
Roma

Gypsies

Travellers

Jean-Pierre Liégeois

to a nomadism or semi-nomadism which is both practical and functional in many respects) and, on the other, restricted travelling conditions (for example in 1992-93 legislation has been proposed in Great Britain which would impact considerably on conditions under which caravans would be permitted to stop). As a result, when we speak of travel, just as when we speak of accommodation, we must take account of the measures taken by the surrounding populations. Socio-political factors determine the expression of socio-cultural factors.

6. The family

Every aspect of Gypsies' and Travellers' lives gravitates around the family, the basic unit of a social organisation comprised of family groups, simultaneously an economic unit in which work and solidarity are exercised and an educative unit which ensures social reproduction and security, as well as the protection of the individual. In a world of shifting, unpredictable situations, the family is a permanent feature, synonymous with stability. In the relative absence of other attachments (such as geographic or professional) on which to base identity and identification, social factors take on overwhelming importance, within which the significance of the family is extreme.

The family is not the sum of its individual members. It is entire in and of itself, a set of components in solidarity *vis-à-vis* other families, *vis-à-vis* the outsider. Conflict is experienced collectively: relations between individuals are simultaneously relations between family groups, and the individual acts, not as an individual, but as a member of his or her family. The misdeed of an individual is felt to be that of the family. A positive act reinforces the prestige of the family. A well-brought-up child brings honour to his family, and, once married, if this should bring him into a new family group, he will continue to represent his natal family within it. Should the two groups come into conflict, he may have to go back to his own: his family of origin, of which he remains a member, will determine his attitude in all circumstances.

Social solidarity keeps all members of the family united: unmarried adults — a rare phenomenon — remain with their parents, orphans are nearly always taken in by relatives, the aged — who are cared for and profoundly respected — are not pushed aside: putting an old person into a "retirement home" is as inconceivable as sending a child to boarding school. The sick

are not left alone: if a stay in hospital is required, members of the family will be in constant attendance, sleeping at the invalid's side if permitted to do so, bringing in his food and constantly enquiring about the state of his health. Nor are the dead ever left alone: a vigil is kept over them night and day until the time of the funeral, by all their relatives, who get there from wherever they may be when the news reaches them. Neither in the home nor outside it, not in hospital, not even in death itself is the individual ever left alone. He is tied up in a vast network of intense emotional relations which it is inconceivable — and would be unbearable — to leave. This gives us some insight into the gravity, in every respect, of exclusion from the group when it occurs: it is social death, because, as we have seen, there is no place for the individual but in his family, and in relation to his family. This social solidarity is also social, and psychological, security.

The family unit is, generally speaking, the extended family, which brings together a number of nuclear families and generations. The nuclear family is relatively unimportant, and the surname it bears — arising from the necessity of regularising the legality of one's civil status, as required in modern States — has no social meaning. It is a name "for papers", and may be borrowed at random from surrounding society (for example, Gypsies emigrating from Russia in the early 20th century were required by the Russian authorities to state their surnames — so they gave Russian ones; more recently, Bulgarian Gypsies took on Bulgarian names when the authorities there banned the use of Turkish ones). This "foreign" name may not even be known to near relations, so insignificant is it. Hundreds or even thousands of unrelated individuals may bear the same "official" surname (for example, *Kalé* in France and Spain).

Travelling and present-time orientation do not favour the sort of cult of the family that one finds in, say, China. On the one hand if the family gets too big its function of social identification, and of providing people with clear bearings, is weakened, and the bonds between individuals may lose intensity: when this occurs, an over-large family subdivides. Such subdivisions require that each individual, in order to situate himself, must cultivate a phenomenal memory for the facts of kinship, a store of knowledge reactivated on a daily basis in ordinary conversation, and clarified whenever people meet.

On the other hand, the practice of "forgetting" the dead (expressed, for example, through the destruction or sale of all the deceased's belongings,

a ban on mentioning the dead person's name, moving away from where a death has occurred) brings people back to the present. Together these tendencies put a stop to any attempt to fossilise a heritage which is as economically pragmatic as it is cultural, and in which, if particularities or privileges were to be perpetuated, family structures would become rigidified, whereas they need to remain flexible enough to adapt, and would strengthen differences between the elements of a system which must keep them in equilibrium.

In the family there are both difference and complementarity, marked by the male and female roles. Women often play a very significant economic role, in relative independence, and it is women who provide the family's daily needs (food, clothing). In a context of rejection and frequent persecution, in which men have been hounded, imprisoned, and punished, women have often borne sole responsibility for providing for their families: accompanied by children, she was less harshly treated.

This picture remains largely valid, and it is usually women who, for example, handle any administrative dealings, particularly with social welfare bodies. Responsible for the education of all her children in their earliest years, and of her daughters up until the time they marry, her teaching role is of crucial importance in ensuring the survival of the group. It is often said that she is the conservative element in the social group, because it is she who passes on tradition — but it is for precisely this reason that she may also be a force for change.

Men, for their part, are the bearers and defenders of family prestige *vis-à-vis* the world outside; inside, they are the heads of their families, and in this capacity carry authority and the power of decision-making. In many groups, the man's earnings tend to be earmarked for exceptional expenses, or for prestige spending: a party, a feast, a car, etc. He is often away from home, scouting out work opportunities or discussing things with other men to keep up social ties and make business deals.

The family comes into being with the birth of the first child. This will be followed by other births, often by a great many others, and the new addition is always welcome. His education is collective, provided by the family at large. He lives communally among three or four generations, and his socialisation takes place within this broadly based group, thus ensuring cohesion, coherence, continuity, and security. The generations are not in

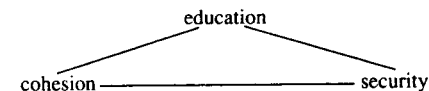
opposition, but form a continuum. There is no separation between the child's world and that of the adults: they are in constant physical and social contact, protecting each other from the outside world, never alone, always within, and part of, a group.

They live together, work together, and suffer together. The child learns through his immersion in the family, and quickly becomes very advanced in his grasp of complex social relations, capable of autonomy and full of initiatives of his own. He respects adults, and adults respect him. He is encouraged to develop exploratory behaviour within his environment (for example looking for scrap metal, sorting the collection, handling the sale). Experience, initiative, and responsibility are valued within a flexible framework without fixed schedules, compulsion, or excessive constraint.

Yet freedom to take initiative is not the same as absence of control. It is simply that this control does not take a direct, individual form, and is not expressed as a plethora of orders to be obeyed. Instead, control is holistic: it is exercised by the group. The Gypsy child experiences an education in independence, not a situation of *laissez-faire*. His behaviour is channelled towards acquiring autonomy within his respect for the group. The educative family is primordial, and takes precedence over later alliances through marriage, and any outside friendships.

In this way, and at every age, the child learns the different aspects of his various social roles. The toddler and the teenager work side by side with their parents: boys with their father, girls with their mother. Each has real responsibilities: for example, the boy will be involved in real business deals, and the little girl will mind younger children and prepare meals when the mother is absent, then accompany her on her commercial activities. The child learns how to behave with his peers, and with members of the opposite sex, in conformity with the expectations of the group, and the rights and obligations which accompany these roles. By the time they reach their early teens, children are making a significant contribution to their parents' activities, while the parents continue to polish the children's social and professional skills. The process occurs at all times within the context of a relationship of mutual respect between adults and children, in which theory, family roles, and economic skills are presented as a seamless whole.

The child, small or big, is entirely secure within the bosom of his community. Tradition gives him security against the future, and group cohesion protects him from the unknown. Education, social cohesion, and security are firmly linked:



The community takes on an even greater importance in that relations with the outside world are limited and generally negative, a source of anxiety, depicted and experienced as hazardous. Contact with the exterior cannot be other than violent: on the psychological level — fear, suspicion — this is always so; on the social level — oppositional relations — it is frequently so, and it sometimes takes on a physical expression as well: violent rejection, aggression. This is all the more pronounced when such contact goes beyond the usual superficial dealings — as in a business context — to a more regular, institutionalised context in which the Traveller loses his potential for taking the initiative: sedentary Travellers' relations with their neighbours, for example, or the situation on a supervised halting site, or in school.

School, as an external element, and one which affects children's upbringing, is disturbing by nature, since it upsets the internal education process. Those parents who experienced it themselves generally have negative memories of it, and hesitate to entrust their children to it. Moreover, they claim that, up to now, their children have got on just as well as those that have been to school, and that there is no connection between scholastic success and success in the economic and social fields (see the chapter on schooling, further on).

My little brother goes to school
and the boys do bully him
and call him "Gypsy, Tramp
and Thieves", and he's only eight
and cries at the night.

Julie Lee ("My Little Brother", in T. Acton, *Gypsies*, Macdonald, London, 1981).

Educated to fear the outside world — a fear which is reinforced and justified by the conflict characteristic of contact situations — the child's attitude to this foreign institution, the school, is one of opposition. His

upbringing has not prepared him to take orders, to accept arbitrary rules. He cannot understand being separated by age from his brothers and sisters, having to give up his habit of taking initiative, and not being allowed to express — immediately and passionately — whatever he is feeling. Faced with these major contradictions between the two educative systems, and plunged into an alien environment, the child will be nervous, anxious, and aggressive towards people and things, unless the school makes a massive effort to adapt to him. What is more, this school, which denigrates his own aptitudes and habits while encouraging others which are quite foreign to him, and which expresses itself in a language which is not his own, caps it all by classifying the Gypsy child as socially maladjusted or even as mentally retarded.

In spite of everything, going to school is a significant new phenomenon for the present generation of Gypsy and Traveller children. It is a change both in itself — in the fact of making use of an outside institution — and it is also an opening up to the changes that school may bring into the children's lives.

The family is undergoing other transformations, too. One of the most marked of these is the reduction in size of family groupings, due to increasing sedentarism which makes it difficult to gather in large groups, and to the policy of providing official accommodation without adapting it to Travellers' needs; it also springs from a rise in mixed marriages which often isolate the resulting nuclear family. There is change, too, in the trend towards increased individual initiative in choosing a spouse, and in young people's demands for change — for some, a passing whim which they do not act upon, remaining well integrated in the group even though they could leave it if they chose, but which, for others, becomes a reality. Women's roles are changing, as are styles of clothing, and the influence of the mass media is increasingly evident. Finally, and in connection with general trends we shall be examining further on, change may reach a point where young people no longer feel they can be part of their own families, solidarity is in crisis, and there is an accompanying rise in delinquency, alcoholism, and drug abuse, a phenomenon in evidence from Dublin to Athens and from Moscow to Lisbon.

7. Religion

In religion as in other fields it is essential to distinguish between borrowings themselves, and how they are lived by the borrowers on a background defined by the Indian heritage of Gypsy origins. In the United Kingdom, some *Rom* are Roman Catholics, while others are Greek Orthodox; Irish Travellers are Roman Catholics, and English *Romanichals* have shown little interest in religion up to now. The picture is further complicated by two major evangelical movements, one dating from about 1830, the second from 1967, which combine Pentecostalism with a validation of Gypsy culture. In Estonia, Latvian Gypsies are mostly Lutherans, while Russian Gypsies are Orthodox. In Italy, some are Catholics, some Orthodox, some Pentecostalist, some Muslim, and others do not believe in God. In Bulgaria there are two major groupings, one of them Christian (*Dasikané Roma*), one Muslim (*Xoraxané Roma*).

A group's religion and its contacts past and present are related. For example, in Italy, those who describe themselves as Catholics are Southern *Rom* or *Roma* who have been living side by side with Catholics for generations, just as Orthodox *Rom* lived with the Orthodox populations of the Balkans and Muslim *Roma* are relatively recent arrivals from Southern Yugoslavia, where they lived alongside Muslims, while young people are losing their faith, or becoming atheists, along with their Italian peers. In Bulgaria the *Xoraxané* are Muslim, but celebrate Orthodox festivals; some groups in Bulgaria bring their infants to the Roman Catholic priest for baptism and their dead to the Muslim *hodja* for burial. What is borrowed, how it is lived, what functions it fills — once again these vary according to the situation in which the group finds itself, and its relations with its surroundings. Gypsy and Traveller religion can be analysed on three different levels: a) as adaptation to the environment, b) as a component of culture, c) as a means of providing

certain forms of psychological equilibrium and of social and cultural reorganisation, particularly in the crisis period of the past few years.

Religion as a form of adaptation when adopting beliefs or rituals allows the group to avoid additional coercion. In this sense there is a relation between adopted religion and the dominant religion of the country of residence, despite the fact that the churches have generally excluded Gypsies and Travellers in a variety of ways, and only rarely take any notice of them except to reject or convert them. But Gypsies' and Travellers' adaptation does not go as far as taking on the full package of local practices: for example very few attend religious services on a regular basis even in countries where this is common practice among the population at large. This is due in part to rejection: both the congregation and the religious authorities have made Gypsies feel unwelcome in places of worship. Conversely, assimilationism may also take a religious turn, as it did for example in Bulgaria in the 1940s, when Muslim Gypsies were forced to convert to Christianity.

While elements may be borrowed for reasons of adaptation, this is not to say that they remain superficial and opportunistic. Some beliefs and rituals have always been absorbed into the Gypsy cultural complex: there is a syncretism arising from different items acquired under different circumstances, organised into a uniquely Gypsy configuration. Such is the case with, for example, devotion to certain saints, who are not Gypsy saints, but who determine Gypsy religious and social practices, transposed by culture and transported by migration (pilgrimages, feast days marked by major festivals). So too with the particular devotion some have for the Virgin, or the very real social importance of borrowed sacraments and other rituals.

Whether of ancient or recent date, whether acquired in a distant place or on the spot, borrowings are fully integrated, not only on the abstract plane, but into a cohesive set of practice. *The sacred is always of relevance to the mundane, and the mundane is — explicitly or no — permeated by the sacred.* There is no separation between religion and other social or cultural characteristics. Religion, like everything else, is experienced intensely. The majority of beliefs and rituals are linked to the regulation of social practices and to developing the norm system, particularly through the oppositions we have already mentioned: pure/impure, good/evil, Gypsy/non-Gypsy. The resulting construction is

simultaneously, through its borrowings, a reflection of the religious beliefs of surrounding populations, and, in practice, a reflection of the existential problems of the Gypsy group. The gods and saints of non-Gypsies are put to use, and this occurs in the context of Gypsy and Traveller preoccupations with regard to their environment. This phenomenon is a twofold expression of Traveller dependence on non-Travellers. As was remarked in Italy — but the observation is generalisable — “It is always the *Gaze* who help, or who punish: the Roma pantheon is an accurate reflection of the Roma environment.”

Birth and death are the occasions most surrounded by prohibitions and by purification rituals through which to lift them. Baptism occurs in this context, surrounded by belief in a range of factors which will determine the child's destiny, and is the most important of all the sacraments. Equally important is to gather round the dead, which brings together all the deceased's relations, even from great distances, as well as non-relatives who happen to be in the area at the time. Visiting the sick, the dying, and the dead is an occasion for a major reunion of the family group, and reinforces cohesion. The follow-up, of moving away, of burning or selling the belongings of the deceased, is part of the purification process for some. The spirit of the dead, through which the deceased remains among the living, is omnipresent, and must not be crossed.

Pilgrimages are the most visible expression of Gypsy and Traveller religious activity, but, to understand them, the three levels of analysis outlined above should be invoked. From the earliest times — for example in the case of the group described in Bologna and in Forlì as being on pilgrimage to Rome — they have provided a justification for travel, particularly in times and places where travel would otherwise have been impossible. Some of these have acquired a character as Gypsy pilgrimages (from Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer in Provence to the Romería del Rocío in Andalusia), or have been recently set up as such by religious authorities. Whatever their origin, many are very well attended, partly out of religious devotion, partly to meet up with family groups, and partly for commercial reasons, although they often entail very considerable distances (for example from Norway to a number of venues in Europe, from Ireland to Lourdes, etc...).

Over the last few years there has been very rapid growth in the Gypsy Pentecostalist movement, through the Gypsy Evangelical Church; since

its beginnings in France in the 1950s it has spread throughout Europe, and beyond. It is a new type of movement, reuniting diverse groups across traditional dividing lines, and nourishing resistance to outside pressures; through its Gypsy dynamism it serves as a form of demarcation, as a source of originality, and as a motor for transformation.

Providing refuge or renewal through salvation, it is both a symptom of social disorganisation and of responding to it by creating something to regroup around, and it is also successfully creating structures which bypass social divisions. The training of Gypsy preachers reinforces internal dynamics, and, whether in their own churches or in vast marquees at major "conventions", as surrounding societies are becoming secularised, Gypsy Pentecostalist groups come together, uniting people in the name of Jesus Christ and offering them a new way of life. The movement is growing all over Europe, from Britain to Bulgaria, from Portugal to Russia. Even before the changes took place in Eastern Europe, it was giving hope and dynamism to some communities there, and this trend has been further strengthened in the 90s.

8. Economic organisation

Gypsy and Traveller economic activities are extremely varied, and variable. That is to say that at any given moment an individual is likely to be involved in a number of them, and that they change over time. It would therefore be difficult, and pointless, to try to compile an exhaustive list; instead, we shall give a few characteristic examples in illustration of tendencies. There are a number of traditional activities which are to be found just about everywhere: metalworking (tinsmithing, blacksmithing, pots and pans, gilding, etc...), collecting and selling various materials, horse dealing, the performing arts and the circus (musicians, acrobats, jugglers, dancers, storytellers, comedians, conjurers, etc...), Fairground operators, door-to-door or market trading (of fruit, veg, second-hand goods, carpets, cloth, clothing, bargain goods, etc...), the production and sale of various craft items (violins, jewellery, belts, tablecloths, lace, wickerwork, metal objects), agricultural work, often of a seasonal nature and sometimes returning year after year to the same places (particularly in connection with harvesting), fortune-telling, and so on. Some activities are on the wane (knife and tool grinding, umbrella-making, items in wood or wrought iron) while others are on the rise (used cars and car parts, dealing in second-hand goods, certain types of performing arts, seasonal work in the building trade, maintenance work). Some types of work are specific to a given area: rafting timber in Finland, gathering wild mushrooms and snails in Austria, whitewashing buildings in Greece and Spain, etc... Regular waged employment has become common in Eastern Europe over the second half of the 20th century.

All of these activities are seen as the sale, whether of goods or services, to clients who are not Gypsies or Travellers. An element of negotiation, of striking a deal, is always present. Finding the client, persuading the client, making the sale — all are important features of economic

activities. Within these commercial dealings, Gypsy and Traveller practices are characterised — provided they have some degree of freedom in which to operate — by their variety: depending on time, place, and circumstances, and given that different groups do show different broad tendencies, the Gypsy or Traveller will be involved in a number of activities. For example in Italy, a *Rom* or *Sinto* may sell fruit in summer, collect scrap in winter, rear a couple of animals for sale whenever the occasion arises, and buy gold for re-sale if he comes across it at a good price.

In Belgium a *Manus* might sell second-hand goods in winter, turn to music when the fairs and festivals season starts up in spring, sell lily of the valley nosegays on May Day, and other flowers as the occasion arises, re-weave worn out straw chair bottoms, play music on the side, go back to second-hand goods. What's more, even in the two examples given, the lists are not exhaustive, nor will they necessarily be repeated year after year: additional activities may be added and grow in importance, while others may decline, to be dropped or taken up again as circumstances dictate.

To all of this we must also add the division of work by gender, which further broadens the range of possibilities for which the individual is prepared through apprenticeship alongside his or her parents: an apprenticeship in diversity, in change and variety, rather than monolithic training for a single trade. This constant rotation makes the child, and later the adult, adaptable and dynamic, renders economic organisation flexible in the extreme, and thus makes the society as a whole adaptable to the situation in which it finds itself, by exploiting opportunities as and when they arise: *the individual's economic activities are thus an ongoing interface between the range of skills at his disposal and fluctuating circumstances which dictate how these can be put to use.*

In those States where a collectivist economy was developed, Gypsies did all they could to reconcile its demands with their own practices. Thus in Estonia, after World War II, Gypsies worked in State enterprise, transporting animals to Russia; they also transported metal and wool, using their own horses, and later still took to importing goods from Latvia and Lithuania; they also engaged in small-scale commerce, despite this being prohibited. Artistic activities, too, afforded a degree of

professional flexibility. In this way, despite extremely difficult conditions for some family groups in particular, they survived.

Work is a necessity, not an end in itself. Work must leave an individual in control of his or her own time, free to participate in social affairs (get-togethers, family visits, parties, visiting the sick, etc.), to keep up and develop social relationships. Only self-employment provides the independence to fully pursue these obligations. Avoiding wage labour is also a way of avoiding involvement in an alien world, and of avoiding prolonged relationships within it. The most important consideration in connection with any type of work is *how* it can be exercised. This economic philosophy means that the choice of activities — when choice is possible — is a compromise between the need for income and the desire to maintain a style of living within a changing socio-economic and cultural context.

Generally speaking, economic activities take place within the framework of the family group, the basic economic unit of Gypsy and Traveller society. For big jobs, this can be expanded to a partnership arrangement between members of close groups. When this occurs, profit-sharing is the rule, and the association is always of an ephemeral nature: it dissolves as soon as the work is done. Within the group, there are bonds of solidarity between different families, synonymous with the redistribution of profits. These may be expressed through anything from occasional favours to regular donations in the form of money or gifts. Sons work for their father, thus enabling him to retire either because of age or because he wants to devote all his time to social affairs. Sometimes special assistance is organised on a broader scale for those with special needs: for example to help a recently bereaved woman and her children, a collection to meet hospital expenses, etc. In general such assistance, essential for the maintenance of cohesion in the midst of adversity and difficulties, follows the lines of social organisation, according to the proximity of the groups in question, measured by degrees of kinship but also, in certain circumstances, by geographical proximity.

Economics are an important determinant of nomadism or sedentarism. Moving brings adaptability, flexibility, and autonomy in maintaining economic independence. The scope and frequency of the moves will depend on the trade(s) being practised at any given moment. While scrap

metal and used car dealing presuppose the acquisition of stock, and thus require relative stability, most types of work demand mobility and an extensive search for prospective clients, as the local market is quickly exhausted. They also require groups practising similar trades to disperse, to avoid saturating the market. When nomadism is curtailed and sedentarism develops, the concept of territory may appear, with those occupying a given area asserting their rights over those of newcomers. The summer nomadism of the sedentary Gypsies of the Nordic countries, Portugal, France, Austria and elsewhere, plays an important cultural role, and is also justified for economic reasons. This is equally true for large-scale population movements, such as those of *Manuš* who travel to Portugal or elsewhere to play music at festivals and pilgrimages, or French *Rom* who travel to London to repair metal catering equipment.

Contacts must be sought out and expanded. Any *Gazo* met under any circumstances is a potential client. Part of the work — and doubtless the most pleasant — consists in setting the wheels in motion, negotiating, proposing to supply an object, a service, or both, to suggest buying, or selling, or both. Movement also enables the Traveller to avoid long-term relationships both before and after the transaction, and thus to keep contact to a superficial level.

In most countries, 1945 - 60 was the period of most significant change: the rural exodus, which decimated an established clientèle and destroyed a symbiotic relationship in which rural and nomadic families exchanged goods and services. In many countries, for example Spain, Albania, and Greece, Gypsies' characteristic trades (as pedlars, craftsmen, musicians...) had ensured their relative acceptance as suppliers of services. Economic development brought profound change, making everyone independent and selfish. Semi-sedentarism on the outskirts of urban concentrations has taken place under difficult economic and social conditions. Other factors were the growth in mass-produced goods, which took over many traditional markets, and motorisation, which changed the practices associated with nomadism: faster, more frequent journeys radiating from a fixed, or semi-fixed, base. In fact the current situation is such that in some cases it would be more accurate to speak of mobility than of nomadism.

These transformations brought changes in their wake, and other contingencies have arisen. Particularly significant has been the general

trend towards tightening up regulations regarding small-scale trading, be it by the imposition of considerable taxes, by complex red tape making licences hard to come by, or simply a blanket ban (for example on door-to-door selling). Gypsies and Travellers — in contrast to, for example, showmen and fairground operators — have no business associations or lobbies to represent them in political circles or to provide any of the protection associated with trade unions.

Another factor, operative in every country, are the restrictive regulations under which official halting sites are run, and which limit or prohibit working on-site: in consequence, families who have no choice but to live on such sites are unable to manage economically, and end up depending on social welfare. Being forced to stay put to keep the children in school also limits the family's adaptive options. The effects of imposed regulations, whether direct or indirect, are never taken into account, since the economic importance of the work that Gypsies and Travellers do is never recognised, despite its often being of a useful, dynamic nature.

For example, the many forms of recycling done by Travellers are of great importance in a consumer society: this looks certain to remain a growth industry. Yet far from being recognised as useful and attracting social approval, recycling work — for example of scrap metal — is a source of tension with the neighbours, who object to unsightly heaps of junk, despite the fact that the problem would never arise if storage areas were provided in the first place. Open-air trading, in markets and on the streets, also seems set for a bright future: modern urban planning is setting aside space for marketplaces and pedestrian shopping areas where streetsellers and performers (musicians, entertainers) are welcome.

The Gypsy demonstrates his dynamism in his choice of trades: all through his life he is on the look-out, not only for clients, but also to discover new opportunities. In post-Communist societies, many Gypsy families have shown their adaptability and entrepreneurial skill, quickly developing small trades and independent craftwork. This success inspires both the suspicion of the authorities and the jealousy of other communities who find that they are not so gifted with a sense of economic adventure. The Gypsy's capacity for innovation — in which he has been trained from earliest childhood — is very great, and his economic organisation is far from the fossilisation which observers often claim for it. What is more, his style of work, in which control over one's own time is fundamental, is

echoed by a growing trend in Western society focusing on "quality of life", expressed as a move towards flexitime, self-employment, and creative work. In a period of general economic crisis and mass unemployment, "small trades" are making a comeback: all over Western Europe, associations which have nothing whatever to do with Gypsy-related questions are combating unemployment by launching projects around shining shoes and washing cars by hand. They are rediscovering the flexible economic practices that Gypsies have been developing for centuries.

Yet the current situation is that, due to a number of interrelated constraining factors, more and more Gypsies and Travellers are vying for more and more limited resources. Where there is serious economic competition, solidarity is weakened, and conflict may arise, particularly if newcomers try to gain a share of the market. The gap between well-to-do family groups and poor ones is becoming more marked. Wage labour, already well established in the factories and collective farms of the former Communist countries, is making an appearance here and there in Western Europe.

Submitted to rather than chosen, such a situation is experienced with difficulty in distressing conditions of persistent rejection. East or West, Gypsies rarely get jobs carrying responsibility: they have been, and continue to be, as marginalised in the world of work as they have been, and continue to be, in the social realm. Employment has not had the integrating effects foreseen for it. In more and more places, Traveller unemployment is a growing fact of life; it too is a new phenomenon, and a symptomatic one. What is more, in conjunction with trends in social welfare policy itself, dependence on the social services and welfare payments is growing: up to now, Gypsies and Travellers availed of these through strategies which enabled them to retain their essential autonomy. Nonetheless, Gypsies and Travellers are capable of adapting. Their dynamics should not be blocked, but, on the contrary, utilised as a fulcrum for community development.

9. Art

Gypsy art is, above all, the art of living. That is to say, it is not merely an expression of a way of life: it *is* a way of life, more experienced than thought out or worked at. It is a daily art, art in everything, everything an art, inseparable from its social, economic, and cultural content. It is the art of doing business, the art of driving, the art of playing music or dancing, the art of talking, the art of social relations, the art of partying. This art is permanent and universal: when farflung expressions of it are seen in juxtaposition, for example at international festivals, this common thread becomes very apparent: for example, the flamenco of the *Gitanos* of Andalusia is closely related, both in spirit and in form, to the *kathak* of Northern India. Tony Gatlif, a Gypsy producer, illustrates this brilliantly in one of his films (*Latcho Drom*, 1993) tracing a journey from India to Spain via Turkey, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, and France. "A Gypsy is the road: all over the world, his experience is the same (...) *Latcho Drom* is a musical film, because for the Rom, music is life (...) Gypsy history can only be told with music, because two things define Gypsies: music, and rejection.

They are their music. Rejection is others. (...) Gypsy music has given the world a great deal: it was in Romania that it soaked up all the influences of Europe and became famous as Gypsy music. It was not Gypsies alone who brought the music of the Orient to Hungary and Romania, but it was they who created fusions between the different musical strands of a given country, or of different countries. This was what Django Reinhardt did when he created his unique style combining jazz and Gypsy music, and which is still an important influence today. Music always has a historical base. That is why we wanted to show how history repeats itself, by confronting people, showing how Indian and Hungarian musicians who have never travelled outside their own countries nonetheless beat out

exactly the same rhythms, in exactly the same ways, one on a clay jug, the other on a milk churn" (Tony Gatlif).

Gypsy art has been recognised and appreciated for a very long time. One of the earliest documentary references to the Gypsies and their migrations, written by the Persian poet Firdusi, refers to "ten thousand *Luri* men and women, experts in playing the lute", demanded from a king of India by the King of Persia for the entertainment of his subjects. Later, and up to the present day, Gypsies have been protected by the wealthy and powerful as a source of entertainment or fantasy, often in defiance of laws forbidding anyone to shelter, let alone to protect, these vagabond artists.

This paradox has meant that, in some periods, Gypsies have been subject to imprisonment on sight by royal decree, and invited to dine with the king. The paradox is, however, a superficial one, because art is universal, an interface between antagonistic social systems, which renders their borders permeable and goes beyond conflict, an art which is, after all, usually "cross-bred" with local forms, as are flamenco and some kinds of jazz.

But art can also be deceptive, fooling the observer into believing he understands what lies behind it: Gypsy art for commercial consumption is both selective and trite, facts which infuse it with great ambiguity. It is selective in that it is only that portion of day-to-day art which the Gypsy or Traveller chooses to display to the "outside", providing a truncated vision of a more complete and complex reality.

The risk is that the reality will be misunderstood in consequence — folklorised, for example — and that this pseudocomprehension will pass for knowledge. The art of living and art for commercial purposes are not synonymous, either in form (the content and performing style of songs and dances for "internal" consumption are unfamiliar to the "outsider") or in spirit (even if familiar, they will be perceived in quite different ways by the two groups). One is profound, the other an isolated portion. A contributing factor to this distortion is the fact that, in order to earn a living, the artist has a tendency to give the public what it wants, that is to say, whatever fits in with current taste, often with an exotic tone, and this is how it comes to pass that borrowed and imported elements come to be seen as "typically Gypsy": "Gypsy music" imported to France from Hungary at the turn of the century, "Gypsy" dances imported from

Turkey into Greece, "Gypsy" songs and dances brought from Russia all over the Western world.

Another point — and one which accentuates the paradox — is that those who so admire Gypsy art in its many forms never stop to think about the quality and depth of the culture from which it springs, and which gives it life. Worse still, like the king with Gypsy dancers entertaining him in court while his decrees banished them from the kingdom, there are many who admire the Gypsy on the surface but attack his culture through coercive regulations and behaviour. It was not so long ago, nor all that rare, that popular Gypsy bands in several States could not admit to being Gypsy, and were not given television airtime. Gypsy art has even been banned from Gypsies themselves: for example, in Bulgaria, until 1989, the playing of Gypsy music at weddings was punishable by a fine. Artistic expression, like linguistic expression, both assertions of strong cultural characteristics, could not be allowed within a context of assimilationist policies.

But art as a trade is also trite, in that for the Gypsy it is nothing but an extension of everyday art, and a job like any other, one which gives the artist independence and opportunities to travel, a popular choice of trade, often practised in a variety of forms, by individuals with a variety of skills. For example, prior to World War II, a good half of the *Rom* in Burgenland (Austria) were musicians on every conceivable occasion: dances, fairs, celebrations, funerals, birthday parties, on the streets and in cafés, playing violins, accordions, tambourines, wind instruments. The trade subsequently went into decline, except in a couple of restaurants, but is currently enjoying a revival, especially with the tourist influx of the summer months, and the *Rom* are bringing out their instruments once more, or switching to new ones: since it is widely held at present that the cymbalom is a typically Gypsy instrument, Gypsies are playing the cymbalom, dressed in picturesque garb. None of this stops them from practising other trades, or from excelling in them: a striking example is a young *Sinto* who plays violin in a jazz quintet and is also a famous footballer.

Instruments vary: the violin and cymbalom in Eastern Europe, the clarinet in the Balkans, the bagpipes in Scotland and the *uilleann* pipes in Ireland, dance-hall accordion or cowboy harmonica. Some instruments (for example the *zurna* in Bulgaria) are played almost exclusively by Gypsies. Melodies, too, are borrowed: for example in Greece, nomads,

semi-nomads, and Gypsies who have settled in rural areas borrow from the repertoire of Greece and of other Balkan countries, composing their own songs on this base, while those living permanently in the cities draw on the Oriental style they learned during their stay in Turkey at the turn of the century; they also listen to Indian music, and to Gypsy songs from Yugoslavia.

Words, too, can come from a variety of sources: for example Austrian *Lovara* translate Austrian lyrics, but go on to modify them each time the song is interpreted, until they finally stabilise into a "Gypsy" song. Pieces can even be borrowed whole: for example *Sinti* and *Lovara* in Austria (and some of them elsewhere) have a tradition of storytelling based on modified Hungarian and Romanian folktales which are no longer remembered in their countries of origin. In the same way, through migrations, some festivals "exported" by Gypsies from their countries of origin have also been preserved, and in some cases are understood by surrounding society as being quintessentially Gypsy.

Gypsy originality lies also in the quality of creative interpretation. The creation/interpretation dichotomy is irrelevant if the piece remains forever "open": "every true artist, placed within a predetermined system, never ceases to break its rules, bringing in new formal possibilities and new demands on sensitivity" (Umberto Eco, *L'œuvre ouverte*). Interpretation is creation, as is strikingly obvious in, for example, the flamenco, born in Lower Andalusia: "Gitanos create or forge deep song: they are the creative agents. But the materials from which they forge their creations are, for the most part, Andalusian" (Ricardo Molina, a *Payo* (non-Gypsy) poet, and Antonio Mairena, a *Kaló* singer, in *Mundo y formas del cante flamenco*).

Symbiosis between the two cultures is profound, and we can speak of *Andaluces gitanos*, "Gypsy Andalusians", as well as "Andalusian Gypsies", a symbolic permutation within the flamenco context. There have been many such symbioses in the fields of music and choreography: in Hungary, Russia, Romania, the Balkans and elsewhere; the two best-known examples in the West being *Manus* jazz and flamenco. For over two centuries, Gypsy choral song has played an important role in the broad context of Russian music. In a visible and recognisable — though often unrecognised — fashion, Gypsies have made major contributions to the enrichment of many of the cultures surrounding them.

What Gypsies have in common is not necessarily *what* they do, but, in every case, *how* they do it. The composers who were won over by Gypsy music — Liszt, Brahms, Dvorak, Falla, Granados, etc. — were aware of this fact. The Gypsy accords more attention, and more prestige, to creative interpretation than to original composition or to the source of the component elements: for example, British Travellers appreciate singing for its tonality, not for its Gypsiness, and the same applies elsewhere. Art is a medium for emotional expression, and the expression is more important than the medium through which it is achieved; all that is required of the medium is that it be adequate to the demands made on it:

Peno men ducas guillabando	I tell my sorrows in song
sos guillabar sina orobar	for to sing is to weep
Peno retejos quelarando	I tell my joys in dancing
sos quelarar sina guirrar.	for to dance is to laugh.

(*Copla flamenca*)

Because of their mobility, the art of Gypsies and Travellers is mobile art, which has concentrated on non-material creations — songs, dances, stories, tunes, poems — often ephemeral, soon-forgotten improvisations. On the other hand, objects compatible with travel have also been produced: light, portable items, or things for rapid sale, or non-commercial items for personal use: women's clothing, for example, and the elaborate painting of wagons and caravans, particularly in Greece and the British Isles. Nowadays more and more Gypsies and Travellers are getting involved in a range of art forms beyond the traditional ones mentioned above: painting, sculpture, literature, acting, etc., and Gypsy and Traveller artists in every country continue to make their mark in the familiar fields of music, song, and dance.

Currently, there are three main types of change occurring, and these are of three different orders. First, there is the *uniformisation of cultural consumption*, due for the most part to the influence of television. *Gaze* artists and *Gazo* style have access to media exposure which Gypsy artists do not have, and the competition is unequal. Soap operas have replaced ballads, the movies and videos have taken the place of storytelling round the fire, musicians are being ousted by cassettes. And even if characteristic tonality survives (as in so-called "Andalusian rock"), it is hard for creative interpretation to resist the pressure of the environment, particularly for young people who are already in difficulty in other fields

(family relationships, finding work, etc.). It is essential that art forms as strong as, for example, that of storytelling, rooted in the power of an oral tradition which is undergoing major change, should be validated through recognition in new contexts, such as the classroom, television, and the theatre, before they are lost forever under the impact of current conditions.

A second major shift is that *Gypsies are exploring art forms little used by them up to now*: painting, for example, or small-scale distribution of recordings of original songs, collections of stories, autobiographical accounts. And, beyond autobiography and folk tales, there is a new move towards creativity: writing and directing for the cinema, writing fiction, poetry... which only want to be encouraged and developed, but which have difficulty in so doing because of the financial risk involved without a guaranteed market, and also because there is still no standard version of Romani which would make such writing accessible to large numbers of Gypsies. In consequence, Gypsy writers usually express themselves, not through their own language, but through that of their country of residence. It is probable that, over the course of the 90s, the creative energy which the Gypsy communities of Central and Eastern Europe are putting into these fields will impact on their Western counterparts, influencing both their perspectives and their very emergence as creative artists.

What is more, dictionaries, those essential tools, are beginning to see the light of day, and improved school provision will furnish Gypsies and Travellers with the instruments they need. Another emerging phenomenon is the appearance, from Seville to Helsinki, of theatre companies in which writers and actors alike are Gypsies, not forgetting trailblazers like the Moscow-based *Romen* theatre, founded in 1931, which remains a major institution of international renown, although it lost its premises years ago and now operates out of rented rooms in a hotel. There is also the *Phralipen* company from former Yugoslavia, which has been forced to emigrate to Germany, where it continues to adopt the great classics of the theatre — ancient Greek works especially, as well as Garcia Lorca and others — into the Gypsy language.

Finally, the third type of change — and this is a sign of major transformation — is *the emergence of politically involved art*. In classic Gypsy expression, even until very recently, statements of this nature were oblique, personalised, a cry from the heart to share with one's own in the

laments of the *Rom*, *Voyageurs*, and *Sinti*, in the *canto jondo* of the *Kalé*, sad love songs full of pain and death:

Ler clisos e mangue cayí
se bichelan a mangues chorés
barés sato mangues gransias
gayardos sato mangues chijés

My brown-haired girl's eyes
are like my sorrows
as deep as my troubles
as black as my pain

Yo ya no soy quién yo era
ni quién yo soy ya seré
Soy un árbol de tristeza
pegadito a la paré

I am no longer what I was
nor will I be what I am now
I am a tree of sadness
clinging to a wall.

(*Coplas flamencas*)

UŠTAVDE E RROMENQI VIOLINA

THEY HAVE SMASHED THE GYPSY VIOLIN

Uštavde e Rromenqi violina
ačhile e jaga rromane
i jag o thuv
and-o devel vazdinõn.

They have smashed the Gypsy violin
the Gypsies' ashes remain
the fire the smoke
rise to heaven.

Igârde e Rromen
čhavorren ulavde pe daðar
e rromnën pe rromenðar
igârde e Rromen.

They led the Gypsies away
they separated children from mothers
wives from husbands
they led the Gypsies away.

Jasenõvco pherdo Rroma
pandle pala betonosqe stùburã
verklinënçar pe prne pe va'
and-e éika ži k-e éang

Jasenovac is full of Gypsies
fettered to pillars of cement,
with chains on hands and feet
in mud up to their knees.

Ačhile and- Jasenõvco
lenqe kòkala
te mothon bimanušikanimata
javin vèdro disàjli
ta e Rromen o kham tatârda

In Jasenovac they left
their bones
to tell the tale of inhuman events
dawn rises serenely
the sun warms the Gypsies.

Rasim Sejdić (*Rasim poeta zingaro*, Publi and Press, Milan, 1978).

For a long time now — and especially under the Socialist régimes of Eastern Europe — street songs composed and sung by Gypsies have included expressions of social criticism. What had been a litany of

sorrows is becoming an ever-clearer battlecry, a shout directed at the outside, to let them know, to make them understand, and this development goes hand in hand with a new assertion of the fact of being Gypsy and of wishing to remain so. This is an entirely new departure for a people who up to now have pursued the politics of invisibility in the hopes of being overlooked. It is a statement of confidence in the other — the outsider — by making him a gift of one's authentic feelings, in the hope that he will understand. This trend is on the rise in every country simultaneously, as the number of artists involved, be they famous or obscure, grows apace.

When it's pouring with rain, and
you've pulled down some lane,
When you're bogged down aside
of the road,
When your Chavi's been ill and
you've just got a lil,
For some Lohva the law says
you've owed,

At night cars come by,
at your trailers let fly,
When you're lying asleep
in your bed,
You're rudely awoken, find
your window's been broken.
Thank the Duhvi
the baby's not dead.

A Gavver comes by the next day
to ask "Why?
You're still here; why haven't you
gone?"
With your tongue in your cheek,
you tell him, "Next week,
For then sir, I'll be moving along."

He then dikks the glass, lying there
on the grass,
And says, "Now what's
all this mess?"
You tell him the facts, but he only
reacts
By saying, "You can't expect less."

(Chavi, boy; lil, paper; lohva, money; Duhvi, God; gavver, policeman; dikks, sees)
(Excerpt from "Trials of the Traveller", from *Dirty Gyppo*, Tom Odley, Stockwell, 1983.)

¿ Qué es lo que ha pasao ?
que los gitanitos
que se han rebelao.

What's going on?
the dear little Gypsies
are rebelling.

¡ Eso no puede ser !

This cannot be!

¿ Qué es lo que ellos quieren ?
qué los gitanitos
tengan pan y aceite.

What do they want?
the dear little Gypsies
want bread and oil.

¡ Eso no puede ser !

This cannot be!

Quieren además
que todos los hombres
seamos iguales.

And they also want
all men
to be equal.

¡ Eso no puede ser !
¡ Qué barbaridad !

This cannot be!
What an outrageous idea!

Mira que flamenco, prima
mira que gitano soy,
pena el crayí que me naje
yo con mi gente me estoy.

Look, cousin, see how I do the flamenco
see what a good Gypsy I am
the king orders me to be gone
here am I, with my people.

Yo soy gitano
gitano bueno
que frio hace
cuando es invierno.

I am Gypsy
a good Gypsy
how cold it is
in winter.

Madre del alma
nací gitano
si no soy bueno
será por algo.

By my mother
I was born Gypsy
If I am not good
there's a reason for it.

(*Jaleos* and *cantiñas* from the stage show *Camelamos naquerar* — We Want to Speak
— by Mario Maya, lyrics by José Heredia Maya, 1976.)

Xudnam te zal
rodas amaro than maškar o averzene
rodas o than
kaj doxudaha pativ tho čačipen
Kebor drom amen užarel ?
Keci ezera kilometri ?
— U amen thodam ča peršo krokos.

We have begun our road
we seek our place among the peoples
we're looking for somewhere
we will find dignity and truth
How long is the road before us?
How many thousands of kilometres?
— And we are only taking the first steps.

[Angela Žigova, Czechoslovakia; (extract)]

10. Lifestyle and identity

Gypsies and Travellers know who and what they are; they feel it, they live it. It is a lifestyle and an art of living, based on ineffable, impalpable ways of being and on ways of doing which may be variable and ephemeral. Content — cultural and material traits — is of little import. “Gypsy” or “Traveller” essence lies above all in how these elements are put together to form a whole: it is the juxtaposition that counts, not the individual components, nor their origins. Cultural and material elements are borrowed freely from the environment. In Italy, for example, some *Xoraxané Roma* use Serbian terminology to describe blood relations, and Greek for relations by marriage, although their vocabulary is essentially of Indian origin; their legal system, on the other hand, is copied from a traditional Albanian one.

For their part, *Kalderas Rom* use Romanian terminology for consanguinity, and Greek for affinity, on an Indian base, while their rituals for honouring the dead are copied from the Balkans. Yet both these groups are entirely Gypsy, and “traditional”. These examples suffice to demonstrate that borrowings and differences between groups, voluntarily maintained in social relations, make it difficult to speak of a unified Gypsy culture with regard to content. But what do borrowings or their origins matter, since they are “Gypsyfied”, that is, used in an original manner in a “Gypsy” configuration? Clothing, house, caravan, rituals of life and death, music, trades — beyond mere appearances, there is a lifestyle. In the supremely “material” field of work, for example, who could imitate the working style of a *Kalderas* tinsmith, a *Sinto* violinist, a *Kaló* horse dealer, a *Manús* fairground operator?

The lifestyle is based on a set of elements. In the social universe, the primal consideration is the importance of the family: the bonds of kinship

are sacred, whether in those groups where they are constantly under discussion, or in others where they are rarely mentioned and people seem indifferent towards them. The desire — even if the facts seem to contradict it — for marriage within precise limits, and the way in which children are educated, contribute to making the family group the basis of social and economic organisation, within a network of flexible, resilient links (we have already seen how social configurations are constantly being modified, yet without losing their cohesive strength). The individual, deeply embedded in this network, finds in it, through a strong feeling of belonging, both the elements of his own identity and a solidarity which brings practical support in the forms of physical and financial assistance, and emotional backup.

Social, economic, and emotional security result, for children and the aged, for the able-bodied and for the disabled: everyone has their place in the group, and a role to play which prevents them from being a burden. Solidarity, because group interests take priority over individual ones; because relations are not authoritarian, but arise from broad consensus, with no concentrations of power, no “leaders”; because communal life entails extreme loyalty towards the group as a corollary of extreme opposition *vis-à-vis* the exterior, from which the group is separated by a barrier of impurity equally cultivated by “society”, and which neither side is willing to cross.

Internal solidarity is thus reinforced by relations of global opposition to the non-Gypsy world. The Gypsies' very existence as Gypsies is perceived from without as a form of dissidence. When the two meet, it is usually in some form of confrontation, a very significant fact which ensures that the group thus encountered is perceived as a quite separate entity. Gypsies and Travellers handle this all-pervasive, unavoidable rejection, which lies outside of their control, through violent and contemptuous criticism when they are in a difficult situation. The identity forged in this context must be capable of resistance — but, at the same time, it draws its energy from the very act of resisting. Opposition to non-Gypsies confronts Gypsies with their own uniqueness, reinforcing cohesion and a feeling of group hegemony.

Economic independence, professional flexibility, the maintenance of a subsistence economy adapted to the situation of the moment: these form a part of, and at the same time support, the Gypsy lifestyle. People, and

human relations, remain the priority: the accumulation of capital and possessions remains less important than wisdom and intelligence. The important thing is the fleeting moment, and that is where wealth should be applied (good food, short-term comfort, a feeling of celebration) in an economy of the ephemeral, the nomad's opulent austerity in which everything is pared down to essentials. The result is a non-material manner of being on which the environment, and circumstance, can have little real impact. The Gypsy or Traveller *is*, and everything is within him: his identity is not bound up in possessions or in place. This profile has been forged over centuries of survival in a difficult context.

Gypsy history is made up more of the routes they have travelled than of traces of their passing, and *the very essence of their culture* arises from this, expressed in social relations, language, and other practices, and elements which can be perceived by the outside observer, such as music, dance, lifestyle. By the very fact that Gypsy culture is portable, geared towards coping with dispersion and with circumstances dictated by others, Gypsies, unlike other groups, left no archaeological sites, cities, or monuments behind them. Nor have they — as providers of services for surrounding populations — left artefacts which would make it easy to trace their history. Their oral culture has produced no written archives.

In the end, the shape of culture and of ethnic identity emerges through the combination of all these elements: from language to independent trades, from solidarity in all its forms to the ever-present possibility of moving on, from social organisation to pride in being different, a consciousness of common origin in shared rules for living, a feeling of belonging to a group united in its opposition to outsiders, from shared history, philosophy of life, child-rearing methods, the strength of the family and so on. Elements picked up over the course of the group's travels are adopted and interpreted as they are integrated into the configuration of the whole; borrowings are modified to meet the requirements of the group, not *vice versa*, in a culture whose flexibility gives it resilience. In a cultural universe founded on adapting to difficult and volatile situations, Gypsies and Travellers have developed a tradition of change, a tradition of innovation which brings relative stability through precarity: an analysis of the societies of Gypsies and Travellers is an analysis of permanence through the ephemeral.

Gypsies and Travellers have always been good at coping with the cultures and societies they encounter, and with the fact that all cultures evolve, and no society is truly solitary or isolated. It has long been true that, as Garcia Lorca put it in *Romancero Gitano*, “*se acabaron los gitanos, que iban por el monte solos*” (“those Gypsies were extinguished, who climbed the mountain alone”). But now, at the close of the 20th century, significant changes are occurring in the very nature of contact between Gypsies and Travellers and surrounding peoples, changes both universal and specific.

They are *universal* in that they affect all cultures. The very nature of needs, and of demands, is changing: broken items are no longer repaired, small-scale performers have been wiped out by “show business” and by television, many musicians cannot find work, nomads who even at the turn of the century still played a vital role in bringing information to rural populations have been made redundant through direct access to the mass media; functional welcoming of the nomad in his capacity as seasonal labourer or craftsman has disappeared, and those who reject him do not recognise the useful roles he continues to play in a variety of fields, branding him a parasite. Up to the present, the yin and yang of sedentary and nomadic communities sometimes achieved a harmonious balance, whereas now they are in perpetual conflict.

Next there are the dangerous forces of modernism, and, even more insidious, their underlying ideology: ideas of “progress”, of consumerism, a rejection of tradition, have a strong debilitating effect on minority cultures, particularly through their younger generations. While economic independence is still a viable proposition, cultural independence no longer is, for the influences at work today impact planet-wide. Formerly, borrowings did not undermine identity, in that they were socially localised, serving to demarcate the group, and contributing to its unique configuration. Now that cultural influences are just about the same just about everywhere, through identical mass media and increased school attendance, uniform influences may well have a levelling effect on Gypsy populations: borrowings only reinforce the borrower’s singularity if they are freely chosen rather than imposed.

Changes are also *specific*, in the sense that they impact in particular ways on Gypsy and Traveller culture. Insofar as these societies have always been marginal in relation to others, tension has always been present, and

violent rejection a fact of life: it is easy to imagine the psychological agony of those subjected to harsh treatment in conditions of permanent insecurity. But from the moment they first appeared in the 1950s and 60s, policies aimed at eradicating the perceived *causes* of marginalism have impacted directly on Gypsies’ and Travellers’ lifestyle, economic practices, social life, travel, accommodation, even on their language and cultural development, curtailing them in a web of restrictive regulations.

Faced with these changes, Gypsies’ adaptive strategies are wearing thin. In this new context they are no longer *acting within* their environment, but *reacting to* it. Many Gypsies, totally disoriented by the events of the World War II in which so many of their kin were exterminated, had great difficulty in developing new forms of adaptive dynamism; changes in policy and in methods of implementation leave no more room to manoeuvre when burgeoning regulations, the intrusion of the mass media, and the invasion of the social workers violate the group’s cultural intimacy. The Traveller’s territory lies within himself, and his borders are psychological in nature: this has been his strength, but it is now a weak point, when the power relations, and the conflictual relations, which characterise the two societies, are internalised. This interiorisation, exacerbated by marginalism and marginalisation, leads to uncertainty, disturbance, and aggression, and saps the dynamism of the affected communities.

Clearly, if the challenges of everyday living demand every ounce of one’s strength and ingenuity (to find a place to stop, to get accommodation, to work, to cope with constant rejection), little is left over for social and cultural development. While identity is linked to such unstable balances, group concern, and group tension, must remain focused on the bottom line of self-preservation. Broader interests (artistic expression, education, even political organisation) become luxuries when each day is a battle to remain oneself and to protect what little is left. This is when tradition becomes ritual, having lost its dynamism along the way; it is transformed from a supporting role for identity and lifestyle into a rigid identity in itself, a sort of last refuge. Because of this, the most “traditional” individuals and groups are not always the most “authentic”, as the stereotype would have us believe: they may be those whose development and adaptability have been blocked, and who, unable to go forward, are treading water as the only alternative to drowning.

In outlining the strong points of this culture, we were also identifying its vulnerabilities. Communal living, marginal subsistence economy, present-time orientation, nomadism, dispersion, linguistic variety, solidarity etc., elements which are the driving force behind the members of a subtly impalpable culture wishing to live in communion and diversity, become weaknesses when these same members find themselves immersed in a society determined to assimilate them, and which embodies the opposite characteristics: individualism, capitalisation, deferment, sedentarism, uniformity, competition, dependence, and so on.

Indicators are arising here and there, symptoms of underlying difficulties. There is a feeling of malaise, of fatigue, of passivity. Some individuals abuse their rightful authority, setting themselves up as "little dictators" within their family groups. There is a turning inwards, into the nuclear family, a sign of fear of the outside rather than of strong culture and tradition; it is a closing in, and it brings with it a risk of rigidifying a social organisation based on flexibility and variability. When there is less and less contact with similar groups who are geographically distant, the characteristic segmentation of Gypsy society tends to set into disparate fragmentation: limitation to the local means a closing in and a narrower and narrower endogamy, eroding social coherence by isolating increasingly discrete groups. The role of the family, always important, becomes bloated out of proportion as other factors decline. The growing trend towards individual choice of marriage partner is contributing to this weakening of social intermeshing. Mutual assistance is on the wane, and is being scaled down to a dwindling, geographically localised, base.

Young people criticise their parents' way of life, their language, their wide variety of poorly paid economic options; seduced by other forms of communication, they no longer listen to the older people's stories, songs, and music. More and more sedentary Gypsies are losing the habit of travelling: even if they continue to pay lip service to an increasingly vague and utopian vision of life on the road, they no longer have the skills or the strength to take it up, especially as the difficulties surrounding it are on the rise. Immobility brings a loss of adaptability. Their situation loses its characteristic reversibility (the provisional nature of accommodation, whether fixed or mobile; provisional work patterns; provisional relations with the environment...). Among the side effects are a rise in health problems (sometimes termed "the pathology of sedentarisation") and financial ones (sedentary living entails a number of additional expenses,

but reduces earning capacity). The persistent dream of travel, when it can no longer be fulfilled, brings dissatisfaction, maladaptation, and aggression, which in turn can lead to delinquency, run-ins with the law, and a resulting stigmatisation exacerbating the group's marginalism. Indications of even deeper malaise are currently appearing, symptoms of desperation: drug abuse among some young people, hypochondria and over-medication, alcohol abuse, family destructuration; even the unprecedented phenomenon of child abandonment has occurred, though sometimes little choice has been involved (for example where pogroms have left Gypsy families homeless, illness and harsh weather conditions have forced them to put their children into care).

Lack of training in marketable skills, linked with discrimination fuelled by the current crisis, renders Gypsies' economic situation a dramatic one, particularly in many Eastern countries. In Hungary, the *Office for National and Ethnic Minorities*, set up by the government in September 1990, stresses, with regard to Gypsies, that "the alarming deterioration of the social situation of this ethnic group requires the elaboration of a comprehensive crisis-management plan in order to remedy the current state of affairs".

These dramatic developments, in a period of crisis, demand the greatest attention, and call for a thorough analysis of the underlying situations of which they are symptomatic. Thankfully, although they are on the rise, they are not yet generalised. The lifestyle is not extinct as yet. Gypsy culture, like all cultures, is in constant evolution — more than most, indeed, as change is itself a Gypsy tradition, and adaptation a regular necessity. Despite the scorn of outsiders denying the very existence of a Gypsy culture, Gypsies' very existence has, over the centuries, constituted an eloquent rebuttal: if they had no culture of their own, why this constant struggle to remain what they are and to evolve in the ways they themselves choose, when it would be so much easier simply to give in to "integration" and "assimilation?" If there were no shared identity strong enough to override the differences arising from dispersion and utilised in self-classification and social organisation, then why the similarity of attitude between different families and groups around the world? Why this feeling of belonging to a whole, and this common fight to assert the same priorities?