparisons proved that Romanies migrated from India. The debate which remained, and remains today to certain extent, centered around the exact migration route the Romanies took out of India (Hancock 2010).

The first series (1888-1892) published a range of texts. Articles which aimed for a more academic style were longer and discussed at length various migration hypotheses, compared vocabulary, commented on a particular group of Romanies, or shared philological research. Articles focused upon research questions involving culture, origins

or language in a historical context, but did not comment on problematic social issues affecting Romanies at the time. Fraser noted the same when he wrote that “[c]ontemporary political issues, such as the campaign of George Smith of Coalville for the regulation of Gypsies’ movable dwellings in Britain, would at first receive scant attention in the pages of the *Journal*” (Fraser 1990, 6). Reviews of related books were published, as were song lyrics and music, and folktales collected by various gypsologists. Published were a great many shorter articles which informally share general observations about various groups of Romanies; cultural practices and physical characteristics are two examples of observations. ‘Notes’ were published at the end of each edition. These were usually short and could be about anything: notes included comments upon timely issues or new laws involving Romanies; corrections or clarifications of previously published work; lamentations about the modernization of Romanies; comments, critiques or praise of recent talks or lectures; vocabulary lessons; brief language or pronunciation discussions; or notes could be brief descriptions of encounters with Romanies. That the *JGLS* was an important publication for the development of linguistic and folkloristic research about Romanies is not contested anywhere. Yaron Matras, a linguist with a specialisation in the Romani language, listed the *JGLS* and a book by John Sampson as being two “landmarks” in old-generation linguistics:

However contested some of the social attitudes reflected in its earlier volumes may be, the *Journal* has, since its appearance, served as the principal discussion forum for scientific research on the Romani language as well as a source of data on Romani. The second landmark, closely connected with the *Journal*’s activities, was the appearance in 1926 of John Sampson’s

monumental grammar and etymological lexicon of the *Dialect of the Gypsies of Wales*, the westernmost variety of Romani, now considered extinct.  
(Matras 2002, 3)

“Tales in a Tent” was the second article in the fourth edition of the third volume. It was published after the society president Charles Leland’s farewell article entitled “What We Have Done.” This article provides an overview of the work that was published in the first series of the *JGLS* and as such provides a rich contextualization of Sampson’s article and a glimpse into how one of the GLS’s members interpreted the work of the society in the same issue that Sampson’s text was published. Throughout the article Leland was careful to name the society’s most prestigious members and the work considered most important. His introduction shows a sensitivity to doubts about the ‘scholarship’ of their research:

It is at least 20 years since I formed the scheme of an English Gypsy Society, and submitted it to a few who were interested in our Lore, but without any success. More recently this was, as my readers know, undertaken with better result by David MacRitchie, a gentleman in whom is that happy combination of the earnest scholar, the practical man of business, and the cosmopolite correspondent, which so well qualified him for the very difficult task of carrying on an association of limited means, yet composed entirely of learned, or, as I may truly say, eminent men, and one recognized as soundly scholarly by all true scholars. (1892, 193)

The next portion of the article paid tribute to Francis Hinde Groome and then goes on to cite the society’s major achievements (largely contributions to folklore and philology), flatter important or influential gypsologists, and reference papers and articles considered

important. Sampson's research into the Shelta language, believed then to be an ancient dialect, received pRaise (this article will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter):

Among the contributions to our *Journal* there has been one of so extraordinary a nature that it would suffice of itself to show that our society and *Journal* have lived to good purpose. . . . a very remarkable and able article by John Sampson, who, as a Celtic scholar, demonstrated the great age and value of Shelta. He also made great collections in it. . . . (Leland 1892, 195)

In a passage which reveals much about how the gypsiologists viewed the context and historical importance of the work which was published in the *JGLS*, Leland wrote:

. . . I am absolutely confident that there is not a true scholar or man of letters living who would not sincerely agree with me in the assertion that among all the contributions by my fellow-workmen there is not a single article of indifferent or mediocre merit. Every one has revealed some wonderfully curious or deeply interesting phase of Gypsy life, or else been a valuable contribution to philology, history, and culture. For History, as it is now studied, is beginning, like Science, to find that elements, which were once utterly neglected as worthless, are of extreme value. We ourselves do not know the full value of what we have done--a century hence our *Journal* will give investigators documents, the real use of which is as yet unknown to us. We were not many, but we did our work well--that is, as well as we could, which is always well. In the future it will be continued in the *Folk-Lore Journal*, where it most appropriately belongs. (Leland 1892, 196)

The members of the GLS could not know that a century hence, the *JGLS* would be mined, in part, for evidence with which to deconstruct historical discourses about Romanies, which the *JGLS*, in part, constructed.



The only factor which sets Sampson's "Tales in a Tent" apart from other texts published in the same edition is his skill with words. In all other respects "Tales in a Tent" is not singular: the *JGLS* regularly published subjective accounts of fieldwork encounters with Romanies which took the form, like "Tales in a Tent," of entertaining tales. However, Sampson's prose envelopes the reader and projects a dream-like state that is irresistible. Some of the articles published in the same edition are more academic in style, but the edition also contains accounts told in story form rather than academic or scientific form. It is clear that the *JGLS* sought to entertain as much it sought to educate.

At twelve pages, "Tales in a Tent" is somewhat longer than most articles, but by no means the longest. "Tales in a Tent" is not a dry, detailed account of fieldwork written to meet academic criteria. On the contrary, it is written as a narrative and is more like a travelogue. The piece is an ethnography, however, in that it describes Sampson visiting a family to collect folktales, which is a major part of the research in which he was engaged most of his adult life. Like many of the pieces published in the *JGLS*, the piece portrays Romanies with a sort of dreamlike aura, beginning with the first sentence in which Sampson equates a visit to a Romani family with slipping back in time. The piece definitely conveys distinct differentiation between the researcher and the Romani; Sampson often uses humour to underscore the gap between researcher and Rom, writing small humorous episodes in which both the reader and writer share amusement at some antic of a member of a Romani family. The piece avoids the academic language and tone that is present in many of the research articles published in the journal, while at the same

time claiming academic respectability and authority--in effect mirroring the manner in which many of the GLS gypsologists conducted their lives and research. (A more detailed analysis of the article occurs in Chapter Four.)

### 2.3 A Rum Lot: A history of the GLS and the *JGLS*

This section was to begin with the statement that it would be remarkable in the context of the twenty-first century to witness a society formed that was dedicated to the study of a particular cultural or racial group which would refuse to include a single member of the object of that study. However, *Romani Studies* remains, as does much of academia, dominated by Western white scholars so that Hancock noted in a recent book chapter that at the first international conference on the Roma in 2002 at Tel Aviv University, "[n]o Romanies participated in either the presentations or the organisation of that conference" (Hancock 2010, 19). Romanies were not explicitly barred from this conference, but the end result is the same: Romanies were not part of the production of academic knowledge at an international level about themselves.

In 1888 the creation of a society based upon interest in a group of people which did not extend membership to that group was a not uncommon expression of interest in the exotic Other and a reflection of an academic tradition which located the possession of knowledge within Western epistemologies and outside the purview of the Other. The manner in which the GLS proposed to study Romanies is not unlike the approach used by folklorists at the time as they studied rural peasant classes, as Nord noted:

The efforts of the Gypsy Lore Society addressed many of the questions posed by work in other, contiguous disciplines: Does the primitive have a place in modern society? Why do certain cultural patterns--stories, practices, words--appear in both ancient and modern civilizations, in different cultures across the globe, in metropole and empire alike? How are resemblances among disparate cultures to be explained, and were there sites of origin that can be identified? And what is the role of the folklorist, anthropologist, or scholar of mythology in gathering, examining, and preserving these artifacts of culture? (Nord 2006, 127)

And so, most histories, like this one, place gypsology within its relationship to folklore. That relationship was described as far back as 1888, when Charles Leland wrote in a review published in the *JGLS* that "Gypsy lore is a sister of Folk-lore, and both are daughters of Ethnology" (1888, 105). Yet, this history of gypsology as practiced by the GLS gypsologists rarely intersects with that of folklore (despite Groome's attempts to interest folklorists in Romanies). The details of the history of the GLS are complex in that it started and stopped several times. What follows is a somewhat simplified version of that history.

The title of this section refers to the name of an article about the history of the GLS written in 1990 by Angus Fraser, which in turn refers to the letter written by Charles Leland, after the Archduke Joseph of Austria-Hungary agreed to become a founding member of the new society. Fraser cites the letter: "... now there are five of us--and a rum lot they are, as the Devil said when he looked over the ten Commandments" (Fraser 1990, 2). Five men came together in 1888 to create the original Gypsy Lore Society (GLS): David MacRitchie, Francis Hindes Groome, H.T. Crofton, Charles Leland and

The Archduke Josef Karl Ludwig of Austria-Hungary. Each had already made a name for himself as a gypsologist. David MacRitchie had trained as an accountant, but abandoned that career in favor of the life of a gypsologist. Francis Hindes Groome's career in gypsology began when he dropped out of university at twenty-one in order to travel the country by horse and wagon with a married Romani woman and, several years later, eloped with another Romani woman--the wife of another man, a non-Roma--after which he took work writing for encyclopedias while studying and writing prolifically and famously about the Romanies in his spare time. H.T. Crofton was a Manchester solicitor who had gained a reputation in Romani studies. Charles Leland had already published many books about the Romanies, including *The English Gipsies and their Language* (1873) which he wrote after taking Romani language lessons for three years. Archduke Ludwig was part of a family which had long been known for its concern for the welfare of Roma, and Ludwig followed suit, studying and writing about the Romani language.

These founding GLS gypsologists advertised for the addition of other like-minded scholars to their numbers. The society, however, was not meant to be inclusive. In fact, citing a flyer from the GLS archives at the University of Liverpool, Lee wrote that "the aim was to restrict membership" (Lee 2004, 40) to no more than 150 members. John Sampson became one of the society's early members; Leland's niece, Elizabeth Pennell, became the first woman member. By the end of the first year, there were sixty-nine members of the GLS, a number which "included most of the existing experts on Gypsies from Britain, Europe and America" (Mayall 2004, 164). The majority of the members

were from Britain, but nine lived in Austria-Hungary, seven were from the United States, and five from parts of Europe outside Austria-Hungary. Fraser's summation of the society's beginnings reveals that the society did not adhere to any particular scientific methodology and that the qualifications for membership seemed to be enthusiasm, so long as that enthusiasm was matched with respectability:

When the time was ripe a few enthusiasts came together to pursue jointly their shared interest: like anyone else, they reflected the spirit of their age; but their aim was to gather in information, with no particular program or methodology to determine the course of their studies. (Fraser 1990, 1)

Together, the members of the GLS in 1888 already had ownership of the majority of existing academic knowledge on the Romanies at that time. The GLS had no trouble establishing itself as the most respected source about the Romanies and their languages, simply because the society "had managed to attract to its ranks most of the existing authorities on Gypsy lore and language" (Fraser 1990, 6). As a result of the ability to position themselves as academics working within the confines of a science, the original members of the GLS already enjoyed a considerable platform from which to make themselves and their points of view heard; becoming members of the GLS had the effect of amplifying every word.

Who was not invited to become a member of the GLS? Most notably: Roma. No member of this early group of gypsologists was a Romani. At the same time that gypsologists' reputations depended upon competing claims of complete acceptance in the various groups of Rom who were the subject of that research, this acceptance was not

reciprocated. Books and articles published by the gypsilogists--including Sampson's "Tales in a Tent" analysed here--describe in detail how various men lived among the Romanies as a Rom, or, as a Romany Rai. Groome was famous for his two Romani 'wives'; the second, Esmerelda Locke, supported herself and Groome early in their relationship through dancing and fortune telling and her name could draw large audiences; regardless, from the point of view of the gypsilogists, Locke's life with Groome worked to validate Groome's claims to insider knowledge of Romani culture, provide evidence of his complete acceptance in the Romani community, and increase Groome's status as a gypsilogist. Locke's relationship with Groome, however, did not work to validate the importance of her experiences as a Romani woman living between two cultures; very little is known about Locke, and what is known has been told from the point of view of the gypsilogists.

From the outset, the only role Roma were provided was that of passive subjects whose identities were to be discovered, defined and described by the non-Romani gypsilogists; Roma were not welcome in the gypsilogists' academic spheres and were not invited to participate in any way in the workings of the society which was to shape and disseminate the popular discourses about gypsies. Membership in this society, whose stated major goal was to discover the truth about Romani origins, was reserved for non-Roma only.

The idea of providing a venue for publishing research about Romanies had been put forward before. "The idea of a Gypsy Lore Society--or something very like it--was

germinating long before" the foundation of the GLS in 1888 (Fraser 1990, 1). Charles Leland, a founding member of the GLS in 1888, as is mentioned above, discussed the idea at least a decade earlier with Edward Palmer, a professor of Arabic at Cambridge University. Why this idea did not come to fruition is not made clear; however, it is likely that funding was a major factor inasmuch as the *JGLS* experienced several publication interruptions related to funding difficulties. Leland went on to settle in England and study Romanes, gathering around himself an informal group of gypsologists who responded with enthusiasm to a letter published in *Notes and Queries* in 1887. The letter was penned by W.J. Ibbetson: its contents urged the "Romany Ryes" of the time to form a society whose main purpose it was to collect and publish Romani songs.

There was always the matter of money. David MacRitchie visited Charles Leland and the two discussed the possibility of starting a magazine, but this was soon abandoned as being financially unrealistic. It wasn't until MacRitchie met with Groome that the two were able to gather together the group of five mentioned above; together these five men possessed the determination, the passion, the connections and the money required to launch the society in 1888.

Just a few years later, in late 1892, the journal had ceased publication. The reason put forth by Fraser was essentially that new gypsologists had not been recruited to replace those who had died. Fraser wrote: "[b]y early 1891, however, it was clear that the Journal, which had for long been holding on by a thread, was going to be short-lived. Death had taken its toll of the little band of adherents, and no more than a few fresh

recruits had come in to fill the gaps" (Fraser 1990, 6). The journal undeniably needed a reliable source of funding.

In 1907 Sampson and Macfie maneuvered around this problem by recruiting to their ranks Robert Scott Macfie, the wealthy head of a sugar refining company. Macfie had been introduced to gypsology by Sampson years earlier. Macfie "proved an inspirational choice, as Macfie, from 1907 until his death in 1935, provided the energy, commitment and, importantly, the finances to keep the society running and, in his capacity as editor of the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, even to Raise its standards by his meticulous editing and correcting of articles" Mayall 2004, 164). Within a year, the society's membership grew to over 200.

that second series of the Journal is a treasure-house. Never again would nine successive volumes so consistently bring together such a rich variety: there were any number of magisterial dialect studies, copious folk-tales and analyses of old vocabularies, sweeping historical surveys, and new ventures into genealogy, art and physical and cultural anthropology. (Fraser 1990 9)

Sampson published prolifically in this second series; however his efforts in other areas were equally as important to the struggling society. Sampson recruited a close network of passionate, dedicated gypsologists. Although he "could be pedantic, pontifical, overbearing, and needlessly jealous of other scholars who might be a threat to his preeminence" (Fraser 1990, 9), Sampson befriended and attracted to the society many of the gypsologists who proved to be key to its long-term survival, including Scott Macfie, Dora Yates, Gladys Imlach and Eileen Lyster.



The society folded once more in 1916, two years after Macfie left to fight in the war. The society was relaunched in 1922 with new financial backing, and this time the society remained active until the death of its most energetic and dedicated champion in 1974, the society's Honorary Secretary Dora Yates. The small North American chapter of the GLS continued producing work and in 1991 re-launched the society once more, under the same name. In 2000, the society renamed its journal *Romani Studies*.

## 2.4 Gypsylorism

The GLS gypsilogists were not the first to popularize stereotypes about Romanies, but, because they positioned themselves as a group of academics and scientists who provided scientific 'truths' and together discredited those who offered viewpoints and understandings different than their own, the impact of their work went deeper and wider. The identity discourses supported by their research were disseminated within and beyond an educated scholarly audience and legitimized through the appropriation of an academic, scientific authority that had not been claimed in any organized manner by previous gypsilogists. For these reasons, their work became the starting point for Gypsylorism. Indeed, in a 2000 article one scholar wrote that:

... for any understanding of Gypsylorism, the foundation and operation of the GLS and publication of the JGLS in 1888 and the constitution of 'The Gypsies' as specific subjects for study must be the starting point. ... The members of the GLS and JGLS claimed a privileged epistemological position, asserting that they were the only internationally recognised source of scholarly information about 'The Gypsies. (Lee 2000, 133)

Gypsyism grew out of Orientalism. Said's well-known book, *Orientalism*, set the stage for the deconstruction of representations of the Orient and its people which were created by writers, academics and travelers from the West for the purpose of maintaining power over the East. Intrinsic in the production of knowledge about the Oriental Other is its use in the subordination of that Other, in part by denying or erasing the viewpoints and voices of the Other. Indeed, Said argues that the West discursively created and produced The Orient and that these Western-created discourses were present whenever and wherever The Orient came under consideration. Said's theories, though not unproblematic, created a framework in which the discourses imposed by the West could be deconstructed--a first step toward making space for the differing voices, viewpoints and epistemologies of the Other.

Lee takes Said's ideas and applies them to the situation of Roma, arguing that Said's work pointed to the discursive construction of the Other outside the West, while Gypsyism refers to the discursive construction of the Other within Europe:

Just as Said argued that 'The Orient' is an externally imposed discursive construct that represents an alleged underlying essential reality, so too I argue that 'The Gypsies' is an externally imposed discursive construct that likewise represents an alleged underlying essential reality. Gypsyism can thus be seen as that field of study that discursively constitutes as its subjects 'The Gypsies'. Like Orientalism, Gypsyism is a discursive formation that emerges from asymmetrical exchanges of power of different sorts (political, economic, cultural, intellectual and moral) that in turn help to re-constitute and perpetuate the unequal exchanges that underlay the initial discursive formation. It could be said that Gypsyism is a particular variant of

Orientalism, in that it began with the discovery that the Romani populations of Europe had originated in India, that is, that they were indeed an exotic and Oriental Other. Whilst Orientalism is the discursive construction of the exotic Other *outside* Europe, Gypsylorism is the construction of the exotic Other *within* Europe -- Romanies are the Orientals within. (Lee 2000, 132)

Within this framework, "Tales in a Tent" can be understood as a performance of Gypsylorism by one well-known gypsologist. "Tales in a Tent" fits within a larger historical context in which a society of often-amateur academics were performing identities in relation to a series of historical and geographical factors: resistance to Victorian British society; the increasing industrialization occurring at the time; the romanticization of rural life; the new 'scientific' approach seen in the burgeoning fields of folklore and ethnology; academic respectability, and the longing for a different kind of life. The complex identities performed could be summed up in the two world title, 'Romani Rai,' a title which was bestowed with pride upon the most respected gypsologists. "Tales in a Tent" is a performance through which can be glimpsed the production of a knowledge which took its place within a hegemonic discourse, ultimately altering the direction of that discourse. Fraser marks Romanies as having suffered from the impacts of colonisation despite never having had their own lands colonised:

. . . while Romanies have never been colonized through dispossession of land in the same way as indigenous peoples, in many other respects they can be considered as colonial subjects--victims of imposed discursive (mis)representations and structural inequalities, marginalized, patronized, exploited, stripped of language, culture, dignity. Here I contend that recent

developments in postcolonial theory can offer a new perspective on the ways in which 'the Gypsies' have been--and still are--constituted and created as subjects. . . . While the vast majority of Romanies inhabit the First and Second Worlds, they experience their lives in an unnumbered and unnamed 'world' that shares many of the characteristics of the Third and Fourth Worlds. (Lee 2004, 31-33)

In a later section, I will discuss how the GLS's response to the emergence of a rival club provides one demonstration of how the GLS sought and managed its hegemonic dominance. First, however, I want to bring to the fore some of the writers who had dominated the production of knowledge about the Romanies before the time of the GLS, and who influenced the imaginative geography and the academic direction of the gypsologists of the GLS.

## 2.5. The influences of Heinrich Grellmann and George Borrow

Before the publication in 1783 of a book by German philologist Heinrich Grellmann (1753-1804), *Die Zigeuner*, Romani origins were an unsolved mystery. Although inherently flawed and criticised later for plagiarism and its hostile attitude toward Romanies (Lee 2000, Matras 2004, Mayall 2004), Grellman's book represented the first systematic study of the Romanies and their language. It was a study, Lee maintains, that strongly influenced the members of the GLS and "became a central and pivotal source, the primary master-text for intertextuality in Romani studies for the next two hundred years, and still heavily influences writers about Romanies" (Lee 2000, 134).

Based on linguistic comparisons, Grellmann's main premise was that that Romanies originated from India and were not from Egypt, as had previously been widely suggested. The book generated widespread interest in the Romanies. However, the wider significance of Grellmann's work was the manner in which he delineated boundaries and definitions to describe who and what were the Romanies. Lee noted that, "[f]rom the outset, Grellmann's work was Orientalist, in the sense that he assumed *a priori* that the Gypsies had 'an Oriental mind' (Lee 2000, 135). This marked a shift in Romani identity discourses, as observed by Mayall: "The Gypsies were now categorically identified as a 'race,' a term used by Grellmann in the text of his study and possibly the first example of its use in English in relation to the Gypsy people" (Mayall 153, 2004).

Grellmann's book set the agenda and the gypsilogists who followed focused upon the same academic themes put forward by Grellmann. Lee noted that "The concepts and perspectives that Grellmann introduced have become sedimented in both scientific and lay discourse during the last two centuries and have provided discursive rationalisation and legitimisation for a wide range of both scholarly studies and of state practices towards Romanies," (2000, 137). That is, the GLS gypsilogists as a group were ardent in their determination not only to "find the final solution of the Gypsy problem" (*JGLS* 1888, 1) through continued study of Romani dialects, but with the description of a homogenous and timeless Romani culture, as discovered through fieldwork encounters, and with the identification and maintenance of a measurable racial purity among Romani groups. One of the methods members of the GLS used to measure

racial purity was language. John Sampson's body of research was particularly concerned with language, and his belief, which proved to be false, that he had discovered the ancient Romani language. John Sampson's individual contributions will be considered in more detail in Chapter Four.

The popularity of Grellmann's book was such that he is often said to be the one who first proved through philological evidence the Romanies' Indian origins; however, the credit for that discovery actually belongs to another lesser-known writer and philologist, Johan Rudiger (1751-1822). Although Rudiger suffered from some of the same romantic misconceptions and patronizing attitudes common in that time (Matras 1999), had his work and outlook, been more widely received, the history of gypsology might have taken a different turn. As it was, he remained overlooked to the extent that it is Grellmann who is most often cited as the man who proved the origins of the Romanies. In a 1782 essay called "On the language and Indian origin of the Gypsies" (Matras 1999) which predates Grellmann's work, Rudiger provided original evidence of the link between Romani languages and Hindi/Urdu. The major difference between Rudiger's work and Grellman's is that Rudiger's work sharply criticized the generations of racism suffered by Roma at the hands of Europeans. Rudiger framed his research in a manner that was "sympathetic to the Gypsies, and very critical of society's treatment of them" (Matras 2004, 57). Rudiger's and Grellmann's work differs in other ways, too: Rudiger analysed examples of the Romani language he had obtained himself, while Grellmann is accused of plagiarism; Rudiger ultimately claims not to know why the

Romanies left India (although he poses some suggestions), while Grellmann postulates that the Romanies originated from the lowest caste of Indians; Rudiger cites linguistic evidence which supported years of contact with Europeans, while Grellmann put forward the hypothesis that Roma remained an almost completely closed group, unchanged by their time in Europe and contact with Europeans. Matras pointedly says that in his research and writing Rudiger is “not pursuing the exotic” (Matras 2004, 58) in the manner that Grellmann did—and in the manner of the gypsologists of the GLS who followed in Grellmann’s footsteps. Unlike the gypsologists who followed, Rudiger’s text concerned itself with the more modern context of the Romanies who were facing discrimination at every turn. By arguing that the basic human rights of the Romanies be respected and by locating the Romanies in modern contexts while refraining from speaking for all Romanies, Rudiger’s work represents an alternative to the methods of academic inquiry in which the Romanies engaged. What is important here is that Rudiger was Grellmann’s contemporary; the society members chose to engage in academic work which continued Grellmann’s tradition, rather than take up Rudiger’s human rights focus, which situated the Romanies as modern peoples. Wrote Matras:

Several points in Rüdiger’s socio-political discussion reflect the enlightener and enlightened in him. First, he understands social conflict as a situation, which arises due to a clash of cultures. The Gypsy culture, however romanticised or simplified, is in Rüdiger’s view nevertheless an equal and legitimate system of norms and attitudes. Second, he is sensitive to historical and political contexts and the effect they are likely to have on random events. He regards the point of arrival of Gypsies in central Europe as such a random event, which only triggers hostility because it falls into a period of

general instability and social-political unrest. Third, Rüdiger's sympathy with the underdog is instinctive, only to be followed by reflection. This impression is supported by the rather superficial knowledge he has of Gypsy society. But although he replicates stereotypes, he does not replicate hostility. . . . Rüdiger does not pass judgement, and he has little knowledge beyond linguistic data, but he sympathises. Finally, Rüdiger is a reformer. He reminds society of its own modernised moral codes and demands that their implementation be extended to offer justice and protection to the Gypsies. . . . (1999, 93)

The GLS gypsologists who took Romani philology as a part of their research (as did John Sampson) could have chosen to follow Rudiger's empirical and scientific approach, an approach which did not allow social characterizations to dominate scientific research (Matras 1999); they could have enlarged upon his methods, his concerns for social welfare, and the historical context in which he places conflicts between Romanies and settled populations. Instead, the gypsologists more often followed in Grellmann's footsteps; Grellmann's book was repeatedly cited by various gypsologists and, like Grellmann, GLS gypsologists everywhere went looking for, and found, the exotic when conducting research with Romani people.

## 2.6. George Borrow (1803-1881)

In the last edition of the first series of the *JGLS*, then-president Leland described writer George Borrow "as our pioneer" in his farewell article "What we have done" (Leland 1892, 194). In so doing, Leland was paying tribute to the man whose



imaginative re-creations of Romanies inspired generations of academic and non-academic interest in a people and their way of life. Yet, as shall be examined below, even the gypsologists whose interest originated within Borrow's books, could not credit his depictions as accurate.

George Borrow's novels and travelogues about his experiences throughout Europe shaped not only a generation of gypsologists--most of whom credited Borrow as their inspiration--but also popular conceptions of the Romanies during and after his life. He is "thought to have brought the cult of Gypsyism into widespread popularity" and "it is claimed that he was the prime inspiration for the development of the folkloristic side of Gypsy studies and that he had a 'profound effect' on how the group came to be seen and understood" (Mayall 2004, 156). Among his most popular books were: *The Zincali*, *The Bible in Spain*, *Lavengro*, and *Romany Rye*.

Borrow's popularity was due, in part, to his methods. When he first began writing about Romanies, he was not only one of very few who wrote about Roma, but he was the first to engage in what might loosely be called fieldwork. This unique method--spending time with, and learning from, Romanies--was, along with many of Borrow's stereotypical representations of Romanies, replicated by the GLS gypsologists. Historian and Romani Studies scholar David Mayall wrote that "[t]his method of having personal contact with the Gypsies, and even in some instances befriending them, was common to many writers after Borrow" (Mayall 2004, 157).

The Romanies in Borrow's books were not a diverse people acting and responding to historical and modern events; instead, they appeared as a single homogenous group who shared one culture, language and appearance, and who, since their initial migration, existed outside of history and historical events (Mayall 2004). In this way, the books which sparked such widespread interest across Britain also worked to support racial definitions of Romanies. Borrow believed that some Romanies were 'real' and others were not. The division between these two centered upon the assumption that certain attributes were more authentic than others, an assumption that found fertile ground in the work of the GLS gypsologists. In his article, Lee noted how Borrow's beliefs led to popular discourses about Romanies which defined 'real' Romanies as a sort of ideal type and the 'non-real' Romanies as corrupted and prone to criminality:

in his writings Borrow introduced and popularised two crucial concepts that were central in the development and perpetuation of Gypsylorism: that of the *true Romany*, and that of the *Romany Rye*, each of which has been embedded in discourse to the present. . . . The 'true Romany' is essentially a discourse that privileges a particular constellation of attributes as constituting an 'authentic' Romani identity. The popularity and attraction of Borrow's representations for many middle-class Victorians effectively sedimented a crucial distinction between the 'true Romany' on the one hand and other types of nomads and itinerants (who were constructed as degenerates, and therefore suspect and dangerous) on the other. (2000, 138)

Borrow's concern was not with accuracy, but with story; it was in service to narrative that he sacrificed factual reliability so much that he was "accused of being careless and inaccurate in his writing, and of changing histories, relationships and

circumstances” (Mayall 2004, 160). All the same, Borrow’s books, particularly the early books, were popular with the general public and therein lies the strength of their influence. Mayall described Borrow’s books in the following manner:

“his works are a combination of philology, spiritual autobiography, romantic travel journalism, records of picaresque adventures, and missionary calls for salvation. In this way Borrow was drawing together a number of strands, taking in the early nineteenth-century passion for evangelism and Christian reform, the recent vogue for linguistic study and a fascination with groups living outside mainstream society. The picture that Borrow presented was coloured and impressionistic rather than accurately descriptive. (Mayall 2004, 160)

Although many of the gypsologists claimed his work as the source of their inspiration, Borrow’s work was ultimately rejected by the GLS because of its lack of academic rigor. Desiring the respect which came with the academy and science, the GLS gypsologists did not closely associate themselves with Borrow’s research methods. These new gypsologists sought acceptance into the realm of the new sciences of philology and ethnology. Nord observed that: “many of these new gypsologists aspired to a level of philological and theoretical sophistication that would gain them academic respectability, if not university positions” (2006, 127). Romani Studies scholar and one-time president of the George Borrow society Angus Fraser (1928-2001) described the gypsologists who in a few years would form the GLS as “men who were little inclined to look to George Borrow as a master, even though it was the magic of Borrow’s writings that had attracted most of them onto the Gypsy tRail” (Fraser 1990, 2). Borrow’s methods were certainly

unscientific and unsystematic even by the standards of the GLS gypsologists, whose own methods are also accused of suffering from the same faults. Still, however imperfect, Borrow's work was the bridge over which the gypsologists walked to come to their academic discipline. Borrow's influence was inescapable: Borrow was echoed in their 'academic' descriptions of the Romanies they met; and Borrow's influence could be seen in their own search for 'true' Romanies wherever they went.

What was so attractive, then, about Borrow's writing? The forbidden. Borrow's stories about travel and interactions with Romanies he met along the way represented an alternative way of life that was off limits to the respectable Victorian academic gentleman. Borrow's influence lay in the "feeling evoked in his writing which excited the imagination and offered a glimpse of an unrespectable world, and also, importantly, in the fact that his works appeared at a time when there was still very little else of any substance being produced about the group" (Mayall 2004, 162). In this sense, it wasn't necessarily the Romanies who were the attraction, but the 'unrespectable' world they represented, a world outside of Victorian values and strictures. In essence, the gypsologists were more fascinated by the possibility of escape from the portions of their own society they found stifling than fascinated by the Romanies themselves. The gypsologists were fascinated less by the Romani identities and cultures they purported to study than they were by the imaginative space Borrow's books opened up within their own lives, spaces in which they could play with and realize aspects of their own identities in a way not possible within the confines of Victorian society, as discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

## 2.7. The other club: the fight for hegemonic dominance

Already noted by Romani Studies scholars (Fraser 1990; Nord 2006) is the ease with which scholars today can critique and eventually condemn out of hand the work that appeared in the first series of the *JGLS*. Yet, it is also easy to present a historical moment as one-dimensional by stating that the contributing writers to the *JGLS* were ‘men of their time,’ a saying which implies that there were no other options for acting or believing. This erases historical contexts, textures and layers and, in the case of the men associated with the *JGLS*, a close look at history shows that other approaches to gypsology were ignored and even suppressed by the members of the GLS. This evidence demonstrates that the GLS gypsologists were more than just men and women who believed the same things everyone else believed about Romanies, but that they were men and women who made choices about how to portray Romanies and how to frame their academic research. It is important to recognize that these choices existed and that similar choices exist today; the Romani Studies scholar today faces similar choices about the portrayal of Romanies and which academic framework to follow while conducting research. It has already been demonstrated that the work of Rudiger was ignored in favour of Grellmann’s. In a 2004 article, Lee brought to light other alternative voices which rarely enter the historical account. Indeed, using Gypsylorism as his framework, he argued that these alternatives to GLS gypsology were actively silenced so that the GLS discourses could maintain their dominant position in academic and non-academic society. His article will be discussed in

this section to provide a deeper historical context for the understanding of the production of academic knowledge by the GLS gypsologists. Like Lee, I proceed with the belief that what has not been said or what has been suppressed is as important as what has been said (2004).

“Tales in a Tent” is a performance of discourses of specific beliefs about Romani identities played out in the *JGLS* which are the result not only of the earlier work and influence of Grellmann and Borrow, but of many turnings away from other possible discourses. As part of the *JGLS*, Sampson’s text is also a part of a performance of the control of the production of knowledge. What is left unsaid is as important as what is said in analyzing power dynamics as they are played out within identity or knowledge discourses. This is true of the gypsologists who “by suppressing alternative possibilities, reinforced their epistemic control in constituting ‘the Gypsies’ (Lee 2004, 31).

As further evidence in support of the hegemonic nature of Gypsylorism, Lee discussed the interactions between the GLS and another club, The Gypsy and Folklore Club (hereafter GAFLC). Lee wrote: “[w]hat has effectively been forgotten and suppressed, and which I am now recalling to memory, is that during the second revival of the GLS from 1907 to 1916, there was an alternative organization that took as its subjects ‘the Gypsies’ and thereby challenging the dominance of the GLS” (Lee 2004, 40). The GAFLC offered an approach that was different than the GLS academic-styled approach and it was interpreted as a very real “challenge to the epistemic dominance and hermetic dilettantism of the GLS” (Lee 2004, 42) by the members of the GLS.

The GAFLC was set up after an exchange between William Townely Searle, described by Lee as “an illustrator and graphic artist, journalist, bit-player actor, bookseller, curio dealer in London” (Lee, 41) and Macfie, in which Searle suggests that he be appointed the GLS’s London correspondent (offering to lend his collection of books about Romanies to members for a fee) so that he could recruit new members to the GLS (Lee 2004). Macfie responded by suggesting that Searle start a salon, at which Romanies and admirers could meet; however, Macfie did not consider the effort a serious one, referring to it as ‘madness’ (Lee, 2004, 42). In 1911 the club opened (and continued until 1914) with the motto “Work is for fools!” (a motto suggested by Macfie) and offered a lecture series, a library, and its own journal. In a letter to John Sampson, Searle noted that the GAFLC had 140 members (more than the GLS), the largest library in the world, and had offered 25 lectures in less than six months (Lee 2004, 42). What had been dismissed as madness became a competitor rather than a complementary (and less important) organization, which caused the GLS to respond in ways that revealed much about their motives as an academic society:

Although the level of scholarship in the GAFLC was never as rigorous as that in the GLS, the GAFLC was nevertheless *at the time* seen as a considerable challenge to the GLS, and in particular was a source of considerable personal vexation to Macfie. Relations between the GLS and GAFLC ranged from an initial enthusiastic assistance through a subsequent exasperated dismay to a final open hostility, culminating in a rancorous legal entanglement..... to indicate the extent to which the amnesia or erasure of this history has occurred, and thereby to illustrate the ways in which the current privileged epistemic position of the GLS has been constituted. (Lee 2004, 40-41)

Because the GAFLC was less scientific in style, members of the GLS were concerned that their journal would become confused with Searle's journal, which, in their minds, would erode their ability to access academic authority: "More importantly for my argument, though, Macfie was concerned about the possible impact of Searle's journal on the position and status of the GLS" (Lee 2004, 43). The GLS membership feared that the GAFLC would be considered by the public as an organization of "equal merit" (Lee 2004, 45). At first GLS members became members of the GAFLC and even contributed to its journal, but this was quickly reversed as the GLS gypsologists attempted to distance themselves from the GAFLC. The distancing took the form of printing texts in the *JGLS* about the GAFLC which resulted in Searle suing the GLS and publishing extensively about the lawsuit in the GAFLC journal, much to Macfie's distress (Lee 2004, 45).

What made the GAFLC approach different? It certainly did not offer the kind of empirical standards which made Rudiger's earlier philological work stand out from other similar research. Searle's approach was not exclusive; he seemed to embrace populism, seeking attention with his skill with publicity (Lee 2004). Certainly, he did not reject definitions of Romanies which included the exotic, but instead capitalized on these themes to gain larger audiences. At the same time, Searle also embraced a kind of human rights discourse as part of his club's mandate; and this approach, had it been taken up by the members of the GLS, could have changed the course of Romani studies.

If Searle had been adept enough to wrest the public focus of Gypsylorism from Macfie, then the position of Romani studies today might have been



very different. Unlike the overtly scholarly GLS, Searle supported advocacy on behalf of Romanies, telling Macfie that the GAFLC was 'now forming a Gypsy Protection Society, and getting a list of atchintans [camping sites], Gypsy Lawyers etc.' Searle later suggested that '[if] only legislation could be made with the protection of the Gypsy as its object a great thing would certainly have been accomplished' (Searle 1912, 36). Had such protection occurred in the 1910s, then the position of Romanies in Britain today might have been very different. (Lee 2004, 46-47)

I do not want to state that the course of Romani studies would necessarily have been better had Searle's approach been taken up: it is impossible to tell how history would have played out had one or two factors been altered. It is also important to note that the GLS gypsologists were not only asserting the superiority of their interpretations over those offered by the members of the GAFLC, but over those offered by anyone taking up Romanies as their research subject. The GLS gypsologists staked their claim to Romanies by asserting that only they really *knew* Romanies:

The lorists publicly accused others of falsifying the image of the Gypsies and claimed that their descriptions were the only ones which provided the authentic picture. In saying this the lorists simply shared the same delusion-- that they alone had privileged access to the 'truthful' picture -- adopted by almost all commentators on the group. (Mayall 2004, 102).

Because of this, I do think it is fair that Lee implies that certain aspects of Romani studies could have played out differently had the focus of that academic production been placed upon the contemporary contexts in which Romanies actually lived. But the goals of

gaining access to academic respectability and/or acting out individual fantasies of escape from society ultimately detracted from the accuracy and usefulness of their research.

## 2.8. Conclusion: Alternative histories, alternative futures

John Sampson's "Tales in a Tent" provided a door to the critical analysis of the production of academic knowledge with regards to Romanies as it was performed in the *JGLS* in the journal's first series. This analysis demonstrated how complex was the production of academic knowledge about Romanies in the late 1800s. At the time, knowledge generated about Romanies had little to do with reality or with issues of importance to Romanies themselves. Instead this knowledge was produced in order to build careers and gain respect from peers, the majority of whom expected research conclusions to fall into line with a set of general beliefs already in place about Romanies. In this way the knowledge produced--knowledge which has been the foundation for research by members of the GLS for over a century--is highly suspect. Although the body of knowledge published within the pages of the *JGLS* has been under criticism more recently, the work of demonstrating the unreliability of that knowledge is not finished. The set of core beliefs which underpin the material which was published in the *JGLS* has remained largely unchallenged, and as such, this thesis adds to the body of criticisms which hope to shift Romani studies to a different foundation.

What is at stake when history is analyzed from a different point of view? There are, of course, implications for non-Romanies: regarding mainstream stereotypes in a

more critical manner can lead to improved interactions with Romani people, including interactions between scholarly researchers and their Romani subject. More important, I think, is the impact this has upon Romanies themselves. People with an understanding of their history--including an understanding of the foundations of the (usually harmful) stereotypes which have defined their identities--are people who are empowered to redefine themselves and their future.

Within this framework, performances such as "Tales in a Tent," which appeared in journals that excluded the voices of the very people they were studying, can no longer be published. A new academic framework is taking shape, driven by agendas of the people who have traditionally been the objects of study of the 'other' or the 'exotic': this is part of the decolonial project. This agenda was articulated in part by Hancock, when he wrote: "I call for a new respect and a new cooperation between Romanies and *gadje*, and an end to the nineteenth-century cultural colonialism and neo-Gypsylorism that lives on in only slightly modified guise" (2010, 20). This will be discussed further in the final chapter of this thesis.

## Chapter Three: John Sampson: The Romani Rai

### 3.1 Introduction

I have wondered while writing this thesis what would be uncovered from a critical analysis of the interactions between my own life, beliefs and academic research. What inconsistencies would be challenged and how many hypocrisies laid bare? I am pleased that I chose this course of research so early in my academic career because it encouraged personal reflections about the assumptions and biases I bring with me to my own research and, I hope, improved the quality of research I will conduct in the future and the impact of the writing that will come out of it.

This chapter examines closely the performance of the 'ideal' Rai and how that ideal interacted with Sampson's attempts at research. Sampson's personal life story is explored in relation to how it impacted his research career. I argue that the desire to perform this Rai identity interfered with the objectivity of the research in that the performance of that identity became more important than the performance of academic research. Of particular interest to this chapter is the way in which the performance of the Romani Rai allowed the researcher to move freely between two worlds while Romanies remained locked in one imagined world.

Over the course of my research I noticed variations in spelling of the term Romani Rai: Romany Rye, Romanny Rye, Romany Rai, Romani Rye, Romani Rai, and even more variations. There seemed to be no consistency. The spelling I have chosen to use--Rai--is

an not an arbitrary choice, but made to recognize the self-aggrandisement of the self ascribed Rais of the Gypsy Lore Society.

### 3.2. "The Rai of Rais"

Anthony Sampson was five the year his grandfather, John Sampson, died. More than sixty years later Anthony published a book about his grandfather's life as a Romani Rai called *The Gypsy Scholar* (1997). A British newspaper, *The Independent*, published an obituary on Dec. 21, 2004, which described Anthony Sampson in this way:

Anthony Sampson was one of the great journalists and writers on contemporary affairs of the 20th century - most famous today for his *Anatomy of Britain* (published in 1962) and its progeny; for his official and magnificent biography *Mandela* (1999); and for his lifetime commitment to the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa.<sup>5</sup>

After discussing his major achievements, which were many, the obituary introduced the reader to *The Gypsy Scholar*, and summarized that work in two short sentences:

Subtitled "The Quest for a Family Secret", it is an inquiry into the life, or double life, of his paternal grandfather, John Sampson, a philologist who became drawn into the world of a gypsy tribe in North Wales and, it emerged, contracted a bigamous marriage and fathered a love-child, Anthony's mysterious "Aunt Mary". The book is fascinating and scrupulous and touching.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Obituary, "Anthony Sampson," *The Independent*, Dec. 21, 2004, [www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/anthony-sampson-754481.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/anthony-sampson-754481.html) [accessed May 3, 2011].

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

Next, the article makes an interesting link between John Sampson, the 'Gentleman Gypsy,' and his grandson, stating that John Sampson was:

known by the gypsies as "the Rai", the Gentleman Gypsy, and there was an element in his grandson that qualified him as Gentleman Journalist. Diligent and hard-working, he nevertheless sustained an image as an ever friendly, courteous, charming outsider, with an unflappably patrician voice and demeanour.<sup>7</sup>

There is little written about John Sampson as an individual or about the details of his life. Of the GLS gypsologists, only one other received extended biographical attention: Augustus John, whose skill in figure drawing was the reason for his relatively widespread fame. Sampson's biography was written by a grandson as a way to air family secrets, rather than to celebrate a well-known figure. Most of the biographical details in this chapter depend upon Anthony's book. As a source, Anthony's credibility is based upon the excellent reception of his many non-fiction books (an incomplete list: *Anatomy of Britain*, 1962; *Mandela*, 1999; *The Changing Anatomy of Britain*, 1982; *The New Europeans: a guide to the workings, institutions and character of contemporary Western Europe*, 1968) and his work as a journalist for a variety of newspapers throughout his life. In the first chapter of *The Gypsy Scholar* Anthony described the depth of his research, which involved:

. . . [an] engrossing paper-chase of discoveries, false trails and sudden treasure. In London I looked more carefully through the two black tin boxes in my cellar which held my grandfather's letters. In the London Library I

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<sup>7</sup> Obituary, "Anthony Sampson," *The Independent*, Dec. 21, 2004, [www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/anthony-sampson-754481.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/anthony-sampson-754481.html) [accessed May 3, 2011].

pored over volumes of the Gypsy Lore Society. . . In Edinburgh I made more visits to Aunt Mary, now in her eighties, to try to coax small hints from her. In North Wales I fond the small village and the house where my grandfather had spent holidays pursuing his gypsy studies and young women. At the National Library of Wales at Aberystwyth I found the Augustus John archive containing many of my grandfather's best letters. (Sampson 1997, 7)

Anthony described the thrill of following clues with which he hoped to unravel the many mysteries which remained unsolved about his grandfather's life. He neatly summed up this research:

. . . the cellars of the Library revealed a much more intimate story: the well-documented Sampson archives preserved secrets which he had diligently concealed in his lifetime. one envelope held bawdy verses to his academic colleague Dora Yates which left no doubt about their true relationship. Other envelopes contained letters from his university colleagues which revealed their wild adventures behind the facades of academe. Still others disclosed bitter wrangles between the two sides of the Rai's family over his funeral and began to explain the traumas that lurked behind my father's silence. In those cellars I was exorcizing a family ghost. (Sampson 1997, 9)

However, Anthony's perspective was one of a relative who was intent upon providing an interesting and, where possible, positive narrative, about his grandfather. Moreover, some passages in the books show that he, too, was drawn to some of the romanticized stereotypes of Romanies and to a romanticized notion of what it meant to be a Romani Rai, as demonstrated in the following passage:

My search also brought to life the lost world of the rural gypsies which had so enthralled the Rai and his coterie of scholars, artists and writers a century ago. Faded letters from half-literate gypsies, sepia photographs of Romani

families. . . all conjured up the thrilling pursuit of the dark-skinned people who kept appearing and disappearing in the wild corners of Wales, slowly giving up the secrets of their language, and hence their origins. I began to understand the power of the gypsy spell, and the longing for an alternative society, as the last fling of the Romantic movement before the twentieth century closed in on it. (Sampson 1997, 9)

Anthony also wrote a condensed biography of John Sampson which was published in Saul and Tebutt's book, *The Role of the Romanies* (2004).

The first chapter of Anthony's book is titled "The Silence," a reference to Anthony's father whose silence about Anthony's grandfather was interpreted by Anthony as a clear rejection of John Sampson's life and work. Inasmuch as the work of John Sampson is important to this thesis, the silence remarked upon by Anthony is part of this chapter as it speaks to interactions between the role of the Romani Rai and other parts of Anthony's life.

John Sampson died in 1931. As an adult, Anthony wrote that he could "still visualize a formidable but magical old man with a big bald head and strong chin, who played with us in the garden" (Sampson 1997, 1). The memory of John Sampson was probably forged much more solidly in young Anthony's mind as a result of the awkwardness and the half-stories and hints he heard from his mother. As he grew older, Anthony came to understand certain objects around his house were associated with his grandfather, such as a drawing "of a gypsy gazing at a seductive girl" (Sampson 1997, 1), a book of folktales and the dictionary of the Romani language, compiled by John



Sampson. More than objects though, Anthony was drawn to what was said about his grandfather--and what was not said. He wrote that:

... after his death his spirit seemed to hover as a shadow over both my parents. My mother would sometimes talk about him with a dread which could only fascinate a child--about his ferocious temper, his heavy drinking, his wicked but unstated habits, and about a woman in Liverpool, 'the wretched Dora', who apparently stood between him and our family. (Sampson 1997, 1)

It is clear from this passage that John Sampson was a complicated man. Sampson not only bridged two worlds, but was, I argue, torn between them. He could not leave behind his Victorian British upbringing even as he so clearly desired to throw it all away. Although Sampson was reputed to have been made welcome in the camps of Romani families, he was ultimately rejected by his wife and son: Sampson and his wife eventually separated and Sampson's son had little contact with his father and refused to talk about him with his own family. Anthony wrote that:

... my mother told me how the gypsies called my grandfather 'the Rai', the gentleman or scholar. But my father was always reluctant to talk about him. . . that the family was under a curse for which the mysterious Rai was somehow responsible. He seemed to hold a spell over anyone who had known him, to be linked to those mysterious gypsies. Yet his memory in the family seemed to have gone up in smoke, like a caravan at a gypsy funeral. (Sampson 1997, 2)

Nowhere was this collision between two worlds more obvious than at Sampson's death. In the book *Gypsies and the British Imagination*, Deborah Nord opened the fifth

chapter, the chapter which discusses the GLS, with a description of John Sampson's funeral. She wrote: "In November 1931, John Sampson, linguist, librarian of the University of Liverpool, and author of the monumental study *The Dialect of the Gypsies of Wales*, received a proper Gypsy funeral" (Nord 2006, 125). A passage in *The Scholar Gypsy* described portions of the funeral as well, "which in 1931 had briefly dominated the headlines of the popular papers" (Sampson 1997). That both writers, one academic and the other non-academic, employed accounts of Sampson's funeral to introduce the complex nature of the identity of a Romani Rai speaks not only to the entertaining and unusual aspects of the funeral, but to its revealing performance. At Sampson's request, the executor of his estate, Dora Yates, organized a procession of Romanies, gypsologists, and friends to walk to the top of Foel Goch in Wales to scatter the ashes. As a performance, Sampson's funeral parade offered:

. . . a glimpse into the strange world of the Gypsy Lore Society. . . Many of its salient features are visible in this drama: the close contact between the many lorists and the Gypsies whose language and culture they studied, an aura of theatricality, the central and largely unacknowledged role of Yates in keeping alive the society and tending to its business and members, tensions between the bohemian lorists and the bourgeois families they sought to elude, the sexual adventurism of some male lorists, and a persistent mix of serious scholarship and nostalgia for customs and rituals that seemed to defy modernity. (Nord, 126)

Not only Sampson's funeral, but much of Sampson's adult life, embodied the tension between the performance of the complex identities of the Romani Rai and those identities imposed by respectable British society. Indeed, the Romani Rai identity itself

presented two faces, one for Romanies and one for British society. As tribute to his dedication to gypsology, his passion, lifelong devotion, prolific academic contributions and, above all else, his perceived acceptance among his Romani contacts, John Sampson was known of the 'Rai of Rais' (Sampson 1997; Mayall 2004).

### 3.3. Looking at the Romani Rai

Being a text which describes activities in which only a Rai would have engaged, "Tales in a Tent" is a text about the performance of Rai and as such a more critical understanding of the term is indispensable to this analysis of the text. The following analysis considers definitions of Rai: initially considered are definitions offered by Rais themselves, which reveals what the most important aspects of the Rai performance were to the very people engaged in the performance; considered after that, and in greater length, are definitions offered by scholars of Romani Studies, which provide critical and historical complexities to the Rai performances.

GLS gypsologist T.W. Thompson wrote an extended definition of the Rai in a review published in the new series of the *JGLS*. This definition focuses entirely upon the feelings of the gypsologist when with Romanies. In Thompson's view, then, the Romani Rai is one who 'feels' a particular way when he is with Romanies. Mayall cited Thompson's definition:

[The Rai is] a rare and perhaps peculiar type, a type that few really know and understand. . . . [The Rai] regards these outcasts, these wandering Pariahs, as something more than a backward race who can provide him with

interesting and valuable anthropological data: the very thought of them somehow stimulates him; the mere chance of meeting them thrills him; his every encounter with them is an adventure to him, an adventure full of mysterious possibilities; he can almost become as one of them, for he can think and feel as they do, and he can think and feel with them; he would often like to throw in his lot with them, not temporarily or for ulterior motives (to wit the better collection of anthropological material) but for ever and for the pure joy of the thing, yet somehow he usually stops short of this last act of devotion. This romantic, impassioned sympathy for the Gypsy race. . . is the dominant characteristic of the Romany Rai. (Mayall 2004, 167)

This definition focuses on different aspects than does Sampson in the definition of Rai offered in "Tales in a Tent." Sampson does not mention feelings, but focuses upon the role and the actions of the Romani Rai. "Tales in a Tent" opens with a short description of traveling to the tent of a Romani family with the last name of Gray. There, Sampson is greeted, not with his own name, but with the title 'Rai.' A woman named Deliah, with whom Sampson is familiar, asks for an interpretation of a dream she had had the night before. This leads to a paragraph-long reflection upon the many roles embodied by the Rai.

Willi nilli we suggest an interpretation, for besides acting as private secretary, legal, medical, and spiritual advisor, general arbiter, and tobacco-jar to his Rommany friends, the complete Rai is supposed to possess a more or less exact knowledge of divination. The Gypsy assumption that one has successfully made all knowledge one's province is often not a little embarrassing, yet I like to think that something more than this delusion suggested to old Gray's mind his beautiful comparison of a Rommany Rai,

surrounded by a group of eagerly inquiring Gypsies, to “Christ sittin’ in de midst of his disciples.” (Sampson 1892, 211)

Sampson’s definition is bounded by role and action and merely implies the feelings of the Rai, those of pleasure and increased self-esteem; Thompson’s definition defines the Rai as someone who experiences a ‘thrill’ when he encounters a Romani.

The sexual overtones in Thompson’s definition are telling. One chapter in *The Role of the Romanies* focuses not only upon the creation of the sexualized identity of Romani women as portrayed through artistic renderings or written text, but also upon the sometimes sexualized nature of the interactions between Rais and romani women.

Hancock asserts that an integral part of the definition of the Rai identity included the appearance at least of gaining access to Romani women. The words used in the passage evoke sexuality: stimulation, passion, thrill. In answering the question ‘what is a Rai?’

Hancock wrote:

For some ryes at least, it seems to have had a more specific in-group meaning: managing to bed a Romani woman. Thus, in a letter dated 6 November 1908, Augustus John wrote to fellow gypsylorist Scott Macfie: “I have recently taken it upon myself to confer the title of Rai upon a friend of mine—one Percy Wyndham Lewis, whose qualifications, the having coupled and lived in a state of copulation with a wandering Spanish romi in Brittany, seemed to me upon reflection to merit the honourable and distinctive title of our confraternity.” (Hancock 2008, 184)

Folklorist Debora Kodish wrote about the role of gender relations in research.

Ethnographic descriptions written by male folklorists of interviews with female subjects:

resonate with a marked, if unacknowledged, sexuality. Male collectors appear as powerful, magical outsiders, folktale heroes initiating action and reestablishing value. Female informants appear as passive vehicles, unwitting receptacles of knowledge, silent, unspeaking, to be wooed and won into speech. The process of collecting folksongs (or tales) resembles the awakening of a silently sleeping beauty. These are sexualized conquests. (Kodish 1987, 575)

Yet, when asked to describe the meeting with the folklorist, the women who had been interviewed framed the interview in a very different manner, highlighting the contexts of work, family and interruption; in their descriptions the encounter with the folklorists held very different meanings. Originating from different imaginations, these different descriptions highlight the way researchers' own beliefs can shape how he or she interprets an event and how that event is later represented. In the same way that "gender relations are constantly present as sub-texts, as powerful and present themes within the stories that folklorists tell themselves" (Kodish 1987, 573), gender relations presented unacknowledged sub-texts in the research of the GLS gypsologists. But these sub-texts do not exist only in terms of gender. These sub-texts can exist also in terms of relations with the 'other'. The performance of Rai implied a series of sub-texts related to gender, race, and culture. As the male folklorists in Kodish's essay interpreted their encounters with women through sexualised filters, so too the GLS gypsologists interpreted their encounters through 'Rai' filters, which included the sexualization not only of Romani women, but a sexualization of encounter with all Romanies.

Sexual overtones are absent in Sampson's definition in "Tales in a Tent." Instead, according to the paragraph in Sampson's text, the Rai can be interpreted as a god-like figure who is received like Christ by Romanies who know him. The Rai is expected to know something about everything, to possess a god-like insight, and to dispense his wisdom when required. He possesses a sort of compassionate benevolence which is the source of the love of the Romanies for him. In the text Sampson protests that he finds this role a little embarrassing, but this protestation conveys the opposite meaning, that Sampson enjoyed the role very much. A part of the appeal of being a Rai seemed to be the manner in which one's identity could include the performance--the impersonation--of god. In the Romani camp, the Rai was among people who were well-loved, to be sure, but inherently inferior nevertheless; in all things, even the Romani language (as will be discussed further in Chapter 4), the Rai was superior.

While Sampson eagerly accepted the comparison one Rom man made between him and Christ at face value, the comment on the part of the Rom man could have been part of an overall resistance on the part of Sampson's Romani research subjects. This might represent a bit of artful flattery offered to a self-deluded 'poseur' in order to get something out of him or simply for a quiet laugh at a man who was interrupting daily life. While this analysis focuses upon the inequality that existed between researcher and subject, there is evidence of strategies of resistance employed by Romanies (Mayall 2004). At the same time as GLS gypsologists were performing the Rai, Romanies were performing different versions of themselves for the Rais.

If, as discussed in the second chapter, "Tales in a Tent" is to be seen as a performance of the production of academic knowledge as played out within the role of the gypsologist, then Sampson's actions within the text can be seen as a performance of his identity as a Romani Rai. In fact, in the second paragraph of the "Tales in a Tent," Sampson reflected upon the role of the Romani Rai. This section provided an expression of Sampson's identity as Romani Rai and a glimpse into how he perceived his own role as Romani Rai.

The use of the title 'Rai' among the GLS gypsologists served several purposes. Its most useful purpose, perhaps, was to differentiate between those whose interest in Romanies was motivated by the desire to convert them to Christianity or pressure Romanies into settling. In contrast, the essential Rai wanted Romanies to exist unchanged in the manner it was imagined the Romanies had existed for centuries, with the small but not unimportant exception that the Rai wanted to make himself a part of the Romanies' existence as much as possible for varying, often contradictory, reasons, which will be discussed at more length further. Romani Rais seemed oblivious to the fact that their presence and interference itself constituted the kind of change they rejected within the Romani way of life. Because the origin of the title 'Romani Rai' is unknown, Mayall (2004) speculated that the gypsologists invented it themselves "in order to bestow prestige and status upon their activities" (Mayall 2004, 166), noting that the term Romani Rai appeared at the same time as the gypsologists. In this way the term worked to legitimize activities which would otherwise have brought upon the Rai the weight of



Victorian British disapproval. In "Tales in a Tent" Sampson described a woman greeting him as 'Rai,' but the title "was an honorific that was more often self-ascribed than bestowed by Romanies" (Lee 200, 139). The term clearly divided the researcher from his Roma objects of study, at once marking the Rai as superior while also providing a respectable reason to spend large amounts of time in Romani camps.

In the imaginations of the GLS gypsologists who aimed to be Rais, the term referred to a very knowledgeable, highly regarded gypsologist, one who had made such close friendships with his Romani contacts and understood their ways so well that he was considered a *de facto* Rom--and so one who could claim inviolable authority in his academic conclusions about Romani culture and language. The Romani Rai had privileged access to the Romani world. Translations of the term often offered include gentleman scholar and friend. Ironically, the word 'Rai' holds a somewhat different meaning than friend in the Romani language. In Romanes, Rai "means a person in position of authority, including 'lord' and 'policeman'" (Hancock 2008 184). This translation, 'lord' in particular, is much closer to the description provided in the passage quoted above from "Tales in a Tent. "

Inherent to the role of Rai was the power imbalance by which Rais gained knowledge which they could then trade for academic authority, respectability, and admiration. This power imbalance exists in all ethnography in that the researcher has the power to define and represent the subject. In this sense the research conducted by the Rais can, as an extreme form of (mis)representation, help all researchers think about our own

practices. Yet, the power imbalance between Rai and research subject involved ideologies of race which deepened the imbalance of power already implied by the act of research. The title or Rai "privileges a particular power/knowledge relationship between the Rai as a favoured outsider, and the 'true Romany' as the source of authentic information within the Romani collectivity" (Lee 2000, 139). Within these relationships, the Romani Rai enjoyed an elevated status which he exploited to gain as much information as possible, the value of which could be exploited for his own career. This status was likely conferred upon Romani Rais for several reasons: Romani Rais brought gifts, however small; Romani Rais brought information from the non-Romani world, which would have been valuable and stimulating, particularly to Romani knowledge producers; as a non-Romani, Romani Rais could act outside of social norms without penalty; the Romani Rai was genuinely interested in Romani language and culture. However the situation was not as simple as that. There is evidence, which will be discussed in more detail later, that the relationship between Romanies and Romani Rais was not as harmonious as was portrayed by Romani Rais and that Romanies at times provided false information to, and invented stories for, Romani Rais. However, it is impossible to ignore that it was only by virtue of the marginalisation of Romanies in Britain at the time of the GLS, Romani Rais were able to enjoy their positions of power. As Lee explained:

Since Borrow's day, what 'Romany Rai' has often meant in practice is that self-appointed gaje 'experts' and 'scholars' created and projected discourses, narratives and representations of Romanies that served their own ends. That is, they were the equivalent of the Orientalist scholars who created the subject of 'The Orient' and 'The Oriental'. (Lee 200, 140)

The role of the Romani Rai was competitive. One needed the approval of other existing Rais to earn the title, a practice which ensured the title was limited only to those who shared their beliefs about Romanies (Lee 2000). The coveted title became a way to regulate dissent:

Rais often claimed to have access to hermetic knowledges denied to those clearly of non-Romani identity or blood and particularly those other gaje scholars of Romani affairs who were not fortunate enough to be accorded the status of Rai. This mediating position, and the claim to privileged access to authentic knowledge, enabled the Rais of the GLS to effectively control the direction of research and scholarship into Romanies. (Lee 2004, 139)

Romani Rais competed not only with each other, but against other gypsologists who might make competing 'truth' claims about Romanies or take gypsology in another direction.

Despite the criticisms which today often follow any analysis of the work and research methods of the Romani Rais, the Rais themselves saw their research as being positive as a whole for Romanies. They interpreted their efforts at friendship and admiration for Romanies--albeit an admiration of a superior being of an inferior one--being positive. The framing of the role of the Romani Rai through a narrow definition of friendship presented a conflict between "the student and the lover, the one objective and scholarly and the other far removed from the position of balanced and dispassionate observation" (Mayall 2004, 176). That the friendship between Romanies and Romani Rais was much more complicated than claimed by the Rais is demonstrated in false

information which was passed on to the Rais, and the descriptions of fieldwork in personal communications between Rais which included hunting analogies in which Romanies were “‘bagged’ as prize trophies” (Mayall 2004, 175). It is true that from a wider perspective the Romani Rais presented positive interpretations of those Romanies they defined as pure-blooded. While Romani Rais did not concern themselves with human rights or do much more than express regret at the racism suffered by Romanies, neither did they advocate the persecution of the Romanies as was seen in Germany (where an estimated 1.5 million Roma were killed by the Nazis during the war). Because the Rais idealized the Romani ‘race’ they studied, they argued for the preservation of that ‘race’(Nord 2006, 153), sometimes using the same arguments that led Nazis to attempt the extermination of Romanies. The idealization pertains to their academic research in that the preconceived identities which Rais constructed prevented them from fully understanding what was really there. Mayall noted this effect in his definition of Rai, which was offered as follows:

In the main they were thought to be of a ‘gentlemanly’ or respectable background, with a scholarly, personal and long-lasting interest in the Gypsies and their way of life. The Rais shared not only a curiosity about the Gypsies and a thinly veiled admiration for the way of life and mode of living, but also a respect for their culture and traditions, and a genuine willingness to befriend the people. The most noted collection of Romany Rais, the members of the Gypsy Lore Society, were keen to promote precisely this image of themselves, claiming that the Gypsy Lore Society was ‘also an association of Gypsy lovers. . . most Gypsy scholars are Gypsy lovers too.’ Their view of the Gypsies was positive and uninfluenced by the negative and critical opinion of others, which they set out effectively to

undermine by what they presented as objective and accurate information.  
(Mayall 2004, 166-167)

Yet, it is the definitions offered by the two gypsologists, Sampson and Thompson (as cited above), that are most revealing in this analysis. Their definitions of Romani Rai had little to do with Romanies--except to express the inferiority of the Romanies by comparison--and had everything to do with personal benefits accrued through the performance of the role. Personal benefits included increased self regard, excitement, escape from British social norms and society, respect from peers, and, if their own accounts are to be trusted, being welcomed into a group like a benevolent god. This last one, when it happened must have made the performance of Romani Rai almost irresistibly attractive, particularly for those gypsologists who felt keenly aware of a lower-than-desired status within British society--to enter a Romani camp and be treated, according to their own accounts, like a king or a god, represented a rise in class status that could never happen in British society. Sampson and Thompson's definitions of Romani Rai did not describe any benefit to Romanies as a whole, beyond Sampson's descriptions of providing advice, information or tobacco. By definition the Romani Rai was a man who felt a certain way and believed certain things about Romanies; a person who conducted research with Romanies but did not support these beliefs could not gain the title Romani Rai. Furthermore, it could be said that it would be impossible for a man who did not share this set of beliefs to perform the role of Romani Rai because the performance itself required that set of beliefs. The half-imaginary romanticised adventures had by Romani

Rais, of the type described by Sampson in "Tales in a Tent" would not have been possible unless the events were viewed through the lens of the beliefs they held. A man with a different set of beliefs would have interacted differently with the Romani families encountered and, even if similar events did unfold, would have interpreted these events in a different way. By defining the Romani Rai through the way a man responded to and felt about Romanies, Romani Rais ensured no dissenting points of view would emerge to compete with their own.

The set of beliefs held by Romani Rais was complex and, at times contradictory. The Rais believed that there existed a pure-blooded group of Romanies whose, culture and way of life were dying out as a result of industrialization, assimilation, and intermarriage. They looked for and believed in a ur-language, an ancient Romani language that had been maintained, unaltered, for centuries. They believed that they could gain access to cultural secrets and while "echoing the spirit and method of the folklorists, [they] aimed at reconstructing the prehistory of a group from the surviving lore and language of the modern-day Gypsies" (Mayall 2004, 170). They believed the 'true' Romani to be noble and regretted any sign of the loss of the 'true' culture. Because of this, Romani Rais regretted the increased tolerance within the general society for Romanies, believing that tolerance led to assimilation, which in turn led to the corruption of Romani culture. Mayall described how the Romani Rais managed the inconsistencies in their beliefs:

For the most part the lorists did not incorporate any real investigation into the nature and extent of the intermixing and intermarriage into their studies,

despite the fact that this process was recognised elsewhere as having taken place from the time of the sixteenth century onwards. To have done so would have threatened their core belief in the existence of the pure-blooded Romany. Intermixing became an explanation of the decline of the race by the time of the late nineteenth century, with the implication that this was therefore a recent process. The notion of racial purity could only be upheld if it was believed that, historically, the Gypsies had resisted assimilation and intermarriage and maintained their isolation and independence from the host society. Although the evidence, some of which they themselves provided, pointed to opposite conclusions, the lorists managed this contradiction by either ignoring it or locating it as a recent phenomenon. (Mayall 2004, 177)

While Romani Rais professed to love Romanies, they did not love all Romanies equally: Rais idolised the isolated and marginalised existence of Romanies who continued to practice what the Rais believed was their 'real' culture and speak their 'real' language; the belief system of the Rais held little respect for Romanies who managed change, adapted, learned the ways of their host cultures and did not recognize that all Romanies had changed and adapted over the centuries. In a article published in the *JGLS* in 1890 Sampson wrote that "[t]he old race is dying out and leaves no successors. Closer contact with civilisation, changed conditions of life, misdirected and unscientific philanthropy are rapidly reducing their customs and traditions to a dead letter, and their language to an ungrammatical jargon" (Sampson 1890, 80-92). This belief ultimately led Rais to reject policies which were aimed to reduce the marginalisation of Romanies and increase their participation in British society. Nord concluded that the Rais' dedication to the

preservation of Romanies--unchanged and displayed like museum artifacts--actually worked against the best interests of Romanies:

Their fantasy of an Edenic Romany existence, the result of projection and an ultimately self-regarding nostalgia, often limited their ability to acknowledge the Gypsies as independent beings subject to change and possessed of a complex history. At the same time, however, the fantasies to which they clung were undermined by their dedication to serious scholarship and their impressive knowledge of Gypsy language and life, and their romanticizing impulses were matched by a championing of Gypsy existence that served to sustain a reviled and harassed minority. (Nord 2006, 127)

Change, adaptation and increased tolerance might have meant a better life for Romanies; to Romani Rais the effects of change, adaptation, and increased tolerance deprived them of the kind of playground to which they sought unfettered access. In the sense that Romani Rais sought camps of Romanies as an escape, for excitement, for a 'thrill', the families, lives and camps of Romanies were indeed playgrounds to Romani Rais.

The play aspect to the research of the Romani Rais is evident in Sampson's "Tales in a Tent." The tone Sampson writes in is light and humorous; Sampson chooses to relate anecdotes which amplify this tone and are intended to make the reader chuckle (as will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter); it is clear that Sampson's research adventure, as performed in the text, is not a serious adventure, but a fun adventure. This lack of serious tone comes through in the paragraph relevant to this chapter, Sampson's description of the Romani Rai. Perhaps the most explicit way to demonstrate this is to consider descriptors Sampson did not use in "Tales in a Tent." Although we must keep in



mind that Sampson does not indicate that this paragraph is an all-encompassing definition of the Romani Rai, it can be argued that the everyday casualness of the definition reveals even more about the working definition of the Romani Rai in that Sampson was conveying in this text the most important aspects of the performance and excluding what was not essential. Sampson does not describe the Romani Rai in academic terms, as a researcher, philologist, or historian but instead describes the Rai through interactions with Romanies--interactions which are predicated on a particular set of beliefs and power imbalances as described above. The Romani Rai is not described as a student of, or dependent upon, the Romanies, as must have been the case in that the Rais usually went looking for cultural and language information; in fact, Sampson's definition clearly sets up the Romani people as the sole beneficiaries of the interaction between Rai and Romani. The Romani Rai is not described as receiving anything from Romanies at all, although at the very least he benefitted from the hospitality of Romanies during the course of his research and at most was dependent upon the good will of the Romani group with which he had become friendly for the information he clearly wanted. The list could go on, but the point is that the Romani Rai described by Sampson was framed within a clear power dynamic which benefitted the Rai, but which also reflected an atmosphere of frivolity and fun such as experienced during a vacation. Nord noted similar dynamics with regard to the entire group of GLS gypsologists:

... there can be, then, no doubting the enthusiasms and passion of this small and sincere group of antiquarians, folklorists, genealogists and philologists. Gypsies were their hobby and Gypsying was their relaxation. Many took to the roads each year, sometimes for months at a time, which

was indicative of the fact that some of the Gypsy lorists were also men of leisure with independent sources of income. The intellectual, social and artistic eminence of those engaged in studying Gypsies was emphasised in case anyone doubted whether this hobby was a sufficiently respectable activity. (Nord 2006, 127)

Mayall framed the hobbying as a last-minute attempt to enjoy a way of life that was disappearing. The urgency insinuated in the desire to experience the vestiges of a dying race suggests a serious tone, but more important was the enjoyment desired by Romani Rais:

The Rais, coincidentally living at an epochal and critical moment in the long history of the Gypsy people, were indulging in a unique experience which would not be available to later generations. They were desperate to bathe in the charm of the true Gypsies, and their picturesque encampments on the village greens, while they were still around. (Mayall 2004, 170)

Certainly there are echoes of the concern about the fate of a dying race expressed in the last few paragraphs of Sampson's "Tales in a Tent", but the rest of the 11-page text focuses upon how Sampson 'bathes in the charm' of the idiosyncrasies of one Romani family.

To non-gypsologists, the passion of the Romani Rais all looked a little bit over the top. The Rai widely attributed with the most thorough academic research methods, Francis Hinde Groome, was considered the victim of something like an illness: Dorson, in his book-length history of the folklore movement, noted that Francis Hinde Groome suffered from a "single-minded, obsessive interest. Gypsies intrigued and eventually

possessed him” (Dorson 1968, 270). Other scholars were critical of Rais’ research and wanted to distance themselves from their work: “other folklorists were said to be critical of the Gypsy lorists’ methods and results, perhaps fearful that their own work would be looked upon less favourably as a result, and privately, the Gypsy lorists were even critical of each other” (Mayall 2004, 176). Despite all this, Romani Rai possessed an incredible amount of influence in shaping the discourses which framed them and, for the most part, continue to frame Romani identities: the Romani Rai’s racialized depictions of Romani identities remain dominant today.

### 3.4. John Sampson: Scholar Gypsy and Gypsy Scholar

John Sampson’s “Tales in a Tent” is a text which locates Sampson’s performance as the ‘Rai of Rais’ not only within the context of a group of gypsologists who were members of the same society, but also within the performance of his personal life. Not only was Sampson’s decision to pursue gypsology influenced by his personal history, but, like many Romani Rais who became ‘obsessed’ with Romanies, Sampson’s Romani Rai performances overlapped to a large extent with his personal life. Part of Sampson’s enjoyment of the role of Rai was derived from his desire to escape a society which he felt nearly crushed him as a youth, and a wife and family which stifled his ability to perform the role even as it provided a holding place within bourgeois society. Like all Rais, Sampson benefitted from the ability to live a double life, the bourgeois portion of which provided the dual functions of providing cover for his research activities and a place of

comfort and power to return to whenever needed. However, living in two worlds could get complicated.

Growing up in a family which struggled to make ends meet--“on the edge of poverty” (Sampson 1997, 12)--Sampson would have had a keen awareness of his own and his family’s vulnerability. Sampson had lived in Liverpool since he was nine, a city where poverty was easily visible, easy to fall into, and difficult to shed. He was born in Ireland in 1862 to Sarah Macdermoot and James Sampson, a prosperous mining engineer who lost all his money in a bank crash soon after Sampson’s birth. In 1871, James brought Sampson, his wife, and three other children to Liverpool. Sampson’s father died a year later. Brought up in the Catholic faith and known as Jack by his family, Sampson’s naturally sensitive and observant nature was likely only deepened as a result of the difficulties poverty presented: the sensitivity no doubt deepened by the daily injustices experienced by the poor; the observant nature strengthened in its use as a tool not only to survive but to escape poverty, which he eventually did. Anthony wrote that Sampson’s younger brother said that “he never really understood ‘that strange character that was my brother Jack. . . his brilliant qualities and amazing powers of concentration and deduction that considered no labour too great to perfect everything he undertook to the very smallest detail’” (Sampson 1997, 13). When he was fourteen, Sampson had to leave school to accept an apprenticeship as a lithographer and engraver, a position he would occupy until he was 22. These were difficult years for Sampson, as Anthony noted in a quote which reveals a lot about the inner strength of Sampson, but also his inner conflicts:

Sampson later told his wife how he had fortified himself: When I went to business--quite a small boy--among new people, I thought 'In future I will fight.' It was a very lonely time for me, dear, quite alone, no one to . . . advise me or help me to avoid the worst sort of mistakes: and now almost for the first time looking back at it I feel a little sorry for myself--sorry that my father, who loved me very much, had not been alive to help me. However, fight I did, for anything I wanted, which chiefly was, after all, only to be myself, to do what I wanted, to say what I thought, not to be crushed out or bullied down, to be able to follow what I thought right, chiefly to conquer what I thought was cowardice in myself, but which I now think perhaps may not have been. (Sampson 1997, 14-15)

Such a certainty of his own precarious position in society undoubtedly contributed to Sampson's easy identification with the precarious social position of Romanies. Yet, it also undoubtedly led to Sampson's obvious eagerness to elevate himself to the level of an invulnerable god among the people he so admired; a god cannot be crushed and cannot be accused of cowardice. Yet, these influences, I think, came into being after Sampson's love of philology led him to study the Romani dialects, as we shall see.

Despite working all day as an apprentice lithographer, Sampson remained determined to continue his education. He attended night school and taught himself at home during his spare time. It is clear that Sampson loved collecting and organizing information and it is within this passion that he found the drive to continue his education; what is not clear is how much this self-education also represented to Sampson a way out of a life and work which stifled Sampson's obvious academic and intellectual creativity. Perhaps one piece to that puzzle is the fact that Sampson choose to focus upon a branch

of academic inquiry which was new enough to have areas of inquiry relatively unclaimed by other serious academics, did not yet require formal education, and which involved researchers who were, like Sampson, self-educated. The time was right for a man with Sampson's talents to make his mark in the field of philology. Remarkd Anthony Sampson: "Philology provided rare opportunities for self-taught Victorian scholars from modest backgrounds, and through it men such as Henry Bradley, Joseph Wright and the phenomenal compiler of the Oxford English Dictionary, James Murray, were able to display their scholarship to academia" (Sampson 1997, 15-16). It was during these years as an apprentice lithographer that Sampson first read George Borrow's books. Almost immediately he began to study the Romani language and embarked upon an avenue of inquiry which would define the rest of his life. Although Anthony Sampson remarked that Sampson's original ambition was to become an artist (Sampson 1997, 14), it was philology that became Sampson's defining passion.

At twenty-two Sampson left his apprenticeship and set up his own business as a printer. When the business failed eight years later in 1892, connections made through the course of his early research into the Romani language paid off and he was offered a position as the first full-time librarian of the University College of Liverpool. Nothing suited Sampson better. Anthony quoted Sampson's response: "'I felt myself in Paradise,' he said later. 'It seemed to me a privilege for which the happy holder of the office should pay the Council generously, instead of being paid by the Council. Here one could live amongst books, not as a recluse in his study, but constantly meeting the most delightful

people on the most delightful terms" (Sampson 2004, 18). With a job he loved that paid the bills, Sampson was able to intensify the research he did in his spare time.

Sampson joined the GLS during the first series and played a vital role in the revival of the GLS in 1908. Part of that role was simply the desire to provide a venue to publish his own research (Hooper 2004, 24). Sampson's stature among the GLS gypsologists was such that he was simply referred to as 'the Rai' and, after the First World War, was hailed as 'the Rai of Rais' and a "new generation of scholars emerged to pay him respect" (Sampson 2004, 19). He earned this status not only for his research and published works but also for his ability to recruit and inspire new gypsologists. He was said to possess a charming and social nature, one that drew other like-minded people to him constantly (Sampson 1997). Among his recruits were the well-known artist Augustus John, and Dora Yates, whose tireless work and dedication kept the society alive until her death in 1974.

Sampson's personality aside, it was his body of work which earned him respect even outside gypsology circles. The universities of Oxford and Liverpool both conferred honorary degrees on Sampson. Sampson's published works include: *Gypsy Folk Tales*; the dictionary he worked on for decades called *The Dialect of the Gypsies of Wales*; an anthology of writing about Romanies called *The Wind on the Heath*; a book of poems in Romani composed by Sampson and his friends called *Romane Gilia*; and a book of light, often humorous poetry co-authored with Dora Yates and Lawrence Wright called *In Lighter Moments*. In addition to this Sampson published prolifically, the number of

articles, reviews, notes and folktales contributed to the *JGLS* by Sampson well exceeds sixty.

A single important article launched Sampson's entry into academia, the result of research conducted early in his career. "Tinkers and their Talk" was published in the *JGLS* in 1890, two years before "Tales in a Tent" appeared. Charles Leland had encountered a speaker of Shelta and asked Sampson to conduct research into Shelta because he could not do so himself. Decades later, Sampson's grandson wrote about this research and quoted from Sampson's own written reflections about it:

He was urged by David MacRitchie to investigate [Shelta] further. 'Probably he selected me as the least squeamish of its members,' Sampson wrote. 'But even to me it sometimes occurred that Shelta was a language which no gentleman should be asked to collect.' His real advantage was a willingness to mix with very rough customers in the slums of Liverpool and soon he 'tracked Shelta from one squalid lodging house and thieves' kitchen to another'. At last in spring of 1890 a friendly knife-grinder (who was later jailed for being a fence) directed him to a 79-year-old tinker called John Barlow, who lived in an Irish slum in Liverpool and spoke Shelta as a distinct language. As Sampson wrote: 'From him I collected a complete vocabulary, and from him, too, I obtained words in their purest form and learned to distinguish Shelta from the other jargon mixed with it by the lower orders of grinders and hawkers'. (Sampson 1997, 34-36)

Both Leland and Sampson, however, "completely misinterpreted the linguistic significance of Shelta" (Harper and Hudson 1971, 79). That the discovery and Sampson's role in it was important both to Sampson's burgeoning career and to the reputation of the



*JGLS* is demonstrated in the words of Leland in an article published in the *JGLS* in 1892 called “What We Have Done”:

There existed in England a language the very existence of which had never even been surmised by any English writer, unless it were the omniscient Shakespeare, whose Prince Hal can ‘talk with a tinker in his own language’. This was Shelta. . . . This is, I believe, the only discovery of an unknown tongue ever made in Great Britain, and it was due to the Gypsy Lore Journal that this was distinctly proved and cleared up by Messrs. Sampson and Mayer. (Leland 1892, 195)

Leland later mentions Sampson’s role in the discovery, “who as a Celtic scholar demonstrated the great age and value of Shelta. . . [and] made important collections in it” (Leland 1892, 195).

Although Sampson did make a contribution to linguistics by “demonstrating conclusively that most Shelta words were derived from Irish Gaelic by means of sound substitutions and metathesis” (Harper and Hudson 1971, 80), Sampson was wrong on the very point that so excited him and other gypsiologists. Like Leland and others who wrote on the subject at the time, Sampson concluded that “Shelta was not an argot of relatively recent origin but the remnant of a Celtic language originally spoken by ancient bronze workers and bards” (Harper and Hudson 1971, 79). The supposed antiquity of Shelta was later disproved. In fact, later scholars showed that Shelta was an argot with English syntax and English grammar and noted its similarity to contemporary cant (Harper and Hudson 1971). However, Sampson’s body of research contains “relatively full and accurate data about Shelta” (Harper and Hudson 1971, 79).

Sampson is most famous for the grammar and etymological dictionary of Welsh-Romani (now extinct) which he published in 1926, the result of decades of work. Its publication crowned Sampson's career; it was widely praised and applauded. The following review published in 1927 reveals the excitement with which the book was received and how much respect it earned Sampson:

In this mighty work Dr. Sampson sets the seal on his life-long devotion to Gypsy studies. Our admiration is tinged with awe at the immense labour and unceasing care involved in bringing together and presenting in scientific fashion these myriads of genuine Gypsy utterances. . . We share a thrill at finding so near us a language still essentially Indian, oriental in its retention of aspirated stops, various front spirants and a mobile accent and endowed with a rich flexional system to rejoice the heart of a Schleicher. (Collinson 1927, 114-115)

Another review by T.W. Thomson, published in 1926, provides a glimpse into the depth of Sampson's passion for the subject and offers a look at some of his research methods:

More than thirty years' labour has gone to its making, for it was in 1894, following a chance meeting with the gentle old harper Edward Wood at Bala, that Dr. Sampson began his studies of the Welsh Gypsy dialect. Already an English Gypsy had remarked of him that he would cut a man's heart out if he thought he could discover a new Romani word thereby; and though no Welsh Gypsy has suffered so cruel a fate at his hands, or indeed anything but kindness and entertainment, there have been few, if any, he has not sought out in his quest for specimens of their original language; and apparently very few who have not contributed something of interest or value to his collection, which in course of time grew and grew until it filled more than a hundred notebooks. His original intention was to produce a vocabulary as richly and variously illustrated by actual quotations. . . . This would have been achievement enough for one man, but gradually Dr. Sampson developed other views, with the result that his great dictionary of

the Welsh Gypsy dialect is etymological as well as illustrative. (Thompson, 1926, 94)

The same review hints at the wide scope and reach of Sampson's scholarship as it continues to detail the kind of information found in the dictionary, and notes that interest in the dictionary will be found outside of philology circles:

But doubtless to folklorists the most fascinating part of Dr. Sampson's great work will be the quotations with which his vocabulary is enlivened and humanized. As I have already hinted, he has been prodigal in their provision, drawing now on the folktales and riddles he has assiduously collected, now on the many conversations of which he has kept a record. (Thompson 1926, 96)

In 2002 one scholar wrote that Sampson's book still represented "the most thorough and extensive description" (Matras 2002, 10) of the dialect to date and that Sampson's discussion of historical phonology remains "probably the most detailed discussion" (Matras 2002, 10).

Welsh Romani captured Sampson's imagination not just because he had never heard it, nor heard of it, before: to Sampson, Welsh Romani was the link to history and the speakers of this dialect were 'true' Romanies, their language as free of modern, European corruption as its speakers were assumed to be. In one passage Sampson recalls the first time he heard Welsh Romani in 1894:

... then for the first time I heard. . . the Romani language spoken not as an uncouth jargon, but as a pure Indian idiom, a veritable mother tongue, miraculously preserved from corruption by a single tribe among the hills and

fastnesses of Wales, which they had entered two hundred years before.  
(Sampson 1997, 58)

In a 1909 text published in the *JGLS* Sampson recalls his early days researching the Welsh Romani language. It is an introduction to a folktale he had collected during his fieldwork. In it, Sampson comments on an early enthusiasm that mirrors Thompson's emotion-based definition of the Romani Rais. Then Sampson describes the reason for his excitement: the language he was hearing was the kind of language valued by all Rais in that it was viewed as an uninterrupted link to an imagined past. And finally, Sampson reveals that in this research he feels as if he is living out George Borrow's dream, the man whose writing inspired his Romani research.

This story, taken down from Mathew Wood at Tal-y-Llyn in the summer of 1895, is transcribed from a note-book half-filled with examples of Welsh Romani heard from the harpist Edward Wood in the previous year. And glancing again at these early notes, emphasised by marks of admiration and quadruple underlinings, recalls something of the first glow of enthusiasm which I felt on meeting with this miraculously preserved dialect. Of what stuff must have been fashioned Abram Wood, that 'reputed King of the Gypsies,' who came from Frome in Somerset, that he should have handed down to his descendants a love for the old language which has kept it intact to the present day, and may well maintain it as mother speech for generations to come. Here was deep Romani beyond my wildest dreams! Scotch Tinkler-Gypsy, I knew, had for over a century been merely a jargon, and Anglo-Romani - well! a fairly wide acquaintance with the elder and younger English Gypsies had long destroyed any hope of meeting with pure Rominus in these islands. The last word, I thought, had been spoken by Wester, and, except for the chance discovery here and there of a few unrecorded *lavs*, there seemed little to be gleaned by students of the

language. True, Groome had published specimens of Welsh Gypsy extracted from the letters of John Roberts, but I imagined that the venerable harpist, like Wester himself, must have been a sole survivor, a sort of Romany Dolly Pentreath, the last speaker of the Celtic speech of my Cornish ancestors. And yet here was Edward beside me, unconcernedly discoursing in a dialect hardly less perfect than that of the Tchinghianes, from which it must have separated at least four centuries before.

“Then felt I like some watcher of the skies,  
When a new planet swims into his ken.”

Borrow's Gypsy dream had come true, and I was listening to the language of two or three hundred years ago. (Sampson 1909, 231)

The long quotes with which I have littered this chapter are included not only to provide a sense of how Sampson's work and Romani Rais were perceived in their time, but to provide a sense of the Romani Rais' working methods in general. Many of these working methods were not unlike those of anthropologists who traveled to colonial destinations to conduct research; gypsilogists were the colonialists at home. On an individual basis, each gypsilogist would have done little lasting harm on his or her own; however, as a group, the GLS gypsilogists' methods of research did have long-lasting negative impacts upon the Romanies they studied and worshipped; their discourses were and are used to justify the continued discrimination against and marginalization of Romanies everywhere they live. Sampson seemed to have had real affection and respect for many of his subjects, but the manner in which he conducted his research served to support and amplify a discourse which did not benefit Romanies.

Research, for the Romani Rais, was a bridge between two worlds. Only the Rais were able to walk across that bridge without constraint. Romanies were barred from the bridge entirely and although British non-Rais could cross the bridge, their way would be made difficult if they were not members of the group of Rais who were members of the GLS. It has often been said that Rais longed to escape British society and used their research to avail themselves of that opportunity as often as possible. However, they did not really long to *be* Romani; their status as Rais assured a comfortable place in British society, in which they enjoyed the admiration and respect gained through publishing about their forays into the Romani world. The bridge gave them the freedom to become respected and well-known scholars in one world and self-ascribed gods in another.

There is no doubt that the performance of the Rai identity was not confined to the Romani side of the research bridge. There is no better demonstration of the way Sampson's Rai performance seeped into his family life than at his funeral, introduced earlier in this chapter. Sampson's funeral was a parade which embodied the often conflicting roles of the Rai, as noted by Nord. These conflicting performances revealed themselves in various aspects. Romanies attended Sampson's funeral, played violin, clarinet, dulcimer and harp, enacted some Romani burial rituals and expressed affection for Sampson--playing the part of the friendship with Romanies. Respected scholars and the mayor of Liverpool played out the respected academic role of the Rai performance. Sampson's son Michael was there reluctantly, but refused to talk about Sampson to his family indicating a desire to distance himself from his father's life and playing the part of

family discord in part caused by aspects of the Rai identity performance (Sampson 1997). Fellow Rai, Augustus John, read Romani verses that were written by the Rai and in this performed the Rais' obsession with the language as a connection to an imagined past and their method of taking knowledge from Romanies and shaping it for use in their own cultural contexts. As the executor chosen by Sampson, Dora Yates organized the funeral and attended, in this way playing out the Rai roles of sexual adventurism and bohemianism as Yates had long been one of Sampson's many lovers (Sampson 1997). Absent from the funeral was Margaret, Sampson's wife, with whom Sampson had attempted reconciliation within the previous year and who disapproved of the funeral arrangements (Sampson 1997). Embodying Sampson's secret life was Mary, daughter of Gladys Imlach, who had been one of Sampson's female recruits to the GLS and with whom he also had an affair and maintained a relationship; Mary had grown up seeing her father (who adored her, apparently) during holidays when he could slip away (Sampson 1997), but could not come to the funeral because her existence was still secret. Notably absent too was the son that Sampson was said to have had with a Romani woman (Sampson 1997, 191) and the other children it had been rumored or hinted that Sampson had fathered (Sampson 1997, 191).

If the performance of Rai identities necessitated secrets on the British side of the research bridge, it also necessitated secrets on the Romani side. I refer here to more than simply secrets about sexual relationships or illegitimate children; here I refer to the secret of Romani resistance to the research methods of Rais. A group of Romanies attended

Sampson's funeral, an act which gave voice to the assumed friendship between Romanies and Sampson. Yet, the truth was more complex. Denied a voice or participation in the construction of their own identity discourses, there is evidence that at least some Romanies resisted by providing false or misleading information. Mayall discusses claims that some of Borrow's informants did just this:

Borrow believed that by offering cigarettes, tobacco and money, and by living and sharing their lifestyle, he was accorded privileged access to the group. A typescript note in the Gypsy Lore Society archive at Liverpool offers a perspective on the relationship from the Gypsy side. Writing Dora Yates, a member of the Boswell family remarked that Borrow was considered dishonest and as causing annoyance and offence by publishing stories which had been told to him in confidence. Similarly, Silvester Gordon Boswell, grandson of Wester (1811-1890), one of Boswell's original informants, has written:

Mr Borrow was not always told the truth in return for his half ounce of twist, and there was many a good laugh at his expense after he had left a Gypsy family seated around a stick fire.

Among his family at least, the friendship and trust which had been established had long since been lost, and the idea that Borrow was regarded by the Gypsies as practically one of themselves contains more than a hint of romanticisation. Also, while offering payment of some kind for information is certainly a legitimate and common practice, this is not the romantic image of the Romany Rai who befriended the Gypsies, found their confidence and was given privileged access to their secrets. The relationship was more a commercial transaction than a meeting of intimates. (Mayall 2004, 158)



While it is true that Sampson's research methods were not the same as those employed by his inspiration, George Borrow, the general approach was the same. In "Tales in a Tent," Sampson's definition of Rai includes being a 'tobacco-jar,' which indicates that some exchange was part of the relationship. Sampson readily acknowledges that Romani informants often do not tell the truth, but he blames this on the essential nature of Romanies and there is no suggestion that it might be due to the nature of the relationship formed with the Romani informant. In a review of Sampson's dictionary a Rom man was quoted as saying that Sampson would, "cut a man's heart out if he thought he could discover a new Romani word thereby" (Thompson, 1926, 94). The Rom quoted may have said this as a joke, but even as a joke it reveals that Romanies were aware of Sampson's single-minded drive and that that drive was obvious in his relationships with them to the point that it was plain that the language was more important than the people from whom he collected the language. It is no surprise that Mayall observes that false information was passed to Romani Rais in general, Sampson was no exception (Mayall 2004). Had Sampson listened--had the Romani Rais listened--to Romanies and heard their actions as resistance rather than as evidence for the innate unreliability of Romanies, he and his colleagues would have had to restructure their research methods entirely. But they didn't want to hear what Romanies were saying, because if they had been able to hear what Romanies were saying and take it seriously, then they would have had to discard their most cherished beliefs and acknowledge the complex contextual realities in which Romanies lived.

## Chapter four: Two Societies

### 4.1. Introduction

I love the first line of "Tales in a Tent."

In one sentence the journey away from technology and modernity is completed and my own fantasies of escape from the demands of modern-day city life are awakened: "Ten minutes Railway journey, and a short run across the fields takes us out of the nineteenth century, and into the Grays' tent" (Sampson 1892, 211). On more than one occasion, my own desire to dodge the complexities and demands of life has led me to a nostalgia for a past that never was or to an idealization of a people and culture that is far too simplistic to be realistic. That is why that first line appeals to me: I would like to follow Sampson away from the Railroads and modern technology and into an imagined rural life which (somehow) demands less of me. Each time I read that first line I am reminded that I am critiquing a sketch that, in many respects, I like very much, and that I have decided to study a person with whom, in many ways, I can identify; that has been the source of personal reflection about the beliefs which shape and motivate my own writing and research.

Others writing before, during and after Sampson's time have used the trope of the escape from complex urban to the simple rural as literary tool. George Borrow, whose work so inspired Sampson, was part of a literary tradition which defended and idealized a rural life believed to be threatened. Borrow's work "for the first time in serious rural writing, offered a tramp's eye view of the English countryside" (Keith 1974, 110). As was

true in most rural writing, Borrow's nostalgia for an imagined past distorted his historical accuracy. In his book about rural writing from the seventeenth century to modern times, English studies professor W.J. Keith concludes that "[i]n the final analysis the rural essayist paints neither landscapes nor self-portraits; instead he communicates the subtle relationship between himself and his environment, offering for our inspection his own attitudes and his own vision" (Keith 1974, 24). In the same way, Sampson's sketch is here analyzed for what it reveals about Sampson's beliefs.

Although Sampson's "Tales in a Tent" uses tools borrowed from the literary canon, it is not a literary piece. Written as it is from a position of academic authority with the intent of imparting non-fiction 'truths' about Romanies to an academic audience, "Tales in a Tent" is first and foremost part of the construction of knowledge about Romanies. In this chapter's close analysis, I focus upon four tools Sampson uses to shape his own identity and that of the Romanies he describes: one, the portrayal of time to deny the modernity of Romanies; two, the rendering of dialogue between Sampson and Romanies to demonstrate the intellectual superiority of the Rais; three, the use of humour to differentiate the Romani Other from the Rai and the reader; and four, the use of a code to hide different interpretations of the text. Through the analysis of these four items I make the case that Sampson engaged in research to validate his pre-existing beliefs about Romanies.

## 4.2. Trapped in time

In one gentle opening sentence Sampson takes the reader from his or her familiar surroundings and into another world. The world is “out of the nineteenth century” (Sampson 1892, 211), the implication being that by *not* being in the nineteenth century, this other world is better, more relaxing, somehow simpler. Sampson’s opening implies that time does not apply across the open field and inside the Grays’ tent in the same way it applies to him and those reading the piece. This is part of the appeal of course--who among us has not wanted to escape the relentless rule of the clock? Many of the great adventure stories begin by placing the protagonist in an unfamiliar environment where time *feels* different. In “Tales in a Tent,” time no longer matters for Sampson, nor for the reader. What is never acknowledged in the article is that time does exist and does matter to the Grays’ family.

This first sentence signaled Sampson’s investment in a belief system shared by gypsiologists which placed Romanies outside of modernity, as it existed in the nineteenth century. To the gypsiologists, ‘real’ Romanies were bearers of ancient traditions and language that needed to be documented; in their view, Romanies were a race which had not changed since they migrated from India, and as such represented a past which had long-since decayed elsewhere. Further, any hints of change or modernity were seen as evidence of the coming extinction of the ‘real’ Romanies. The gypsiologists as a whole were unwilling to view Romani cultures in a modern context. This time-displacement

reflects ambivalence about their own experiences of modernity. Sampson wrote about this in the preface to *Wind On The Heath*, an anthology of writing about Romanies:

Our Gypsies meanwhile have gone on in their old way serenely indifferent to opinion. 'Are you aware, Rosaina,' I asked a picturesquely clad young Romani, 'that Wordsworth, the great Mr. Wordsworth, has called you a "wild outcast of Society"?' 'There are two societies, Raia,' was the disdainful reply. Yes, certainly there are two Societies, and which is the happier remains a question. Do we not find Shakespeare--through the mouth of Amiens--Hazlitt, Kinglake, Stevenson, Housman, Masfield, and many another, sometimes wondering whether Madam Civilization may not have put her money on the wrong horse? (Sampson 2005, vii-viii)

Romanies were interpreted as museum pieces in an exhibit. As such Romanies had little value outside their display cases and lost value when 'contaminated' by the modern world from which they must be protected if they were to retain their value as museum exhibit pieces. Sampson wrote:

The Gypsies are in truth a touchstone to the personality of a man. Just as one person may see in an ancient battered coin merely a worthless piece of metal, of no utility as currency, so to another it may conjure up visions of famous men and bygone civilization, and even seem a thing of worth and beauty in itself. (Sampson 2005, vii)

This is the historical trap: only 'pure' Romanies who continued their ancient traditions without reference to modernity or contemporary influences should be 'saved', studied or supported. Any attempt by Romanies to advocate on their own behalf or to alter their way of life to their own benefit was interpreted as a departure from traditional ways that excluded that group from being worthy of support. Only passive Romanies would receive the benefit of whatever advocacy the Romani Rai saw fit to provide, without input from Romanies who must always be engaged only in their own cultural activities.

By placing the Grays' tent "out of the nineteenth century" the first line of "Tales in a Tent" invokes fiction and places Romanies out of the range of complete 'truth'. In doing so, Sampson granted himself an editorial freedom which resulted from a reading less critical than a piece written to signal "academic" or "science". At the same time the fictionalized beginning brings to mind the stereotypical literary interpretations of Romanies which were common in fiction and makes them 'true'. In this way, the text conflates living Romanies with their literary counterparts. The gypsilogists as a group often did not differentiate between the Romanies they read about in novels and the historically and culturally contextualized Romanies they encountered in the course of their research. Romanies existed as fantastic creatures in fantastic books in which fantastic things happen; like fairies and pixies, Romanies exist in Sampson's text as almost-human corroborations of the mysteries which exist just outside of a reason. Not only does the opening work subtly to fictionalize Romanies, but the fictionalization also works to further place Romanies outside of known human timelines. By remaking a physical journey by tRain and across a field into a journey through time, Sampson was in essence saying "once upon a time," and when a storyteller uses those words or their equivalent, we let go of our critical faculties, our disbelief, and prepare for a wonderful tale populated by unusual creatures in which we long to believe.

Books are often described as escapes--a way to enter another world and time without ever really leaving your own. For GLS gypsilogists, the British Romanies were like living books: when the need for escape struck, instead of going to a bookstore or

library, gypsilogists headed off to the nearest Romani camp and let the adventure unfold around them, secure in the knowledge that they could close the book--go home-- whenever they needed. The escape that these gypsilogists sought in their research visits to the Romani camps can also be likened to that of a book in that none of the gypsilogists escaped for good; their escapes were always temporary. The gypsilogists always returned to the world they sought to escape from to face its challenges, yes, but also to reap the benefits of what that life had to offer: regular work, a regular pay cheque, respectability, house and home, a society of peers. In a sense, these gypsilogists were doing what we would all like to do and what we do do when we can: they were dodging some of the most confining strictures that belonged to their station in life, whilst continuing to take advantage of the benefits that came with, in their case, being white, middle class, citizens of Britain in the late nineteenth century. The introduction to the piece describes an escape from industrialization to an country landscape that is as 'pure' as the Romanies who live there. Framed within such an idealization, the Romanies are cast as characters in a pre-determined plot with a familiar theme.

Through a simple sentence, Sampson called to the mind of his readers a wide array of associations, belief systems, memories, and longings. As a piece of writing, that skill is admirable. However, as part of the process of the production of knowledge, the first sentence frames the subjects of Sampson's study within a discourse which does not reflect the complexity of Romanies' lives.

### 4.3. Speaking to an audience of peers

More than one story is told in Sampson's article: one is projected to the general reader and another is skillfully told to the initiates of a secret code-of-sorts, to his fellow Rais. Much of the remainder of this chapter assesses implications of various layers of meanings which Sampson weaves into the text and considers what this infers about Sampson's research methods. A portion of Sampson's intended, but hidden, meanings can be unraveled through an analysis of folklore within the text. Subsequent sections will explore this more fully. This short section makes the case that Sampson did not want these meanings to be fully understood by anyone outside the closed circle of researchers associated with the GLS.

"Tales in a Tent" is an excellently written piece which, when read casually, offers to the reader an amusing evening of interactions with Sampson's Romani subjects. A closer reading reveals that another story was told in a manner only his fellow Rais would understand at the time. The evidence for this begins with Sampson's use of Romanes language throughout. Sampson scatters about thirty Romanes words and phrases throughout the piece. A translation is offered in a footnote for '*guzberi gorji*' [wise woman or witch]. Footnotes provide more information about other details: belief patterns, superstitions, the shortening of a child's name, riddle answers, word origins, background information about a subject, the relation of one tale to another, additional information about a tale, translations for Romani constellation names, and relevant cultural information. Yet, he does not translate these Romanes words. In the time Sampson wrote,



the majority of people who spoke Romanes were other Rais. These words would have been understood by his peers, and only they would have understood the full meaning of the article. Sampson did not want the meaning of all of the Romanes words to be public knowledge. That meaning was present only for the speakers of Romanes who would be reading the journal, other Rais, whose perspectives were so similar they would appreciate the joke.

That Sampson wrote for a particular audience leads to the conclusion that the fieldwork description is not a factual description of that evening's events, but a composite of storytelling fieldwork encounters stitched together to impress and amuse his Rai audience. Several other items point to this conclusion (which are analysed in more detail in following sections). First, the presentation of language use is not consistent throughout. Sampson quotes the Gray family as freely mixing English and Romanes; but the transcriptions of the three folktales told by different members of the family contain only a few words spoken in Romanes, '*Rai*,' '*guzberi gorji*,' '*ker*,' '*hoi*,' and '*dordi*'. I do not think this spoken style change can be attributed entirely to a movement between casual conversation to story performance; the stories were probably recorded at separate events and inserted into the article. Second, it is unlikely that a story performance would unfold in such a convenient a manner as described. Romanies did not, after all, sit around all day waiting to tell stories to wandering Rais; the interruptions of daily Romani life are completely missing here, leading to the conclusion that there was much left out and/or added to write this perfect scene. Sampson likely created an 'ideal' storytelling session

based upon a number of episodes. Third, the references to beliefs and superstitions which litter the dialogue are so numerous it is unlikely they would have come up in normal conversation as portrayed in Sampson's text. In the first pages alone--in the time just after Sampson arrives at the tent--the conversation has moved from superstitions about a jumping eye, to the analysis of dreams, to fairies, ghosts and witches and begins a personal story about an encounter with fairies. This is not convincing. It is much more probable that Sampson wanted to demonstrate a level of knowledge about Romani beliefs and for this reason peppered his text with such references.

This close reading calls into question just how much accuracy may be expected in this text which is part of the production of academic knowledge about Romanies. Strictly accurate or part-fiction, the text was published as part of a wider body of knowledge and so must be considered as part of an attempt to create truths about Romanies. The uncertainty about accuracy also allows for multiple readings. There is more than one story in this piece. I focus upon two: Sampson's story about his fieldwork; and the story told through the arrangement of fairytales. Both stories are written for his peers.

#### 4.4. Talking Romanies

The first Romani person encountered in "Tales in a Tent" is a young woman named Deliah, who greets Sampson and his fellow Romani Rai "from within, with one of her inevitable omens. '*Dordi! Rai*, I knowed someone was a comin', cause my eye jumped. *Dil-ta! Rai*, *okki tiro duidash!*'" Sampson related that, "Deliah's spirit is still

troubled by a dream of the previous night. She dreamed she 'wur a drownin' in muddy water'; but her 'daddy's dream was betterer, 'cause he on'y dreamed he wur a-drownin' in nice'd fresh water'" (Sampson 1891, 199).

The dialogue presented in Sampson's first paragraph sets a pattern which continues through the rest of the text. When the Romanies speak, their words are spelled to display difference as heard by Sampson; neither Sampson's, nor his colleague's, dialogue is ever represented verbatim or phonetically; humour is used to enhance the separation between Romanies as object and non-Romanies as researchers and audience; portions of the dialogue are presented in English and portions are in the Romani language; and dialogue snippets often contain references to superstitions or belief patterns belonging to Romanies. Sampson was faced with many stylistic, representational, and interpretive choices when he sat down to write this piece for the *JGLS*. I cannot know exactly how and why Sampson made his presentation choices, but "Tales in a Tent" is the end result of complex negotiations. As such, this text stands as the performance Sampson put together to represent not only--and not necessarily--what he actually believed about Romanies, but how he wanted his beliefs, his identity, and his actions to be represented to fellow GLS gypsiologists. These factors, as projected through this piece, became part of the larger body of work which shaped public interpretation of Romani identities.

Dialect sketches in which regional ways of speaking were presented for a mixture of amusement and instruction were part of the larger dialect literature genre which became quite popular by the mid-nineteenth century (Shorrocks 1999). Dialect sketches

were also popular in the nineteenth century United States. Realism was portrayed through the use of 'realistic' speech in a variety of literature:

To an unprecedented degree, the social and personal significance of dialect provides the very framework around which late-nineteenth-century literary works are structured. . . . [are] part of a large group of texts in Gilded Age literature that explore the cultural and aesthetic politics of dialect difference: regional stories that consider social aspects of rustic language; highbrow novels that react against the spoken idioms of mass culture; popular texts that experiment with humorous accents of ethnic interaction; southern romances that create racial hierarchies of speech; minority works that overturn linguistic hegemony; naturalist novels that depict blasphemous degeneration of city folk; African-American songs and stories that exploit the signifying alternative of vernacular discourse. (Jones 1999, 2)

A branch of the dialect genre was aimed at the audience who spoke the dialect portrayed (such as literature which portrayed working class stories for working class audiences).

Sampson did not write for a Romani audience, but for fellow Rais and academics and, as such, "Tales in a Tent" is part of a kind of dialect literature which, according to linguist Graham Shorrocks, presented as "specimens of local 'manners and customs,' or later under the influence of new development in philology (specifically, dialectology) and the new academic discipline of folklore" (Shorrocks 1999, 90). Academics have returned to this genre to analyse the portrayal of dialects in a variety of texts (Hoenselaars and Buning 1999; Jones 1999). English studies professor Gavin Jones makes a direct link between the portrayal of African-American dialect and the encoding of racist beliefs. In his book *Strange Talk The Politics of Dialect Literature in Gilded Age America* Jones links dialect writing to the maintenance of hegemonic dominance on the part of a white

culture nervous about race: "American dialect writing was, in part, a confirmation of cultural hegemony. The focus on "incorrect" dialects sanctioned belief in the pure, standard speech of a dominant elite" (Jones 1999, 9). In analysing "Tales in a Tent," I make similar links between the use of dialect writing in this non-fiction piece and the encoding of racist beliefs about Romanies.

Contemporary academics grapple with issues of representation whenever the oral interview or encounter is presented in the written form. Linguist Dennis R. Preston challenged folklorists to consider such issues in a survey of 1970s articles from the *Journal of American Folklore*. He demonstrated that respelling (presenting non-standard spelling to represent spoken dialect) occurred most often when the subject was speaking in non-American varieties of English. Preston found that researchers respelled what was different to them and that respellings resulted in a more critical interpretation of the subject. In the article detailing his findings, Preston wrote:

The impetus for this respelling may come in part from the desire to give lore the flavor of spontaneous or relaxed language. Since writing cannot hope to capture the quality of speech, these few respellings do more to mar the transcript or representation than make it come alive. Furthermore, since respellings in general seem to be more popular with folklorists when offering the speech of the "different," these particular respellings are especially obnoxious. Since they represent the casual pronunciation of speakers from all regions and all social classes, the fact that they are used most frequently for certain groups makes them most representative of a linguacentric, prescriptivist attitude. (1982, 320)

Preston's work was not unchallenged (Fine 1982), but the resulting debate reinforces the underlying truth that intended and unintended meanings can be conveyed through representation choices. In Sampson's time academics were not engaged in debates about representation within the terms of Preston's arguments; nonetheless, issues of representation play a central role in interpreting Sampson's portrayal of Romani conversation in "Tales in a Tent."

For the purposes of accuracy, Sampson was known to employ two people to transcribe a conversation, interview, or story at the same time. But that did not happen in the scenario presented in "Tales in a Tent." In this case Sampson was accompanied by one other man he refers to as "the other rye." Additionally, much of the dialogue Sampson quotes occurs outside the informal storytelling session, in situations in which it is unlikely he was taking verbatim notes of the conversation. It is likely that a good deal of the dialogue presented has actually been recreated from memory; it follows that whether consciously or not, Sampson 'edited' the dialogue to fit the needs of his text and that his portrayal of the Gray family's dialogue was not as accurate as implied. Of course, as a man who spent a good deal of time with this family and other Romani families, Sampson would have sufficient claim to a better ear than most for accurately recalling Romani speech.

Sampson's mixture of English and Romanes also calls into question how accurately he portrays the use of language in the sketch. It appears that Sampson did not accurately present the mixture of English and Romanes that was spoken. The sporadic use

of a Romanes word or phrase within direct dialogue gives the impression at times that Sampson translated a Romanes dialogue into English for the benefit of his English readers, leaving a few words untranslated for effect. At the same time, the phonetic spelling of some of the English suggest that Sampson had directly quoted the family's pronunciation of an English word. The dialogue presents at times as macaronic and at other times as a little too neatly constructed to be a verbatim representation. Two examples are: "'Shanny!' roared his father, 'do you see dem *a lollin* ' me to *stariben*?' 'Jal an, daddy,' chuckled Shanny 'you're *jallin* ' *misto* '" (Sampson 1891, 201); and: "... *Dukeripen*, ' my wise woman opines, 'is a tatcho purro kovva,' but now, like law and language, in sad ruins" (Sampson 1891, 204). Sampson also occasionally substitutes a Romanes word for English in his own text: "... though it must be difficult, especially for the *pukinyus* to distinguish between the prophetess and the charlatan" (Sampson 1891, 204). While the 'mistakes' present in the phonetic rendering of the Gray family's English might indicate an 'incorrect' usage of English, the almost too-perfect use of English before the use of a Romanes word or phrase is incompatible. The inconsistency, I believe, is Sampson's, who likely recreated the dialogue for dramatic effect and ease of reading; he is after all an excellent writer. Yet, this text is not presented as fiction, but was published as an academic's observations of his Romani subjects. It is probable that Sampson's immediate audience, the GLS gypsologists, were cognizant of the mix of fiction and non-fiction and that it was a practice in which they themselves engaged. But, the larger audience would have been less aware of the blend of science and fiction that

occurs in this piece. At any rate, it is enough to make the point that the speech patterns attributed to the Grays are not accurate representations.

The phonetic rendering of the Romanes speech in Sampson's text had the overall effect of creating a less-sophisticated and un-British other, compared to whom Sampson appears much as the god-like character he imagined himself to be. By presenting Romani speech in unorthodoxly spelled words, the focus turns to the "mistakes" in Romanies' speech. As Preston noted in his 1982 study, such 'mistakes' do not flatter the subject portrayed. An interesting contrast is the fact that Sampson's prose was corrected and enhanced by at least one editor before publication and so his 'mistakes' never appear in print. In this seemingly artless text, Sampson asserts his superiority to his Romani subjects.

Who speaks is also important in "Tales in a Tent" as well. Neither Sampson nor his colleague is ever directly quoted. In the second paragraph after Deliah tells them about a dream, Sampson writes "Willi nilli we suggest an interpretation" (Sampson 1891, 199); later, when it is his turn to tell a story, Sampson simply writes, "I tell them the old story of "Faithful John" (Sampson 1891, 208); when invited to wish on a new moon Sampson writes, "I doffing my glasses first to avert ill luck;" as the article nears its end "the other rye asks whether Mandra and Deliah may accompany us soon to the pantomime" (Sampson 1891, 210). Sampson wrote an entire book about the Romani language and Sampson's apparent fluency in Romanes was part of his skill in obtaining Romani friends. Yet he does not quote his own attempts to speak their language, attempts



which can be assumed (based on the fact that Sampson learned as an adult and could never immerse himself in the language full-time for long stretches at a time) to be imperfect, at times broken, and certainly spoken with an English accent. Sampson preserves every instance where the Gray family strayed from received English usage, but he makes his own mistakes, in either English or Romanes, invisible.

Sampson's voice appears in the body of the text and is the voice the audience is meant to hear; the text is about Sampson, the Rai. Sampson's choice to remain silent in conversation makes his authorial voice all the stronger. Next to the emotional volubility of the Gray family, Sampson's unmovable silence or polite summaries of his part in the conversation appears restrained and reasonable and academic. Sampson does not write his part in any conversation because that would interfere with Sampson's textual performance of the role of Rai. By treating his own speech differently from the speech of the Romani family, Sampson is signaling that he is different from these people.

Used to further widen the perceived difference between Roma and non-Roma are the conversation topics Sampson chose to include and the humor with which the conversations are portrayed. Whenever a member of the Gray family speaks he or she talks about topics and beliefs different from those chosen by middle or upper class respectable British people. Sampson does not write a text whose aim it is to bridge differences. If Sampson wanted to do this he could have included much more familiar and commonplace conversational topics to his audience, which, no doubt, occurred at some point during this visit. Instead, Sampson presents conversations about superstitions,

dreams, amusing responses to British technology. Although many of the superstitions were not specifically Romani in origin and would have been common enough in everyday British life, the numerous references create an impression that Romanies were much more superstitious than average. As discussed in an earlier section, it is not probable that all these superstitions actually came up in casual conversation in the way presented, and is more likely that Sampson produced a composite based upon conversations occurring over many visits. Even parenting becomes strange in a teasing exchange between grandmother and granddaughter which is rendered “one of the many strange features of domestic life” (Sampson 1891, 200). In this Sampson was certainly not alone. At the time dialect literature was often used to define British against non-British. Sorenson observed this dynamic in her study of the use of the Scots dialect in *The Heart of Midlothian* when she linked “the particular linguistic practices of this Scots speaker to a specific semiotic that can in turn be situated in a narrative of Britishness. . . . Scott’s Scots and the folk culture it constitutes provide an “other” against which the English identity might define itself. (Sorenson 1999, 66)

#### 4.5. Funny differences

Sampson’s use of humour in the sketch also accentuates difference. Romanies are not participants in Sampson’s humour, but its objects. Sampson invites the othering of the Grays through the amusing arrangement of the Grays’ speech and his own editorial responses. The sharing of in-jokes with the reader about the Grays encourages

identification with Sampson, who sees amusement in what differs from the British norm. The humour is gentle and not, I think, directly derisive. It is akin to the humour shared by parents in describing the antics and sayings of a well-loved but amusing child, one who is always saying cute and often incomprehensible things which betray the child's poor grasp of adult reality and reason.

The othering through humour begins with Deliah's greeting: "'Dordi! Rai, I knowed someone was a comin', 'cause my eye jumped'" (Sampson 1891, 199). There many lenses through which Sampson could have interpreted this greeting to his reader. For example, he could have written his own response to this greeting in direct quotes (did he respond in English or Romani?) in a way that would have portrayed the interaction as one between equals. Sampson also could have contextualized Deliah's comment by telling the reader whether the jumping eye to which Deliah referred was part of a wider belief system or peculiar to Deliah herself and how it related to superstitions held by people in every culture, and how and why it fit into her current life. Further, he could have portrayed his own fumbling in Romani or reflected upon an odd British belief--and in that way make himself and/or British culture as much the object of the joke as Romanies and Romani culture are in this piece.

The same criticisms hold for other examples. Mid-way through the text, during a break from the storytelling session Sampson writes:

And while Wasti and I discuss the impiety of a local astronomer who is having a huge telescope built "to look right into heaven," Mandra sings and dances fantastically in the moonlight "just for all de wurl," as old Gray says simply, "like one of dem little *lubnis* on de stage." She is eleven years of age,

and the pride of her grandparents, for is she not “ de best scholard in her class, and’ de’ best fighter in de hull school?” (Sampson 1891, 207)

The portion of the discussion which Sampson chooses to quote directly--“to look right into heaven”--provokes amusement both at Wasti’s articulation of the night sky as the location of heaven rather than a part of a universe of stars and orbiting planets. This discussion between himself and Wasti is an aside, a nonessential part of the sentence which is really about the dancing of the little girl; this signals that it is not important, but merely an amusing exposition of the ‘ignorance’ of the Romani man. This is further demonstrated by the phonetic spelling of old Gray’s pronunciation (wurl instead of world; dem instead of them; de instead of the) and through his expression of pride in his granddaughter’s fighting at school. This paragraph, the second of two which describe a break between stories, arranges chosen pieces of conversation for humorous effect. The larger context of the entire conversation is erased in this text in order to produce a greater comedic effect (as opposed to a critical effect, or a realistic effect, or a sympathetic effect). The humor is derived from the exposition of difference: scholarly British men do not believe that heaven is literally behind the sky, nor do they praise a young girl for her ability to fight. The skill of the writer in piecing the text together is everywhere apparent; however, the result of that skill was the reinforcement of division.

#### 4.6. Stories told in folklore

“Folklore *means* something:” this is the first sentence of the third chapter in Folklorist Alan Dundes’ book *Interpreting Folklore* (1980, 33). It is not a very remarkable sentence; it seems to state the obvious. Nonetheless, when first reading “Tales in a Tent” I overlooked the importance of the folklore it contained, and, as a result, missed out on a portion of the story Sampson was telling. But once I began asking why the folklore in the article had been included, pieces to a puzzle I could not at first complete began to fall into place.

Discussed here are two implications which result from an interpretation of the folklore in Sampson’s article. The second relates to the coded information Sampson deliberately placed into the story to produce a particular interpretation. The first, however, was not intended.

As Dundes said, much of folklore and its meaning is unconscious--we don’t think about it. This

makes the study of meaning difficult though not impossible. It is difficult because it is not easy to elicit native testimony about such meanings. Unconscious symbolism is just as hard for informants to articulate as is the grammar of the languages they speak. (Dundes 1980, 36).

Folklore, Dundes said, is projective material, but much of the meaning projected is unconscious. If that idea is applied to Sampson's text, then the descriptions of superstitions and beliefs project a number of meanings. As established earlier, it is probable that Sampson created a composite piece based upon information gained from many days, weeks, or months of fieldwork; he did not portray the evening as it actually occurred. He wanted to show himself in the best light, display his knowledge, and create a distinct sense of difference between non-Romanies and Romanies. A closer look at the folklore tells another story, one that Sampson didn't realize he was telling.

None of the folklore traditions Sampson describes in "Tales in a Tent"--superstitions, beliefs, tales, and dities--are exclusively Romani traditions. An in-depth examination of the items of folklore is not within the scope of this thesis, but such an examination would likely show that most if not all of the traditions which are mentioned in the text were common in Britain. Even a cursory consideration shows the traditions which appear in the text were commonly held across Britain. In fact, it is probable that Sampson would have already been familiar with most, if not all, of the superstitions discussed. Elias Owen's *Welsh Folklore* (1896), for example, is filled with beliefs, superstitions, and stories which are similar to those discussed by Romanies in Sampson's piece. This interpretation of folklore contrasts with the one Sampson seems to want to express in this text: that Romanies are different.

The second 'story' to be read in "Tales in a Tent" is to be found in folklore and language that, I argue, Sampson deliberately placed in the piece to be understood only by

his fellow Rais. It is ironic that folklore "provides a socially sanctioned outlet for the expression of what cannot be articulated in the more usual, direct way" (Dundes 1980, 36) because, although Dundes is speaking to the unconscious and non-deliberate workings of folklore, Sampson used folklore deliberately to tell his story. Sampson could be relatively certain that most non-Rais would not be able to read Romanes and that non-Rais would not look for meaning in a reference to a dream or in the arrangement of folktales. But that is exactly where a folklorist searches for meaning. Dundes writes:

For humans, projection provides protection. Folklore, although *collectivized* fantasy, does meet the psychological needs of individuals. Indeed it is literally and figuratively custom-made for the purpose. . . . projection provides a means of translating inner thoughts to outer expression. . . (1980, 61).

Among Dundes' examples of the safe projection of what would be offensive meaning into fantasy was Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. This example was particularly interesting to me because even though I read and loved the book as a child, I have cringed while reading some passages to my children, wondering what meaning they were taking away from the descriptions and treatment of the "Oompa-Loompas." These dark-skinned little people, rescued from an awful jungle existence to work in the factory, are summoned with a word or a snap of the fingers and are paid nothing but cocoa beans--a wage which delights them, Willy Wonka assures young Charlie.

One might legitimately ask why there should be need for a facade of fantasy to express stereotypic traits. Why not delineate the stereotype in undisguised fashion? Part of the answer might be that it is always easier to treat unpleasant material in fantasy rather than in reality. Fantasy has always served as a screen for the projection of racism and this includes literary as well as folk fantasies.

But part of the answer might be that the civil rights movement of the 1960s made it more unacceptable to express blatant racism directly. (Dundes 1980, 67)

It may be that Dahl “was not fully conscious of the racist implications of his portrait of the Oompa-Loompas, but racism need not be conscious to be destructive” (Dundes 1980, 68). Like Dahl’s projection of racist elements into the Oompa-Loompas, Sampson’s version of ‘gypsies’ in “Tales in a Tent” may not have consciously projected elements of racism, but the meanings are clear, nonetheless. It is interesting to note that racist ideologies were not unacceptable in nineteenth-century Britain; Sampson deliberately used folklore to code and to hide elements of his experiences as a Rai conducting research among Romanes, elements that were ultimately unacceptable to Victorian society.

#### 4.7. The final scene

The three paragraphs which conclude Sampson’s text portray the response of old Gray to a question posed by Sampson’s colleague: “Then, remembering the girls’ love of a sikermastri, the other rye asks whether Mandra and Deliah may accompany us to the pantomime” (Sampson 1891, 210). The response of Old Gray is the humorous anecdote with which Sampson chooses to end the article. The scene Sampson describes is one of panic; the old man shouts and chokes on his own words while the elder Romani girl cowers in a corner and the younger Romani girl pulls the two Rais out of the tent. In an interaction which, if written differently, could easily have left the reader laughing at the Rai’s social incompetence, Sampson instead leads the reader to laugh at what is portrayed



on one level as an over-the-top response to a reasonable request. The casual reader, as ignorant as Sampson seems to be as to the cause of the fuss, has no avenue through which to identify with the Romani family. And so the funny anecdote in which Gray's response is rendered like the unintelligible tantrum of a child becomes the final comment in this text.

This scene becomes an unintended exposition of the writer's research methods. If the incident did happen in a version close to what was described, then this interaction reflects the manner in which Sampson managed fieldwork challenges and reveals key assumptions which inform, and ultimately plague, Sampson's contribution to the body of academic knowledge about Romanies.

After listening to one last story, Sampson and his colleague stand up, ready to leave. Then,

. . . remembering the girls' love of a *sickermaskri*, the other *rye* asks whether Mandra and Deliah may accompany us soon to the pantomime.

What could there have been in this request to throw such a bombshell into our pleasant party? For Gray has started to his feet with the cry of an animal in pain, passionately vociferating, "Not dat one! Not dat one!" and pouring out a torrent of uncouth grief as he points to the wretched elder girl cowering in a dark corner of the tent. And Wasti sits motionless with inscrutable face, her eyes, as I think, reading my very thoughts. And Mandra, with piteous grimaces, is clasping and unclasping her hands, as she flits to and fro, tugging our coats to draw us outside and end the painful scene.

Yes, it is time to go, for old Gray has broken down over some simple phrase--it is only *gorjiko rat*, but it chokes in his throat. Strangely familiar, too, the words sound, for do they not occur in the last two lines of Grannam Herren's song: --

*"Tu shan a wasawie lubenie  
With Gorjiko rat to be kabni."*

And I find myself wondering whether Gray was quoting from this, as our hasty adieux returned with Wasti's benediction, we step into the sweet night air, and walk homewards, musing curiously on the break-up of the Rommany race. (Sampson 1891, 211)

One interpretive level, Sampson frames the event as confusing to himself, his colleague and the reader. Sampson asks rhetorically: "What could there have been in this request to throw such a bombshell into our pleasant party?" (Sampson 1891, 211). Sampson's essential belief that Romanies were by nature incomprehensible impaired his ability to learn from a misunderstanding or a challenge in his research. Here, Sampson rationalized his inability to understand as a perfectly normal part of interactions with Romanies. In this way, Sampson missed opportunities to more deeply understand Romani ways of life and world views; this scene is not flattering to Sampson as an academic researcher.

So why did Sampson end this piece in this particular manner? The answer lies in the words Sampson heard old Gray utter: 'gorjiko rat.' Did Gray say those two words? There is no one answer to that, but several possible answers. I am not convinced that Gray actually did, or even that Sampson thought he heard Gray say them. It is possible that Sampson used this scene as a device to signal to members of an in-group, the GLS gypsologists who had been studying Romanes. The signal telegraphed a meaning, an in-joke, which non-Romanes speakers would not understand. And in this case too, Romanies are the butt of the joke.

Sampson linked the two words he heard (or pretended to hear), 'gorjiko rat,' to a song with the verses: "Tu shan a wasawie lubenie/With Gorjiko rat to be kabni." But when the Romani words in that verse are translated to English the verse reads (as translated by Dr. Ian Hancock): "You are a bad whore/With non-Romani blood to be pregnant." The meaning of these words adds another layer to the interpretation.

The Romani language was appropriated by the gypsologists not only as a way of performing their Rai role, but as part of a code used to communicate messages to other gypsologists, sometimes in quite public texts such as "Tales in a Tent." Additionally, the use of the Romani language came to be coupled with sexual meanings. Privately, some gypsologists, including Sampson, enjoyed composing part-English, part-Romanes sexually-charged verses, the "Romani words providing a coded language" (Sampson 1997, 111). Just one example of this is the discovery by Anthony Sampson of written exchanges between Dora Yates, who was Sampson's lover, in which Romanes is used in sexual jokes and expressions of longing for each other (Sampson 1997, 111). These verses were used as "in-group humour to be understood and appreciated only by the initiates. Did this sometimes deliberately find its way into material for a wider, though unsuspecting, audience. . . thereby compounding the fun?" (Hancock 2010, 179). The Romani verses which Sampson quotes near the end of "Tales in a Tent" are used in this way.

To the uninitiated, the ending of "Tales in a Tent" operates on the level initially discussed above: the reader unfamiliar with the sexual proclivities of the Rais is also

unlikely to read the Romani language and so will be unable to decode the meaning of the verses Sampson wrote in Romanes. Any reader not familiar with the language or the imagined and real conquests of the GLS gypsologists is unlikely to be motivated to research the meaning of the Romani words in the text. This apathy on the part of the casual reader is particularly likely after having encountered so many Romani words scattered throughout the rest of the text in a way that does not substantially interfere with the text's meaning, the meaning of which can at times be deciphered from the context. The verse and the words 'gorjiko rat' certainly are not presented as if they have an important meaning: "...old Gray has broken down over some simple phrase--it is only *gorjiko rat*, but it chokes in his throat." The non-gypsologist reader would likely interpret the signals in the above sentence--"simple phrase" and "it is only"--to mean that the words in Romanes are unimportant. However, Sampson's mixed signals would also increase the amusement of the GLS gypsologists who do know the meaning of the Romani words in the verse. Sampson is speaking two codes here and he does it very well.

What becomes obvious is that Sampson actually did know, at least in part, what upset the elder Gray when his colleague offered to take the Romani girls, with Sampson, to a pantomime. By referring to the verse and lingering on the words 'gorjiko rat,' Sampson makes it clear that he finds the situation is highly amusing. The implication that the two Romani Rais would impregnate the young Romani woman with a non-Romani baby was an in-joke Sampson placed in the text, to be enjoyed by the GLS gypsologists because, like most successful humor, it held a mirror to reality. Cited earlier was the letter

from Augustus John to Scott Macfie which defined the Romani Rai as a man who had managed to 'bed' a Romani woman. Romani women were regularly presented as sexual objects in the writing and art of the gypsologists (Hancock 2010, 212). Sampson's anthology of writing about Romanies devoted an entire chapter to "The Romany Chye" illustrated by the figure of a sexualized young woman dancing before a crowd; the chapter is filled with poems, tales, and portions of larger works which describe again and again the supposed 'sensual' beauty of Romani women. According to Sampson's grandson, Sampson himself is suspected of having fathered Romani children (Sampson 1997). Sexual adventurism was part of the bohemian outlook that was essential to the allure of being a Romani Rai. While it might be argued that old Gray's response was simply an overreaction which was part of a culture which valued and protected female virginity by keeping men and women apart, Sampson's use of the verses indicate otherwise. Indeed, Sampson's lack of response to Gray's behaviour would indicate that he understood that the elder Gray was concerned about the possibility of the older Romani girl becoming either Sampson's or his colleague's next conquest and that this was all part of the seduction game. Had old Gray's interpretation not been true, one would have expected Sampson to try to smooth over the misunderstanding, assure Gray that this was not the case and to make amends. Instead, Sampson disappeared into the night like a guilty lover. Sampson did not make any attempt in his text to refute or counter the sexual innuendos which would obviously result--indeed he capitalized on the implications of the sexual licentiousness of Romani Rais for effect.

An equally strong case can be made by interpreting the folklore codes Sampson uses. At the end of page 210 Sampson describes “the wretched elder girl [Deliah] cowering in a dark corner.” Given the nature of relationships between the younger and older generation, which Sampson described as an “inverted reverence between parents and children” in which “gypsy children are allowed to indulge in the freest open ridicule of their parents without rebuke,” (200) why is the girl cowering? She seems to be cowering even before Gray becomes angry. Making our way back through the article, another clue can be found on page 207, when old Gray is admiring the dance of his eleven-year-old granddaughter and says “like one of them *lubnis* on de stage”: Sampson’s *The Dialect of the Gypsies of Wales* defines *lubnis* as whore or harlot. We can look to the tales Sampson included in “Tales in a Tent” for more clues. If we interpret the article as a composite, it may be that the stories included were not actually told on this evening, or on the same evening that the grandfather becomes angry with the granddaughter and Sampson; it may be that events did not really happen as narrated. But if we accept that Sampson is telling a story through his choice of folklore, then the choice to present certain tales and not others is meaningful. Story performances are often motivated by the meaning that the storyteller wants to convey. In *Scottish Traveller Tales* (2002) Donald BRaid writes about how Traveller and storyteller Duncan Williamson chooses to perform different stories to different audiences in order to convey meanings tailored for each audience. The traveller story performers in BRaid’s book contextualize their performances differently for traveller and non-traveller audiences, emphasizing certain

aspects of a story or telling different stories altogether in order to project differing identity meanings. BRaid concludes that “storytelling is a potent means of communication because storytelling performances engage listeners. A narrator’s creativity and his or her artistic patterning of the story are important in motivating the engagement” (BRaid 2002, 285). The storytellers in Sampson’s text make choices about which fairytales to perform and these stories project meaning that can be read, as observed by folklorist Bengt Holbek:

fairy tales must be read as expressions of thoughts, feelings, and norms of traditional storytellers and their audiences; more specifically, that the “marvelous” elements referred to above may be read as expressions of emotional impressions associated with experiences in their own lives. (Holbek 1989, 42-43)

Additionally, Sampson decides which stories to include in his piece. In this context, Sampson’s article is analyzed as a story and those who read it are his audience.

Three stories are narrated in “Tales in a Tent.” The first story is called Bobby Rag and is a version of a common tale recognized by the Aarne-Thompson (AT) classification system as AT 955, The Robber Bridegroom. The story is told by Johnny, an older Romani man who can still recall when the old stories were more frequently told. In the preface to the story, Sampson notes that the stories are told as “consolation and instruction” (201). In this version a ‘gypsy’ girl is kidnapped by a squire and forced to marry him. His mother wasn’t happy with her son marrying a low ‘gypsy’ girl and orders her son to take her to the forest to kill the girl. He can’t bring himself to kill her and so leaves her to die naked

in the forest, where she is discovered by another gentleman who is riding in the forest. He brings her home to his family, who are pleased with her. The first husband is killed and she marries the second squire and becomes a lady.

The second story is called *De Little Fox*, an example of tale type AT 708, *The Wonder Child*. Wasti, the grandmother tells the story, “ignoring her grandchild’s rebuke that she is ‘putting herself too forward’” (201). A witch makes a handsome girl pregnant through magic. She is placed in solitary confinement and gives birth to a fox. The fox goes to visit the grandfather three times and eventually reveals that it was the witch who made the girl pregnant, saying the old witch offered the girl food and “ef she wur to eat it all, she’d be in de fambaley way wid some bad animal, but she only eat half on it, an’ den she wor so wid me” (207). The fox becomes an angel and flies away and the witch is burnt.

The third story, “*De Little Bull-Calf*” is a version of tale type AT 300, *Dragon Slayer*, and told by grandfather Gray. A boy goes out to seek his fortune bringing with him a bull-calf that he loves. After some adventures, the boy finds a young lady staked down by her hair. Gray says “[d]ey wuz werry savage dat time of day, kings to deir darters, ef dey misbehavioired demselves, an’ she wuz put deah fur de fiery dragin to ‘stry her” (209). The boy kills the dragon and the lady’s grandfather finds her and takes her home again, “for youah shuah he wor glad, when his temper comed to him again” (210). They search for the boy who saved her and he is identified by a wound inflicted by the dragon and “de ole king says, ‘I see you’ve got an eye on dis boy, an ef it is to be him, it has to be him’.”



The two are married. It is after this story that old Gray becomes upset and Sampson must leave.

The stories are indeed the “consolation and instruction” described by Sampson. One interpretation possible after a consideration of the context of these tales is that the girl cowering in the corner is pregnant and the father of the baby is a non-Romani man--or at least that is the story Sampson is conveying in this article. The first story “Bobby Rag” sets out the situation the family is facing, sexual relations and marriage between a non-Romani man and a Romani girl. That the storyteller prefaces the story as one that is not told very often to the younger generation anymore may be an admission that he thinks there is reason the story should be told. The risks are high: if the man’s family considers themselves too superior to be connected to a Romani girl, she will be abandoned. However, the story ends with a happy union between the Romani girl and a non-Romani man: there is hope that the cowering elder granddaughter’s situation may turn out happy too. The second story is told by the grandmother who ignores her granddaughter’s request that she not tell the story. Might the granddaughter know that the story she says she will tell is relevant to the crisis in the family and not want it aired in this way? Women were not encouraged to perform stories, particularly in mixed group settings. Wasti’s story is about an unexpected pregnancy that causes much grief to the girl whose pregnancy comes about through no fault of her own. It is only through the baby’s efforts that the girl is allowed to return to her father’s home and her previously happy life. In telling this story is the grandmother telling her granddaughter that the arrival of a baby will melt her

grandfather's anger? Or did Sampson put this story here to make it easier to infer the condition of the elder granddaughter and the reason for Gray's odd response? It is important to recall at this point that only a person who was familiar with reading and interpreting tales would make these connections, and so Sampson was safe in assuming only Rais, who collected Romani folktales as part of their work, would understand what he was saying. The final story told by grandfather Gray tells the story of a boy rescuing a girl from her father's wrath. Gray makes a point of commenting upon the often violent punishment given to wayward daughters in the past. Old Gray also comments that the father's anger cooled and he was glad to have his daughter back alive in the end, even allowing her to marry the boy he did not think suitable because he saved her life. Gray might be saying that although he has been angry, his wrath is nothing to the punishment she would have experienced in a previous era. He might even let her marry the father of the baby, should the man offer to save her from the shame of a baby outside of marriage. Sampson may be sending an assuring message to his fellow Rais: that no long-term harm will come of sexual relations with young Romani women--perhaps a simplistic and self-serving message in the end, but one that is needed to keep the tone of the piece light. And Sampson is making light, or making a great joke of, the results of a non-Romani's sexual conquest of a young Romani woman.

I will bring to light two more details which bring weight to the interpretation of the elder granddaughter being pregnant with the baby of a non-Romani man. In the first paragraph of "Tales in a Tent" Deliah tells Sampson that she dreamed she was drowning

in muddy water. Rais would have been familiar with many superstitions and beliefs, including beliefs about dream meanings, because they were a part of their research. In this simple way Sampson provides a broad hint right at the beginning of his article as to what story he will be telling about this Romani family. According to Gertrude Jobes' *Dictionary of Mythology, Folklore, and Symbols* (1962), water is linked to fertility and the feminine, to giving life, spiritual rebirth, truth and wisdom. The connection to a pregnancy is obvious. To dream of muddy water indicates a dispute. To be swimming in water signifies ill-luck overcome, but Deliah was not swimming; the ill-luck had not been overcome. When the grandfather admires his granddaughter he lovingly compares her to a 'lubnis' on the stage(207): 'lubnis' means prostitute or promiscuous woman. Everywhere in this piece, Sampson is signaling through folklore the unmarried pregnancy of the young woman, something which could not be talked about openly in the time and place he lived.

Without condemning or condoning the sexual freedom desired by these male gypsologists, I want to make connections between research methods which included the necessary sexual objectification of one's study subject and the unreliable conclusions about Romani women which would have resulted. Sexual relationships are today more likely to be recognized as a part of extended fieldwork, particularly in anthropology, and contemporary ethnographies are more likely to acknowledge and/or describe these relationships (Bernard 2006; Davis 1986; Kulick and Wilson 1995, Turnbull 1986). It is a reflection of the sexual and racial mores of nineteenth-century British society that sexual

relations between non-Romanies and Romanies were not socially acceptable and this is, in part, reflected by their place in secret code.

It has also been suggested that actual sexual contact might not have been as common as the Rais wanted each other to believe (Hancock 2010). Although it was desirable, it was not, as Gray's response and Sampson's ejection from the tent demonstrates, always easy to gain access to Romani women. However, the sexual objectification openly encouraged by the Rais placed another layer of difference between them and Romani women. In order to frame his Romani women research subjects as sexual conquests, Sampson obscured other aspects of the daily lives and points of view of Romani women. Additionally, if he had been viewed as a threat to the chastity of young women, Sampson's access to Romani communities would have been limited. Consider Gray's angry response and Sampson's quick exit. How welcome would Sampson be at his next visit and how interested would the Grays be in providing accurate information? Their reputations hindered their ability to do research but bolstered their reputations as true Rais, which, I argue, mattered more to the GLS gypsologists.

There is a contradiction in the Rais' concern for preserving the purity of the Romani 'race' and their concurrent desires for sexual relationships with Romani women. Sampson's final sentences in "Tales in a Tent" are a sly commentary about the loss of 'pure' Romanies: "And I find myself wondering whether Gray was quoting from this, as our hasty adieux returned with Wasti's benediction, we step into the sweet night air, and walk homewards, musing curiously on the break-up of the Rommany race" (Sampson

1891, 211). On the heels of being kicked out of the tent for the suspicion that Sampson and his colleague would, given half a chance, impregnate Gray's granddaughter, Sampson is expressing his belief that he is witnessing the last, dying moments of the Romani 'race', a race that is dying, according to his beliefs, because more Romani women are marrying or having sexual relations with non-Romani men. If their claims to sexual conquests are to be believed, it is through many of the actions of these Rais that some of that 'purity' was lost and, by the Rais' own definitions, the Romanies were pressed even closer to the precipice believed to mark the end of the race entirely.

In the final analysis of this piece it can be said that, with or without a complete understanding of the words 'gorjiko rat,' and the meaning of the folklore in the text, "Tales in a Tent" performs one truth about Sampson's production of academic knowledge: that is, Sampson did not want to know much more about Romanies than he had learned reading Borrow's books. As much as Sampson craved the respectability won through the academic application of the scientific method, his was a different, less scientific, project. Sampson used the cover of academic respectability in order to reap its benefits in Victorian society while dodging its disapproving eye during the course of fieldwork which often overlapped with less respectable activities, such as pursuing potential Romani lovers. Sampson's project was not the scientific study of Romanies: his project was to take what must have seemed this one last chance to live the life Borrow wrote about in his memoirs and novels, with the Romanies who lived as described by Borrow. In the end, Sampson believed in Borrow's Romanies so much that he could not or would

not see the real Romanies behind the glamour he himself imposed upon these people wherever he encountered them. The result was the production of a body of knowledge which was based more upon the beliefs Sampson formed while reading fictional descriptions of Romanies, than through the dispassionate observations of the amateur academic he claimed to be.

## Chapter Five: Conclusion

In the first year of coursework for an MA degree in folklore, I took a research methods class; the majority of researchers involved in ethnography would probably have been through such a class. The class I attended provided opportunities for students to discuss ethical concerns and research techniques. We explored issues of representation and we discussed how we might conduct our own ethnographies. How would we refer to the subject of our research? Subjects, participants, or even co-researchers? Would we show the papers and/or books we wrote about our subjects/participants/co-researchers before or after publication? Would we want the subjects of our research to be involved in shaping our conclusions or in the editing and writing of our scholarly manuscripts? I felt certain at the time that in conducting any ethnography I would make every attempt to approach my research subjects as equals from whom I had a lot to learn. Yet, it wasn't until I began the research for this thesis that I began to understand that conducting ethical research is much more complex than that.

While the analysis of knowledge created in a previous era is important work, it is equally important to recognize those same power structures in one's own research. Though I did not conduct an ethnography for the completion of this thesis, I intend to conduct ethnographies in my ongoing academic career. Moreover, while working as a journalist before graduate school, I interviewed and represented many different kinds of people in newspaper and magazine stories of various lengths and styles. Could I write a

critique of the one-sided and at times stereotypical representations of some of the people I wrote about? Could an analysis similar to the one provided here deconstruct the research I conducted in the form of mini-ethnographies for class assignments? Absolutely. The point, of course, is that none of us are without our biases. The power dynamics which influenced Sampson's research have not disappeared. The fact that I can choose to conduct ethnographic research with a group of people indicates that I have a degree of privilege, even if it is acknowledged that research subjects can exercise a degree of power by choosing whether or not to participate. That I will decide how to shape academic representations of these people is part of a power imbalance that is inherent in the nature of academic research. This is precisely why this study of Sampson's work remains relevant: by recognizing the power structures which impaired Sampson's research, light is shed upon power structures which exist today.

There were aspects of the body of knowledge produced by the GLS gypsologists, and the methods used in its production, which moved it beyond the realm of one just one man: the wider impact of the knowledge produced by GLS gypsologists was profound and far reaching across geography and time; GLS gypsologists organized in part to shut out dissenting voices; their research supported an identity discourse which in turn supported the marginalization of Romanies around the world. For those reasons, the deconstruction of Sampson's work has far-reaching implications.

This kind of examination can demonstrate clearly what not to do, it does not always make clear how things might be done. How does any ethnographer produce



research which does more than confirm individual belief systems, biases and preconceptions? Some of the answers to that question lie within the pages of this thesis and in my assessment of Sampson's research methods.

Folklorists have been grappling with these questions for years. In his book *All That is Native and Fine* (1983), Folklorist David E Whisnant analysed how the politics of culture and representation played out through a number of scenarios in Appalachia. Some of his insights about the work of folklorists, teachers, and cultural scholars in the area during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are applicable to the work of the GLS gypsologists in Britain.

Whisnant's work is concerned in part with how the "economic colonization" of Appalachia coincided with "the discovery of indigenous culture by writers, collectors, popularizers, and elite-art composers and concertizers" (1983, 6). Interest in culture, he argues, became a distraction from the more complex reality of exploitation, marginalization, and resistance. He writes:

. . . culture. . . became a diversion, a substitute for engaging with the political and economic forces, processes, and institutions that were altering the entire basis of individual identity and social organization in the mountains. Thus to this day there are a thousand people who "know" that mountaineers weave coverlets and sing ballads for every one who knows that millions of them have been industrial workers for a hundred years, have organized unions and picketed state and national capitols in pursuit of their constitutional rights, and have laid their bodies in front of strip-mine bulldozers and overloaded coal trucks. Or that, today, they shop at the K-Mart and Radio Shack, drive Camaros, and watch as much television as people anywhere. (Whisnant 1983, 7)

Similarly, there are thousands of people who "know" that Romanies play violin, dance, and enjoy the 'freedom' of the open road because they have seen and read representations which have been shaped by earlier writers and researchers such as the GLS gypsologists. Comparatively few people know about the history of racism and expulsions, resistance and activism that has always been part of the lives of Romanies.

In pointing toward a future beyond deconstruction, I am as convinced as Whisnant that "to understand culture in the mountains--or indeed in any culturally enclaved area within a larger, formally pluralistic but essentially assimilationist social system--one must inevitably talk about the politics of culture" (1983, 7). Whisnant uses a working definition of the politics of culture which focuses on two factors: "I mean principally two things: (1) the interaction of disparate cultural systems *as* systems, and (2) the function of a fixation *upon* a romantically conceived "culture" within the broader social, political, and economic history of the mountains" (1983, 13). My own analysis has been focused on the second of these two factors. Whisnant's analysis of the implications of the work of people he calls 'cultural intervenors'--those who take action within a culture to affect any change, from archivists and teachers to cultural revivalists and academics--demonstrates the far-reaching implications which can result from the work of even well-meaning people. He writes:

That cultural intervenors may be on the whole decent, well-meaning, even altruistic people does not (indeed must not) excuse them from historical judgement. One may reasonably display great charity for the cross-purposes, confusions, and miscalculations of fallible individuals in difficult

circumstances. But insofar as those people actively intervene in the cultural (or other) lives of large numbers of people, their failures and miscalculations, however, "understandable," become a legitimate object of public concern. For the effects of what they do touch so many and linger so long. (Whisnant 1983, 263-264)

It is in this same spirit that GLS gypsologists are interpreted as "cultural intervenors."

The gypsologists were products of their time and they were engaged in a research methodology which in many respects reflected the time in which they lived, but their failures are legitimate objects of concern.

How, then, do we negotiate the politics of culture? Folklorist Ronald Frey suggested that participation and engagement were key to understanding the worldview as represented in the oral stories of the Aboriginal Peoples of the Inland Northwest (1995). A researcher must be immersed in the context of the culture. I believe there is more to it than this. Sampson and the GLS gypsologists went to great lengths to participate in and to engage with Romani culture, and yet, as this thesis makes clear, the larger impact of their work was to add to and legitimize a body of knowledge which supports stereotypes about Romanies. Sampson's kind of participation is not what Frey had in mind, and so I look elsewhere for a research framework which actively engages with many of the criticisms which I have applied here to Sampson's text.

It is easy to fall into what folklorist Susan Ritchie calls ventriloquist folklore (1993). While attempting to give voice to voiceless people, a researcher can end up speaking *for* that group, establishing "the folklorist as kind of medium or channeler, who presents the true voices of those otherwise lost to an audience so eager for diverse

articulations that they fail to note this 'diversity'--these signs of another world--issues from folklore's single disciplinary throat" (Ritchie 1993, 366). Ritchie asserts that "[a] politically progressive postmodern study of culture will have to learn to carry out its tasks while maintaining a skepticism about the ideological work of representation" (1993, 365). Ritchie is skeptical about representation:

Is there any difference between the fraud and the folklorist? Frauds and swindlers disrupt representational ideology by presenting their own words as if they were another's. . . . Representation operates on the very logic of fraud. It causes us to long for a self-consistent subject that can only be misrepresented, and then sells us on the substitute. Our eagerness to correct this injustice has caused us to become swindler ventriloquists ourselves. (Ritchie 1993, 375-376)

Ritchie argues that voicelessness is only a problem when it is assumed that everyone aspires to have voice; moreover, what can be done in a world in which the subaltern, as Gayatri Spivak's 1988 essay argued, cannot have a voice?

I do not entirely accept this argument. Skepticism and caution, yes. It is difficult for the subaltern to be 'heard' when speaking across cultures and experiences. But the subaltern is speaking. In fact, the subaltern must speak and negotiate two and three worlds if the subaltern is to continue to exist, adapt, and thrive within other dominant cultures. Further, the research paradigms which have most excited me in the course of this research originate from the very people who, in some contexts, would be labelled the subaltern without the ability to speak.

This thesis has critiqued a research methodology which shut out dissent, concerned itself more with the performance of the 'Rai' than research, set out to prove

the existence of Borrow's fictionalized 'gypsies' and ultimately denied the worldview of the Romanies at the centre of the project. I will conclude by pointing to research frameworks which do more than just provide voice.

Maori professor of education and director of the International Research Institute for Maori and Indigenous Education Linda Tuhiwai Smith called this framework Decolonizing Methodologies. Simply stated, this methodology recognizes and places importance upon indigenous research perspectives and agendas. She writes that

increasing numbers of indigenous academics and researchers have begun to address social issues within the wider framework of self-determination, decolonization and social justice. This burgeoning international community of indigenous scholars and researchers is talking more widely about indigenous research, indigenous research protocols and indigenous methodologies. (Smith 1999, 4)

The researcher may or may not be a member of the indigenous community being researched, but under this framework the researcher must commit to working from an indigenous agenda and in cooperation with the community (while acknowledging that defining who is the community is not always easy): "Decolonizing research implements indigenous epistemologies and critical interpretive practices that are shaped by indigenous research agendas" (Denzin, Lincoln and Smith 2008).

A similar philosophy exists among Romani activists and knowledge producers. In the introduction to *All Change! Romani Studies through Romani eyes* Romani Studies professor Thomas Acton wrote about the "emergence of a Gypsy/Roma/Traveller academic and intellectual community, asking new questions and presenting new critical

challenges, because for them this identity was not something exotic, but their own” (Le Bas and Acton 2010, 4). As Ian Hancock wrote after the first international conference on Roma at Tel Aviv University in Israel in 2002, at which no Romanies participated in presentations or organization: “It is also an indication of the direction things are surely taking if we do not protest now, and loudly. That such a conference on Romani issues can be organised without any Romani involvement whatsoever is reminiscent of meetings of the US Bureau of Indian Affairs in the early 1900s where Native American issues were discussed in the absence of any Indian participation or representation” (Le Bas and Acton 2010, 19).

Obviously this is not an exhaustive analysis of alternative research methodologies. I am only pointing to the existence of other methodologies today which attempt to avoid the misrepresentations and misdirections which were so common in the work of Sampson and his colleagues. I want to say that research can be different, if we want it to be. The decolonial project is a necessary step; we must look back critically before we can move into our future research with awareness.

## Glossary

Dr. Ian Hancock and Dr. Ken Lee provided translations for some of the Romanes dialect found in this thesis.

**Atrash** Scared

**Beng** Devil

**Dikta** See or look

**Dordi** My goodness

**Dubel** God

**Dukeripen is a tatcho purro kovva.** Fortune-telling is a legitimate old practice.

**Dukermeskri** Fortune-teller

**Foki** People

**Gorjiko rat** Non-Romani blood.

**Guzberi gorji** Wise woman or witch

**Jal an** Go on

**Kabni** Pregnant.

**Kek koms** does not like

**Ker** Do or house

**Lel** Get

**Lellin** Taking

**Lubnis** Prostitute, promiscuous woman

**Maila** Donkey

**Mi-duvel's** My God's

**Misto** Fine

**Mulli** Dead or spirit

**Muscroes** Policemen

**Mush** Man

**Okki tiro duidash** Here's your cup and saucer.

**Puker'd** Told

**Pukinyus** Magistrate

**Romado** Married

**Sa** Laugh

**Sikermeskri** Show or performance such as circus.

**Stariben** Jail, gaol

**Tu shan a wasawie lubenie.** You are a bad whore.



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saying this, I believe that I speak for all, and I write this "valedictory" from my heart. I believe that we shall all remain through life true Romany Ryes, and that wherever we meet, it will require no more than "in Romany a word or two," to make us at once friends. *Palga, mi boro Dwed atch apâ tumende!*

CHARLES GODFREY LELAND.

FLORENCE, 13th March 1892.

## II.—TALES IN A TENT.

TEN minutes' railway journey, and a short run across the fields takes us out of the nineteenth century, and into the Grays' tent. As we thread our way gingerly among Deliah's pet hens in the little outer shelter-tent, the voice of their young mistress greets us from within, with one of her inevitable omens. "*Dordi! rai, I knowed someone was a comin', 'cause my eye jumped. Dikla! rai, okki tiro dvidash!*" Deliah's spirit is still troubled by a dream of the previous night. She dreamed she "wur a-drowndin' in muddy water"; but her "daddy's dream was betterer, 'cause he on'y dreamed he wur a-drowndin' in nice'd fresh water." Aunt Lenda has been happier in her visions. She dreamed she "seed our Blessed Saviour a-walkin' on de clouds, with beautiful green grass under his feet, and flowers springin' up where he wur a-walkin', and a dear little silver willage in de heavens."

Willi nilli we suggest an interpretation, for besides acting as private secretary, legal, medical, and spiritual adviser, general arbiter, and tobacco-jar to his Rommany friends, the complete rai is supposed to possess a more or less exact knowledge of divination. The Gypsy assumption that one has successfully made all knowledge one's province is often not a little embarrassing, yet I like to think that something more than this delusion suggested to old Gray's mind his beautiful comparison of a Rommany Rai, surrounded by a group of eagerly inquiring Gypsies, to "Christ sittin' in de midst of his disciples."

Then, by a natural transition, the talk glides from dreams to fairies, ghosts, and witches; and Wasti, in the intervals of her duties as hostess, relates how she and Manful Herren, gathering sticks in "Cockenhill Wood agin Redford, seed a fairy, like a dear little man stan'in' on a tree stump," but when she got up to the place "he wur

wanished, and dere was a lovely little pat of fairy butter on de tree stump." In such a case, it is the correct thing to wash your hands in this fairy butter for good luck. And how Aunt Wynie, "a notified woman" for veracity, while hoeing and weeding in Lincolnshire, saw the earth open, and heard a voice apprise her thrice of a buried treasure, which she was even able to tap by inserting her hoe in the hole. Alas! in her excitement, poor Wynie uttered the *beng's* name instead of *mi-durel's*, and the hole closed up again, and defied discovery. Johnny, too, tells us how, with hair erect and quaking limbs, he encountered a *gaujo's* ghost at "Tatto Heath," "but de boss seed it fast, for we all know hosses see ghostes quicker nor we do."<sup>1</sup> And how Johnny's mother, going by night to steal straw from a farmer's rick, met a friendly old gentlemau, with an old-fashioned gun in his hand, and silver buckles on his shoes, who gave her more straw than she could carry home. The farmer intercepted her on her return trip and accused her of theft, but turned pale when he heard her explanation. "'Come up to de house wi' me,' he says, 'and pick out dat gun and dese shoes de man you seed was a-wearin'.' And when she picked dem outer dozents he had dere, sure 'huff dey belonged to dis mau's father dat was dead forty year, and a great fren' to Romany-chels.'" Ethelenda's story of the man in Dudley, who gave himself to the devil for the rather barren privilege of turning flour into soot, is received with some incredulity, for "how could de *beng* gin him powah over God's grain?" but all the elders are prepared to "kias a Bible book" as to the truth of the old turnpike woman in Norfolk, who used to witch people limp and boneless, and then hang them over her gate till she chose to bring them back to life.

Little Mandra's<sup>2</sup> incredulous laughter rings brightly through these solemn tales, as—short-skirted and black-legged—she tumbles round the tent with the dogs; but her pretty mockery only raises an answering smile on her grandmother's wrinkled face. The inverted reverence between parents and children is one of the many strange features of Gypsy domestic life. A whole tentful of rough Gypsies will hush into awed silence and attention while a poor Gypsy baby stammers out some little saying, but Gypsy children themselves are allowed to indulge in the freest open ridicule of their parents without rebuke.

Then, while the "crumb-cloth" is being removed, and the old

<sup>1</sup> According to my Gypsies, a donkey sees ghosts even quicker than a horse "because of the cross on his back." This faculty is denied a mule ("mi-durel moila that he keb know") because "he kicked our Saviour offer his back when he tried to ride him."

<sup>2</sup> Gypsy corruption of "Miranda."

china reverently washed, the "good only company *mush*" enlivens us with some of his favourite Rommany jests, whom we greet none the less smilingly, because they are all such old friends. We hear, again, how George Herren refused to go to hear his wife tried, "because he wor *atrash* he should *sá*." And of the unfilial reply of Shanny Young when his parent was being conveyed to the police station in a wheelbarrow by four *muscrocs*. "Shanny:" roared his father, "do you see dem a *tellin'* me to *stariben*?" "*Jal* an, daddy," chuckled Shanny, "you're *jallin'* *místó*." And how Tom Gray asked the noble huntsman if he had seen his leg of mutton go past, and of Sinfí Smith's artless reply when asked if she understood *Romimus*.

And only half-listening to these *bons mots*, I can hear Mandra asking the other *rai* riddles in a corner of the tent: "Hikki pikki in a hedge; if you touch hikki pikki it will bite you,"<sup>1</sup> and "Patches on patches without any stitches; if you tell me this riddle I'll give you my breeches,"<sup>2</sup>—a safe offer on her part. Joshu, kindest of *karing musches*, is giving his sister-in-law, Wasti, an animated description of his feats in the P. R. of America, quoting with pride the eulogiums of Nat Langham and Jem Mace; and half hidden from view in the little outer tent, Ethelenda delivers a pious exhortation to her niece, puffs of smoke from her short black pipe alternating pleasantly with dog-eared Scripture texts. "Repair ye de way of de Lord," and "Before you have time to *pen* 'Oh! my blessed Father! deceive my soul,' strike grotesquely on my ear.

And then Johnny tells us one of the old *Märchen* current among the Gypsies when he was a lad, but now less frequently heard, and looked down upon as "poor simple things" by the younger generation of "School Board Romani-chels." In this tent, however, these tales are still received with the implicit faith due to inspired narratives, of absolute historic truth, full of consolation and instruction; and, though familiar to all the company except ourselves, their recital is interrupted with exclamations of "My nanmy! what blessed words!" "My *mulli fóki*!" and "Dat was my old *dubel* to be shuah!"

#### "BOBBY RAG.

"Yeas an' yeas an' double yeas ago, deah wuz a nice young Gypsy gal playin' round an ole oak tree. An' up comed a 'squire as she wur a-playin', an' he falled in love wid her, and asked her ef she'd go to his hall, an' marry him. An' she says: 'No, sir! you wouldn't

<sup>1</sup> Nettle.

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have a poodah Gypsy gal like me.' But he meanted so, an' stoled her away an' married her.

"Now, when he bring'd her home, his mother warn't 'greeable to let hisself down so low as to marry a Gypsy gal. So she says: 'You'll hev to go and 'stry' her in de handert mile wood, an' strip her star'-mother-naked, an' bring back her clothes and her heart and pluck wid you.'

"And he took'd his hoss, and she jumped up behint him, and rid behint him into de wood. You'll be shuah it wor a wood! an ole-fashioned wood we know it should be, wid bears, an' eagles, an' suks, an' wols into it. And when he took'd her in de wood he says: 'Now, I'll ha' to kill you here, an' strip you star'-mother-naked and tek back your clothes an' your heart an' pluck wid me, and show dem to my mammy.'

"But she begged hard fur herself, an' she says: 'Deah's an eagle into dat wood, an' he's gat de same heart an' pluck as a Christ'n; take dat home an' show it to your mammy, an' I'll gin you my clothes as well.'

"So he stript her clothes affer her, an' he kilt de eagle, and took'd his heart an' pluck home, an' showed it to his mammy, an' said as he'd kilt her.

"And she hear'd him rode aff, an' she wents an, an' she wents an, an' she wents an, an' she crep' an' crep' an' her poor dear hen's an' knees, tell she fun' a way troo de long wood. Youah shuah she'd have hard work to fin' a way troo it! an' long an' by last she got to de hedge anear de road, so as she'd hear any one go by.

"Now, in de marnin' deah wuz a young gentleman comed by an hoss-back, an' he couln't get his hoss by for love nor money; an' she hed herself in under de hedge, fur she wur afrightened 'twor de same man come back to kill her agin, an' besides youah shuah she wor ashamed of bein' naked.

"An' he calls out: 'Ef you're a ghost go 'way! but ef you're a livin' Christ'n, speak to me!' An' she med answer direc'ly: 'I'm as good a Christ'n as you are, but not in parable.'<sup>1</sup> An' when he sin her, he pull't his deah, beautiful topcoat affer him, an' put it an' her, an' he says: 'Jump behint me.' An' she jumped behint him, an' he rid wi' her to his own gret hall. An' deah wuz no speakin' tell dey gat home. He knowed she wuz deah to be kilt, an' he galloped as hard as he could an' his blood-hoss, tell he got to his own hall.

<sup>1</sup> " 'Stry' " is Chaucerian, e.g. "and struye your persons" in *The Tale of Melibee*.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. apparel.

"An' when he bring'd her in, dey wur all struck stunt to see a woman naked, wid her beautiful black hair hangin' down her back in long riuuklets. Dey asked her what she wuz deah fur, an' she tell'd dem, an' she tell'd dem, an' youah shuah dey soon put clothes an her, an' when she wuz dressed up, deah warn't a lady in de land more han'some nor her, an' his folks wor in delight av her.

"Now, dey says: 'We'll have a supper for goers an' comers an' all gentry to come at.' Youah shuah it should be a 'spensible supper an' no savation of no money. And deah wuz to be tales tell'd an' songs sing'd, an' everywan dat dida't sing't a song had to tell't a tale; an' every door wuz bolted for fear any wan would meek a skip out.

"An' it kem to pass to dis Gypsy gal to sing a song; an de gentleman dat fun' her says: 'Now, my pretty Gypsy gal, tell a tale'; an' de gentleman dat wuz her husband knowed her, an didn't want her to tell a tale, and he says: 'Sing a song, my pretty Gypsy gal.'

"An' she says: 'I won't sing a song, but I'll tell a tale.' An' she says—

'Bobby rag! Bobby rag!  
Roun' de oak tree—'

"'Pooh! pooh!' says her husband, 'dat tale won't do.' (Now, de ole mother an' de son, dey knowed what wuz comin' out.) 'Go an! my pretty Gypsy gal!' says de oder young gentleman. 'A werry nice tale indeed!'

"So she goes an—

'Bobby rag! Bobby rag!  
Roun' de oak tree,  
A Gypsy I wuz born'd;  
A lady I wuz bred;  
Dey made me a coffin  
Afore I wuz dead.

An' dats de rogue deah!' An' she tell't all de tale into de party, how he wur agoin' to kill her, an' tek her heart and pluck home.

"An' all de gentry took'd an' gibbeted him alive, both him an' his mother; an' dis young squire married her, an' mad her a lady for life. 'Ah!' concludes Johnny musingly, 'ef we could know her name, an' what breed she wur, what a beautiful ting dat would be, but de tale doan' say.'"

Now it is Lenda's turn, and, exercising the privilege of the guests in the previous story, she sings a song instead of telling a tale—

"A Gypsy I wuz born'd,  
An' a Gypsy I'll remain;  
A tellin' young maids deir forchans,  
Myself I will maintain!"

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And this glorification of the Rommany *métier* draws from Wasti her own views on fortune-telling. "*Dukeripen*," as my wise woman opines, "is a *tuteho purro korva*," but now, like law and language, in sad ruins. Yet we learn that there are still Gypsy families who inherit the old prophetic gift,<sup>1</sup> though it must be difficult, especially for the *pukinyas*, to distinguish between the prophetess and the charlatan. Deliah, too, supports the inspiration theory, adding that "dat was *tuteho dukerín*", when de *Dukermístri púker'd* de pooah young prince he'd never live to *lél romado*,"<sup>2</sup> while Lenda denies that the young people nowadays can tell fortunes properly either way.

Then Wasti, ignoring her grandchild's rebuke that she is "putting herself too forward," tells us the tale of—

#### "DE LITTLE FOX.

"In ole formel times, when dey used to be kings an' queens, deah wuz a king an' queen hed on'y one darter. And dey stored this darter like de eyes in dere head, an' dey hardly would let de wind blow an her. Dey lived in a 'menjus big park, an' one way of de park deah wuz a lodge-house, an' de oder en' deah wuz a great moat of water. Now dis queen died an' lef' dis darter, an' she wur a werry han'some gal—you're sure she mus' be, bein' a queen's darter!

"In dis heah lodge-house deah wuz an ole woman lived, and in dem days deah wur witchcraft, an' de ole king used to sout fur her to go up to de palast to work, an' she consated herself an' him a bit. So one day dis heah ole gentleman wuz a-talking to dis ole woman, an' de darter gat a bit jealous, an' dis ole woman fun' out dat de darter wuz angry, an' she didn't come anigh de house fur a long time.

"Now de ole witch wuz larnin' de young lady to sew. So she sout fur her to come down to de lodge-house afore she hed her breakfast. An' de fust day she wents, she picked up a kernel of wheat as she wuz coming along, an' eat it. An' de witch said to her, 'Have you hed your breakfast?' an' she says 'No!' 'Have you hed nothin'?' she says. 'No!' she says, 'on'y a kernel of wheat.' She wents two marnin's like dat, an' picked up a kernel of wheat every marnin', so dat de witch would have no powah over her—God's grain you know, *raí*! Bat de third marnin', she on'y picked up a bit av

<sup>1</sup> Oliver Lee has repeatedly stated to me that his mother is able to tell any one consulting her all the principal events of their past life, all the articles in their pockets, and the subject of a letter or the exact amount of a bill held before her in a closed envelope.

<sup>2</sup> Such a tale is related of the late Duke of Clarence and Avondale.

orange peel, an' den dis ole 'guzberi gorji'<sup>1</sup> witchered her, an' after dat she never sount fur her to come no more.

"Now dis young lady gat to be big. An' de witch wuz glad. So she gonod to de king an' she says, 'Your darter is dat way. Now, you know, she'll hev to be 'stry'd.' 'What! my beautiful han'some darter to be in de fambly way! Oh! no! no! no! et couldn't be!' 'But it can be so, an' et es so!' said de ole witch.

"Well, it wuz so, an' de ole king fun' it out and was well-nigh crazy. An' when he fun' it out, for shuah dem days when any young woman had a misforchant, she used to be burnt, an' he ordered a man to go an' get an iron chair, an' a earload of faggots, an' she hed to be put in dis iron chair, an' dese faggots set of a light rount her, an' she burnt to death.

"As dey had her in dis chair, and a-goin' to set it of a-light, deah wur an ole gentleman come up—Dat was my ole dubel to be shuah! —an' he says, 'My noble leech,<sup>2</sup> don't burn her, nor don't hurt her, nor don't 'stry her, for dere's an' ole wessel into de bottom of dat park; put her in dere an' let her go where God d'rect her to. So dey did do so, an' nevah think'd no more about her.

"Durin' time dis young lady wuz confined of a little fox, and d'rectly as he was bornt he says: 'My mammy, you mus' be werry weak an' low bein' confined of me, an' nothin' to eat or drink, but I must go somewheres, an' get you somethin'.' 'Oh! my deah little fox, don't leave me. Whatever shall I do witout you? I shall die broken-hearted.' 'I'm a-goin' to my gran'father, as I suspose,' says de little fox. 'My deah, you mustn't go, you'll be worried by de dogs.' 'Oh! no dogs won't hurt me, my mammy.' Away he gone'd, tritlin' an' trottin' tell he got to his gran'fader's hall. When he got up to de gret boarden gates, dey wuz closed, an' deah wuz two or tree dogs tied down, an' when he gonod in de dogs never looked at him.

"One of de women comed outer de hall, an' who should it be but dis ole witch. He says, 'Call youah dogs in, missis, an' don't let 'em bite me. I wants to see de noble leech belonging to dis hall.' 'What do you want to see him fur?' 'I wants to see him for somethin' to eat an' drink fur my mammy, she's werry poorly.' 'An' who are youah mammy?' 'Let him come out, he 'll know.' So de noble leech comed out an' he says: 'What do you want, my little fox?' He put his hen' up to his head, such manners he had! 'I wants somethin' to eat an' drink fur my mammy, she's werry poorly.' So de noble leech tole de cook to fill a basket wid wine an' wittles. So de cook

<sup>1</sup> Witch, *dit*. "wise woman,"

<sup>2</sup> *i.e.* leech.

done so, and bring'd it to him. De noble leech says: 'My little fox you can never carry it, I will sen' some one to carry it.' But he says, 'No! thank you, my noble leech,' an' he chucked it on his little back, an' wents tritting an' trotting to his mammy.

"When he got to his mammy, she says, 'Oh! my deah little fox, I've bin crazy about you. I thought de dogs had eaten you.' 'No, my mammy, dey turn't deir heads de oder way.' An' she took'd him an' kissed him an' rejoiced over him. 'Now, my mammy, have somethin' to eat an' drink,' says de little fox, 'I got dem from my gran'father as I s'npose it is.'

"So he wents tree times. An' de secon' time he wents, de ole witch began smellin' a rat, an' she says to de servants, 'Don't let dat little fox come heah no more; he'll get worried.' But he says, 'I wants to see de noble leech,' says de little fox. 'Yonah werry plaguesome to de noble leech, my little fox.' 'Oh no! I'm not,' he says.

"De las' time he comes, his moder dressed him in a beautiful robe of fine needlework. Now de noble leech comes up again to de little fox, an' he says, 'Who is yonah mammy, my little fox?' 'You wouldn't know p'raps, ef I wuz to tell you.' An' he says, 'Who med you dat robe, my little fox?' 'My mammy, to be shuah! who else should make it?' An' de ole king wept an' cried bitterly when he seed dis robe he had an, fur he think'd his deah child wur dead.

"Could I have a word wi' you, my noble leech?' says de little fox. 'Could you call a party dis afternoon up at your hall?' He says, 'What fur, my little fox?' 'Well, ef you call a party, I'll tell you whose robe dat is, but you mus' let my mammy come as well.' 'No! no! my little fox, I couldn't have yonah mammy to come.' 'Well, I shan't come ef my mammy arn't to come.' Well, de ole king agreed, an' de little fox tell'd him: 'Now deah mus' be takes to be telled, an' songs to be sing'd, an' dem as don't sing a song hez to tell a tale; an' after we have dinner, let's go an' walk about in de garden; but you mus' 'quaint as many ladies an' gentlemen as you can to dis party, an' be shuah to bring de ole lady what live at de lodge.'

"Well, dis dinner was called, an' dey all had 'nuff to eat, an after dat wur oval, de noble leech stood up in de middlt an' called for a song or tale. Deah wuz all songs sing't and tales tell't, tell it came to dis young lady's tun. An' she says, 'I can't sing a song or tell a tale, but my little fox can.' '*Pooydoria!*' says de ole witch, 'tun out de little fox, he stinks!' But dey all called an de little fox, an' he stood up an' says: 'Once ont a time,' he says, 'deah wuz an' ole-

fashn't king an' queen lived togeder, an' dey only had one darter, an' dey stored dis darter like de eyes into deir head, an' dey 'ardly would let de wint blow an' her.' 'Poogydarda!' says de ole witch, 'tun out de little fox, it stinks.' But deah wuz all de ladies an' gentlemen clappin' an' sayin', 'Speak an' my little fox.' 'Well tole! my little fox.' 'Werry good tale, indeed!'

So de little fox speak'd an, and tell't dem all about de ole witch, an' how she wanted to 'stry de king's darter, an' he says: 'Dis heah ole lady she fried my mammy a egg an' a sliced of bacon, an' ef she wur to eat it all, she'd be in de fambaleay way wid some bad animal, but she only eat half on it, an' den she wor so wid me. An' dat's de ole witch deah!' he says, showin' de party wid his little paw.

"An' den, after dis wuz done, an' dey all walked togeder in de garden, de little fox says: 'Now, my mammy, I've done all de good I can for you, an' now I'm a-goin' to leave you,' an' he strip't aff his little skin, an' he flewed away in de beautifulest white angel you ever seed in your life. An' de ole witch was burnt in de same chair dat wuz meant fur de young lady."

White beams are stealing into the tent, dulling the lamp's rays, and Deliah, from her coigne of vantage, invites us all outside to "wish on the new moon," I doffing my glasses first to avert ill luck, and the women greeting it with a low courtesy. The *nevo dud* is lying on its back "for wilful weather," and bright above our heads are "*Mi-duvel's Wardo*,"<sup>1</sup> and the "*Raway's Skamin*,"<sup>2</sup> and the "*Trin Kralyn*,"<sup>3</sup> and Lias's favourite "*Seven Peas*,"<sup>4</sup> and other star-groups which, like old "No Name" Herren, the Gypsies have neglected to christen.<sup>5</sup>

And while Wasti and I discuss the impiety of a local astronomer who is having a huge telescope built "to look right into heaven," Mandra sings and dances fantastically in the moonlight "just for all de wurl," as old Gray says simply, "like one of dem little *lobonis* on de stage." She is eleven years of age, and the pride of her grandparents, for is she not "de best scholard in her class, an' de best fighter in de hull school?"

<sup>1</sup> *Uris Major*, vulgo "Churib's wain." Another Gypsy name for the same constellation is the *Lilasky Chirich* ("kite").

<sup>2</sup> *Classiopis*.

<sup>3</sup> The three stars forming the Belt of *Orion*.

<sup>4</sup> *Pleiades*.

<sup>5</sup> In addition to the above-mentioned, there is the *Sinuouskro's Puv* (tailor's field), described by a Gypsy as six stars like a square field, with one star representing the tailor inside—probably *Ursa*. Many Gypsies take a keen, if unsentient, interest in astronomy; for instance, Lias Robinson recently came several miles to see me, merely to desire me to look out for two stars which "had got into their wrong position." It was the Conjunction of Venus and Jupiter.

Then, when we are once more gathered around the fire, I tell them the old story of "Faithful John," and Gray follows with—

"DE LITTLE BULL-CALF.

"Centers of yeahs ago, when all de most part of de country wur a wilderness place, deah wuz a little boy lived in a poonah bit of a poverty *ker*, an' dis boy's father giv him a deah little bull-calf. De boy used to tink de wurl' of dis bull-calf, an' his father gived him everyting he wanted fur it.

"Afterward dat his father died, an' his mother got married agin, an' dis wuz a werry wicious step-father an' he couldn't abide dis little boy, an' at last he said, if de boy bring'd de bull-calf home agin, he wur a-goin' to kill it. Dis father should be a willint to dis deah little boy, shouldn't he, my Sampson?

"He used to gon out tentin' his bull-calf every day wid barley bread, an' arter dat, deah was an ole man comed to him, an' we have a deal of thought who dat wuz, *hoi*? An' he d'rected de little boy: 'You an' youah bull-calf had better go away an' seek youah forchants.'

"So he wents an, an' wents an, as fur as I can tell you to-morrow night, an' he wents up to a farmhouse an' begged a crust of bread, an when he comed back he broked it in two, and giv half an it to his little bull-calf.

"An' he wents an to another house, an begs a bit of cheese crud, an' when he comed back, he wants to gin half an it to his bull-calf. 'No!' de little bull-calf says, 'I'm a-goin' acrost dis field into de wild wood wilderness country, where dere'll be tigers, lepers, wolfs, monkeys, an' a fiery dragin, an' I shall kill dem every one excep' de fiery dragin, an' he'll kill me.' (De Lord could make any animal speak dose days. You know trees could speak onst. Our blessed Lord he hid in de eldon bush, an' it tell't an him, an' he says, 'You shall always stink,' and so it always do; but de ivy let him hide into it, and he says, 'It should be green both winter an' summer.')<sup>1</sup>

"An' dis little boy did cry, you'ah shuah, and he says, 'Oh! my little bull-calf, I hope he won't kill you.' 'Yes, he will,' de little bull-calf says, 'an you climb up dat tree, an' den no one can come anigh you but de monkeys, an' ef dey come de cheese crud will sef

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Noah Young's name for elder, "*mi-dweel's kundle ruk*" (*G.L.S.J.* III, 73); some other Gypsies (including Isaac Herrou) call it "*araca*." Oliver Lee's name for ivy is "*chiridakro ruk*," because it was the tree brought back by the dove into the ark, and this is the reason that birds are fond of clustering round it. Holly is "*mi-dweelakro ruk*" (*cf.* Cornish "Aunt Mary's tree"); and Gypsies pitching their tent against a holly-bush are under divine protection.

you. An' when I'm kilt de dragin will go away fur a bit, an' you come down dis tree, an skin me, an get my biggest gut out, an' blow it up, an' my gut will kill everyting as you hit wid it, an' when dat fiery dragin come, you hit it wid my gut, an' den cut its tongue out.' We know deah were fiery dragins dose days, like George an' his dragin in de Bible, but deah ! it arn't de same wurl' now. De wurl' is tun'd ovah sense, like you tun'd it ovah wid a spade !

"In course he done as dis bull-calf tell't him, an' he climb't up de tree, and de monkeys climb't up de tree to him, an' he helt de cheese crud in his hend, an' he says, 'I'll squeeze youah heart like dis flint stone.' An' de monkey cocked his eye, much to say, 'Ef you can squeeze a flint stone an mek de juice come outer it, you can squeeze me.' An' he never spoked, for a monkey's cunning, but down he went. An' de little bull-calf wuz fightin' all dese wild things on de groun', an' de little boy wuz clappin' his hands up de tree an sayin' : 'Go an, my little bull-calf ! Well fit, my little bull-calf !' An' he mastered everyting barrin' de fiery dragin, an' de fiery dragin kilt de little bull-calf.

"An' he wents an, an' saw a young lady, a king's darter staked down by de hair of her head. Dey wuz werry savage dat time of day, kings to deir darters, ef dey misbehavoured demselves, an' she wuz put deah fur de fiery dragin to 'stry her.

"An' he sat down wid her several hours, an she says, 'Now, my deah little boy, my time is come when I'm a-goin' to be worried, an' you'll better go.' An' he says : 'No !' he says, 'I can master it, an' I won't go.' She begged an prayed an him as ever she could to get him away, but he wouldn't go.

"An' he could heah it comin' far enough, roarin' an' doin', an' dis dragin come spitting fire, wid a tongue like a gret speart, an' you could heah it roarin' fur milts, an' dis place wheah de king's darter wur staked down, was his beat wheah he used to come. An when it comed, de little boy bit dis gut about his face tell he wuz dead, but de fiery dragin bited his front finger after him.

"Den de little boy cut de fiery dragin's tongue out, an' he says to de young lady : 'I've done all dat I can, I mus' leave you.' An' youah shuah she wuz sorry when he hed to leave her, an' she tied a dimant ring into his hair, an' said good-bye to him.

"Now den, bine bye, de ole king comed up to de werry place where his darter was staked by de hair of her head, 'mentin' an' doin', an' espectin' to see not a bit of his darter, but de prents of de place where she wuz. An' he wuz disprised, an' he says to his darter,



'How come you seft?' 'Why, deah wuz a little boy comed heah an' sef me, daddy.' Den he untied her, an' took'd her home to de palast, for yonah shuah he wor glad, when his temper comed to him agin.

"Well, he put it into all de papers to want to know who seft dis gal, an' ef de right man comed he wur to marry her, an' have his kingdom an' all his destate. Well, deah wuz gentlemen comed fun all an' all parts of England, wid' deah front fingers cut aff, an' all an' all kinds of tongues, foreign tongues an' beastes tongues, an' wile animals' tongues. Dey cut all sorts of tongues out, an' dey went about shootin' tings a purpose, but dey never could find a dragin to shoot. Deah wuz gentlemen comin' every other day wid tongues an' dimant rings, but when dey showed deir tongues, it warn't de right one, an' dey got turn't aff.

"An' dis little ragged boy comed up a time or two werry desolated like, an' she had an eye on him, an' she looked at dis boy, tell her father got werry angry an' turn't dis boy out. 'Daddy,' she says, 'I've got a knowledge to dat boy.'

"You may say, deah wuz all kinds of kings' sons comin' up, showin' deah parcels, an' arter a time or two dis boy comed up agin dressed a bit better. An' de ole king says, 'I see you've got an eye on dis boy, an' ef it is to be him, it has to be him.' All de other *ryas* wuz fit to kill him, and dey says, 'Pooh! pooh! tun dat boy out; it can't be him.' But de ole king says, 'Now, my boy, let's see what you got.' Well, he showed de dimant ring, with her name into it, an' de fiery dragin's tongue. *Dordli!* how dese gentlemen were mesmerized when he showed his 'thority, and de king tole him, 'You shall have my destate, an' marry my darter.'

"An he got married to dis heah gal, an' got all de ole king's destate, an' den de step-father came an' wanted to own him, but de young king didn't know such a man."

A silence falls on the little group, and we rise reluctantly to go—this not being Noarirus's tan, where a man may, if so minded, sit up all night. Then, remembering the girls' love of a *sikerneski*, the other *rye* asks whether Mandra and Deliah may accompany us soon to the pantomime.

What could there have been in this request to throw such a bomb-shell into our pleasant party? For Gray has started to his feet with the cry of an animal in pain, passionately vociferating, "Not dat one! Not dat one!" and pouring out a torrent of uncouth grief as he points to the wretched elder girl cowering in a dark corner of the

tent. And Wasti sits motionless with inscrutable face, her eyes, as I think, reading my very thoughts. And Mandra, with piteous grimaces, is clasping and unclasping her hands, as she flits to and fro, tugging our coats to draw us outside and end the painful scene.

Yes, it is time to go, for old Gray has broken down over some simple phrase—it is only *gorjiko rat*, but it chokes in his throat. Strangely familiar, too, the words sound, for do they not occur in the last two lines of Grannam Herren's song:—

" *Ta shan a vassavie labraie*  
With *gorjiko rat* to be *kubai*."

And I find myself wondering whether Gray was quoting from this, as, our hasty adieux returned with Wasti's benediction, we step out into the sweet night air, and walk homewards, musing curiously on the break-up of the Rommany race.

JOHN SAMPOSON.

### III.—THE WORSHIP OF MOUNTAINS AMONG THE GYPSIES.—(Continued.)

**E**VEN the settled Gypsies, from whose folk-lore the "lucky" mountains have more or less already disappeared, believe that in this way one can see the witches. In Mühlbach (Transylvania), in the winter of 1887, a Gypsy woman maintained that on St. Andrew's Eve she had seen from the "Red Mountains," near the town, the rich Roumanian peasantess, Marie Opincar, milking the cows in her neighbour's stable with a magic thread, whilst she herself lay in her bed. Her assertion caused a regular disturbance amongst the Roumanian population. Of a Saxon peasantess in Kelling she made a similar statement.

As regards the above-mentioned Suyolak, he is a gigantic being, his whole body covered thickly with hair, which the witches have to lick off, and which then always grows again. He knows all healing remedies and magic arts. On the occasion of his first coitus, he was surprised by the devils, and, being enfeebled, was vanquished by them, and fettered to a rock, where he remains till now. If once he could tear himself loose, he would destroy the entire world. On Whitsun Eve the witches of the whole earth assemble at the spot where Suyolak is fettered to a rock, and bring him their yearly gifts. Then, angered at the sight of so many witches and devils, he seeks to burst his fetters, but a great yellow serpent appears, winds itself







