

From Negative Visibility to Positive Invisibility – Who Needs to Use Gypsies [Roma] as the Anti-citizens of Civilized Europe?

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Abstract

Since the 15th century, Gypsies in Occidental Europe have been subjected to special legislation and social action determined to cause one of two types of cultural identity extinction – extermination or complete assimilation. Five centuries later, the result has been an exceptional cultural persistence associated to social marginalisation and, in Portugal, a mixture of positive invisibility (unlike the Spanish situation, Portuguese Gypsies are not recognised as having made any positive form of cultural contribution) and of excessive exposure, in terms of a negative visibility constructed by public opinion and the media. This negative visibility of Portuguese Gypsies is worsened by the systematic silence and a certain connivance on the part of the authorities (Parliament, Government, Catholic Church, Courts, municipal authorities, etc.), with rare and personal, non-institutional exceptions, occurring in moments of excessive persecution. In this paper, we will explore the identity economy of social persecution against ethnic minorities that are not recognised as such in the Law, and are used in daily life as the negative image of the hegemonic ‘imagined society’.

Keywords: *European Gypsies; Roma; citizenship; Portuguese Gypsies; persecution.*

Neither ‘immigrants’ nor ‘European’ – the ‘infernal’ status of European Gypsies as the anti-citizens of Europe

In Europe, since the end of the Second World War, which marked the collapse of ‘white’ imperialism, new incoming migrations have appeared, with some justification, as the inverted heirs of European colonialism (Ballard, 2003). Inter-ethnic relations in the ‘space of the West’ had, however, been theorized and politically controlled at least a century earlier outside of Europe, namely in the USA. Therefore, some of the leading concepts in this area (e.g. assimilation, stereotype, etc.) emerged from the arena of North American social sciences. This, more or less consciously, serves to cover up the fact that the history of Europe, and especially of the Mediterranean, counts thousands of years of imperialist expansion, ‘nomadic’ invasions, religious wars across highly mobile

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borders, all of which caused the successive displacement of minorities who were threatened by the great imperial confrontations.

From the invasion of India by Philip of Macedon, to the incursions into Mediterranean Europe on the part of the Celts, Goths, Alamanni, Alani, Vandals, Huns, Arabs and Vikings, etc., the history of the Mediterranean-Indian axis, also fed by the Jewish diaspora, saw a multiplicity of movements; this would later threaten the ideals of the nationalist, essentializing and hegemonizing Romantic movements that led to the formation of the Nation States, which required the construction of a mythical history of national heroes and martyrs. Territory, sovereignty, and cultural identity, are historical myths that render the great mobility of borders, religions, and ‘nations’ invisible. Within this process, one of the histories that has been made most invisible is connected to the many centuries of the ‘Gypsy’ presence (and their many hetero-attributed definitions) within the above mentioned axis, and their particularly strong concentration in Eastern Europe.

As we will examine later, it conveniently suits ‘Europeans’, worshippers of a mythic ‘rational’ ‘Western civilization’, to cover up the fact that they reacted to this ‘immigration’ in ways that are absolutely opposed to the Christian, Humanist, and rationalist ideals¹ (see below) on which they based their invention of a continuity with the Romano-Greek world (and, when convenient, with the tribal world defeated by Roman legions and later recuperated as the deepest root of the Nation States of a fragmented, conflicted, and merely nominal Europe).

European Gypsies have lived side by side with other Europeans since the Middle Ages; to make this fact invisible is a necessary precondition in order to produce the hegemonic coincidence of the euphoric and megalomaniac notion of ‘Europe’ with the rationalist notion of the ‘white race’, redefined in diffusionist terms as Indo-Arian. But the ‘white race’ is not homogeneous. The need to account for the slightest variations, for their comparison (Freud 1907) to immediately construct an interpersonal (Boehm, 1929) or political hierarchy based on the narcissism of small differences (Freud, 1922), made it necessary to subdivide and introduce racial strata within the ‘white race’: ‘Nordics’ (temporarily in ascension), ‘Alpines’ (in competition for the leadership of Europe, and therefore, of the colonized or colonizable world) and ‘Mediterraneans’ (currently in clear decline, and seen as almost-Africans). In this European racial hierarchy, characteristic of the Rationalist centuries, Gypsies were relegated to an almost pre-human level (Hanckock,), inferior to that of Lybio-Iberians, that is, the ‘Europeans’ who were ‘racially

¹ On which they base their claim to ‘superiority’ and their aspiration, if not their ‘duty’, to world domination or – at worse – in the act of accompanying the world leadership of the most multicultural of their offspring.



contaminated' by the invasion of Arab and Berber Islamic populations known as 'moors', loosing their 'blood purity' (Stallaert, 1998).

A keen historian could point out that these 'classifications' are a mere essentializing form of recording international disputes among Europeans in a way that makes it look like history is not accidental, and as though it depended on genetic 'characteristics', that is, set apart from the vicissitudes of history. This would hide the vulnerability and shaky situation of the winners of the moment, and thus legitimize their victory with the Olympic laurels of 'divine protection' and/or genetic 'superiority'.

In the case of European Gypsies (who are one of the most interesting cases of forced transnationalism)², their 'destiny' as sub-Arians was traced from early on. In the 15th century, after their first diplomatically accepted appearances in the West, it became clear that they did not have a State to represent them on the international scene, a Monarchy capable of entering matrimonial or military alliances, an Aristocracy to lead and 'ennoble' them, or a sovereign Territory to which they could return, protected by a suitably threatening Army. This immediately led to them being reduced to the lowest status of vagrant populations, with no shelter and way of life (something the Monarchies were well aware of, since the great social crises of the late Middle Ages), the status of criminal outlaws and – even worse – of beings who were 'inferior' because they accumulated all categorized forms of inferiority. They were 'foreign' (even when born locally for several generations) and did not practice the hegemonic religion; they were part of the world of 'errant travellers' (or, as was then written, in Portugal: people "with no settlement, nor parish, nor employment"). More than that, they were made by scientists as part of the psychopathic world of genetically compulsive 'criminals' (Lombroso). And, as soon as social history and social biology produced its classifications and grids on the world hierarchies, they were essentialized as the representatives of a far lower 'evolutionary' stage, as 'primitives' and 'nomads' (Condorcet, 17).

Once the greatest classificatory distance possible was established, gypsyphobia (as well as the reactive Romantic idealization of these beings so 'close to Nature', and therefore, 'freedom') was legitimized, and the European identity (even that of the 'Mediterraneans' who were so close to 'Gypsies' at the base of the European social scale) was clearly strengthened by such a favourable comparison.

European gypsies were made invisible from history, trapped in categorical grids that rationalized the vulnerable hierarchies that resulted from that very same History, and focused upon as the crucible of all worse traits – which resulted in the hyper-visibility of their petty crimes, magnified by all the

² Thus making it clear that migrations are often the result of the will of the Other, when the Other is stronger and the one who writes Social Science and History.

extremely serious imaginary crimes projected upon them (they were believed to be incestuous, cannibalistic, child abductors, promiscuous, aggressive, deceitful, etc.) (Moscovici & Perez, in Vala, 1999).

Today, and within the European Union under construction, they suffer an extremely intense process of political concealment, because they lack State representatives to negotiate in their name their entry into the Union. However, they are already part of it, despite being made invisible because they do not fit into the dominant 'thought' patterns, and are not included in the concern with 'governance' of the (new) postcolonial European migrations.

Forgetting history, among the illiterate and the 'civilised'

The fact that Gypsies have forgotten their history and live in the present, day to day, lacking any kind of idealised future, is a constantly revisited literary cliché. Since they were illiterate, they forgot whence they came and do not have a lost homeland to which they aspire to return, as did the Zionist Jewish minority before the foundation of the State of Israel. Their memories do not extend back further than three or four generations, for the comfort of many anthropologists and citizens who can thus ethnographically immobilise Gypsies in an imaginary primitivised 'ethnographic present' even when they found in their 'fieldwork' that the large majority is urbanised, sedentarised and has progressively become more and more educated and politicised.

What may seem rather unexpected, and calls for interpretation, is the fact that Portuguese intellectuals, politicians, and the ruling class, as happens in general with those 'civilised Europeans' who say they cultivate a historic memory, have also done everything possible to forget the history of five hundred years of inter-ethnic relations that has resulted in the current situation. And that this has enabled them to ethnographically essentialise the abject social situation that has derived from that very same interaction, historically situated and documented.

From 'forgetting' history to the essentialisation and cultural immobilisation of the 'other'

Such a strategy of deletion of historic memory makes it possible to mask the fact that Gypsies are still persecuted to this day, albeit in more subtle forms. Their persecution is still based upon the essentialisation of a 'parasitic' 'nomadic' culture that is attributed to Gypsies against all evidence since those who have survived drastic marginalisation have specialised as craftspeople, seasonal workers, and traders who offer their services to large percentages of the national population. Their essentialisation is followed by a succession of gypsy-phobic statements that produces, according to the European authorities, the most worrying case of racism and xenophobia present in Europe today.



Social scientists define as essentialization of a culture the fact that traits which derive from the survival conditions that were and are imposed upon it from outside, by more powerful socio-historical groups, are attributed to endogenous and spontaneous values and dynamics within the culture itself. This then 'immobilizes' the minority in a disadvantageous and threatened relational position, usually codified as threatening.

The most common type of cultural essentialization, as a strategy to reduce ethnicity to binary oppositions (the preferred Anglo-American strategy³, essentialized by Lévi-Strauss as the Structuralist theory of Mind), is to attribute to a minority group 'primitive' traits within a stratified evolutionist 'scientific' classification, and then requiring that these socio-historical groups are kept in their 'primitive' condition, which is deemed to be their 'cultural', 'authentic' characteristic, seen as intrinsic and preferably unalterable. In practice, this demand for primitivism hinders the socio-economic progress of the essentialized group, turning 'indigenous' into indigent (Lévi-Strauss, 1959-60, in 1984:).

The cognitive error, defined by post-colonial social scientists as ethnographic essentialization of a culture, is the heritage of the 'science of Folklore' of the 19th century, and of the colonial ethnography which characterized the first half of the 20th. It almost invariably serves more or less subtle racist purposes, and hides the history of tense inter-ethnic relations between a hegemonic group and a minority one, forced by the former into the corner of a culture of survival, to avoid extinction.

From the shame of their own history, to the moral accusation of the 'other'

One hypothesis for the interpretation of this strategy of 'forgetting' the history of inter-ethnic relations between the Portuguese (authorities and people) and the Gypsies who gained the Portuguese nationality is that the Portuguese are ashamed of their history in this specific area. From this perspective, making history invisible, as a form of negation, would correspond to an unconscious confession of guilt and shame derived from a profound contradiction between stated ideals and historically promoted practices. After the crushing failure of the 'holistic' pretensions of the reconstructive history

³ Dualism is the sort of sociocultural delirium (in Durkheim's acception, cf. 1965:365) that Ingold finds as the last support of 'Western thought', associated to the "master dichotomy of anthropology itself, between Western and non-Western societies, characterized as people who think in terms of dichotomies and people who don't" (1996: 5). This 'troublesome dichotomy' also constitutes the foundation of Ethnic Binarism (Modood), the sort of Ethnic Delirium reported by Stuart Hall (1992b, in 1997) when he taught his young son that brown is a colour found in school watercolours, not in inter-ethnic relations, where 'brown' becomes or must become 'black'. Dualism and Binarism (the basic organizers of the Rationalistic theory of Difference, viewed as Superiority or Inferiority) are the counterparts of the ideologic Deliria that propose 'hybridity', 'creolization', 'multiple, shifting and non-synchronous identities' in the liminal third-space of translation, lived in the 'inter' and 'in-between', or through 'border-crossing', hallucinating the advent of "liquid societies" (Baumann) oriented by "planetary humanism" (Gilroy 2000).

practiced by evolutionists and diffusionists, the fixation of 20th century social sciences upon the atomistic plane of local synchronies, defined as ‘contextual’, does not merely ‘forget’ that the phantasmatic investment of history and of group identities, both past and longed for, is the most compelling of all ‘contexts’, since it allows for microscopic focusings oriented toward the strengthening of mainstream ideologies.

Historical records show that during the 15th century, all over Western Europe, popes, emperors, kings, and municipal authorities granted safe-conducts, received the delegations of several Gypsy dukes and counts who had fled the European part of the Islamic empire, in a hospitable manner and according to the diplomatic protocol of the time, and even financed their ‘pilgrimages’, namely to Santiago de Compostela. This changed with the founding of the great Imperial Spain of Ferdinand and Isabella, and in the following three centuries, paralleling the rise of charismatic absolutist monarchy, a radical volte-face resulted in mainly genocidal policies.

However, we should not just limit ourselves to repression in the Iberian peninsula. Decades earlier, in the North of what today is Germany and the Netherlands, local authorities had abandoned their initial goodwill towards Gypsies and turned to persecution and genocide as their *modus operandi* - while showing no guilt at all; this was again the case in the Nazi Holocaust and, after that, during decades, in some Nordic Countries and present-day Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary, countries that recur to forced sterilization.

Towards internal and transcontinental exile: training colonialism, slavery, and evolutionist racism on Gypsies

The attempt to reduce to slavery, exterminate, exile, or forcefully assimilate the ‘nomadic’ Gypsies of Europe is the first ‘experiment’ of what colonial and imperialist inter-ethnic relations would become in the following centuries. From slavery and colonial deportation of Gypsies, to slavery and colonial deportation of Africans there is a clear continuity of intent of **exploitative domination, albeit with the fundamental difference** that Gypsies, as was the case with American ‘Indians’, always proved to be much less subdued and ‘useful’ to ‘missionary’ projects and the expansion of monocultures than the Africans ‘exported’ to North and South America. By associating extreme forms of communitarism to a proud individualism, based upon the defense of Honour, it is well known that Gypsies were never a particularly effective ‘workforce’ for any kind of ‘work’, even missionary or civilizational projects.

For better or worse (depending on one’s individual point of view), the manner in which Gypsies, unlike rural populations (Stewart, 1997), proved untameable by the will of the ‘Lords’, and worked against their inclusion in the ‘Christian civilizational project’ and their subsequent integration in the massified Calvinist ‘work ethics’ (Weber, 1905; Lash, 1979), that is, their



identitary extinction, resulted in persecutions that are currently well documented by marginal historians (Hancock, 1987; 2003; Frazer, 1999).

Exclusion orders, public floggings, being put to the pillory, confiscation of all property, banishment of men to slavery on galley ships, deportation of men and women to separate colonies, explicit declaration of the intent to exterminate them, the abduction of their children as the most effective way of implementing their extermination, the death penalty simply because they gathered in crowds and bands, accompanied by attempts towards forced assimilation, with the same objective of exterminating them – at least culturally (**cf. Table 1, enclosed**): everything was attempted to reduce diversity and eliminate difference. There is no similar case in Europe, in its destructive ferocity, other than the persecutions of Jews in 15th century Inquisitory Jesuitic Spain, and more recently, by the Nazis.

Table 1. LAWS, REGULATIONS AND ADMINISTRATIVE DECISIONS ON GYPSIES IN PORTUGAL

DATE	EPOCH	PENALTY
1526 (charter dated March 3)		<i>“gypsies shall not enter the Kingdom, and those who are within its territory shall leave it”</i>
1538 (law XXIV)	João III	<i>“must be arrested and flogged in a public square” “[In case of reincidence] they shall be flogged again in a public square ... and they will lose all their goods and chattels”.</i>
1557 (law dated August 17)		Adds the galley penalty (enslavement)
1573 (Charter dated March 14)	D. Sebastião	A new deadline of 30 days for gypsies to depart; if they did not, women must be flogged and men be sent to galleys; declares the end of the letters of settlement (“cartyas de vizinhança”) already issued
1574 (dispatch on a requirement)		Attenuates the conviction to 5 years in the galleys to 5 years in Brazil (requested by the convict)
1579 (charter dated April 11)	Cardeal D. Henrique	Gives new permits to those that “live properly and work and are not harmful”; nomads <i>“must leave the country in thirty days or they will be flogged in a public square and banished forever to the galleys”</i>

DATE	EPOCH	PENALTY
1592 (law dated August 28)	Filipe I	In 4 months, if they wander in groups or gangs, they will be sentenced to death , “with no appeal or reprieve possible”
1603 (Ordenações Filipinas)		“entry in the kingdom of Gypsies, Armenians, Arabians, Persians or Moors from Granada is not acceptable”
1606 and 1608 (charters) 1613 and 1614 (laws)	Filipe II	“ forbids the issue of letters of settlement ” (galleys for 3, 6 or 10 years; excludes the death penalty)
1646 (petition from the widow of Jerónimo da Costa)		“ <i>widow and sons must be given citizenship of the Kingdom</i> ”; “ <i>must be honoured as a noble knight</i> ”; “ <i>descendants be exempt from manual labour</i> ”; “ <i>they must serve the crown as soldiers</i> ”
1647	João IV	Orders fixed residence to ten former prisoners, wives and sons of gypsies; forbids the speaking of ‘geringonça’ [romanes], the use of ‘gypsy costume’ and palmistry (penalties: galleys for the men; deportation to Angola or Cape Verde for women, to be separated from their offspring)
1649		“ <i>the name and way of life of this vagrant people of ‘ciganos’ must be extinguished</i> ”; “ <i>uproot completely their way of life and any memory of these vagrant people, who have no home, nor settlement, nor parish, and no employment beyond the thieving off which they live</i> ”; “ <i>shall be embarked and taken to serve in the colonies, separated from each other</i> ”; exception made for those who, in these days, fought in the borders and did not gather with others” (about 250 men)
1686		“ <i>those who came from Castile, shall be exterminated</i> ”; “ <i>the sons and grandsons of Portuguese, must have fixed residence (...) or they shall be sent to Maranhão (Brazil)</i> ”
1694 (instruction to the Town Council of Elvas)	Pedro II	“ <i>all the Gypsies born in this kingdom who do not find proper means of sustenance shall leave this kingdom within two months, or they will be put to death, as decreed against the Castillian gypsies that entered this kingdom</i> ”



DATE	EPOCH	PENALTY
1708 (edict)	João V	Forbids the clothes, the language, the trade of quadrupedes and other forms of deceit, under the penalty of flogging and deportation for 10 years (men to the galleys; women to Brazil)
1718 (edict)		Orders capture and deportation to the colonies – India, Angola, São Tomé, Cape Verde, etc.
1745 (law)		New laws on deportation of gypsies.
1754 (letter from the Governor of Angola, Álvares da Cunha)	José I	Asks to be sent many gypsies with their women, because they stand the climate better and they don't misbehave.
1756		Condemned to serve in the public works for the reconstruction of Lisbon.
1800	D. Maria	Determines the imprisonment of those who roam the kingdom; orders that “ <i>the children of both sexes shall be transported to the Casa Pia orphanage in Lisbon and schooled</i> ”.
1848 (order)		Demands the gypsy bands a passport in their travels within the kingdom.
1920 (GNR regulations)	1 st Republic	The part that refers to ‘ciganos’ orders a “ strict vigilance ” over them, because of their “ <i>frequent pillage acts</i> ”.
1980	Revolution Council	Declares the unconstitutionality of the norms from 1920.
1985 (GNR regulations)		Orders the special vigilance of ‘nomads’ (artº 81).
1993 (May, 10)	3 rd Republic	The municipal authority of Ponte de Lima orders “ <i>to the people of gypsy ethnicity (...) to leave the municipality in eight days and that in the future they should not stay for more than 48 hours</i> ” (impeached by the reaction of the Attorney General and of the Justice Ombudsman).

Source: J. and S. Bastos (2000: 99-101)

Under democracy too, is the ‘voice of the people’ the ‘voice of God’?

In Portugal, unlike what happened to the Jews, Gypsies were not the target of accusations and persecutions justified as ‘religious’. It was not ‘the will of God’, channelled by the Inquisition, but rather the popular accusation of petty ‘robbery’ that was deployed against them. It is possible to hear two voices in the dialogue that history enables us to reconstruct: the one that accuses gypsies (in a great majority), and that of other authorities who, almost unwittingly, destroy the popular Gypsy-phobic discourse and/or reveal the perverse intentions of the accusers.

Since in Portugal it has been long believed that ‘the voice of the people is the voice of God’, let us listen to some of the persecutory voices, in the name of the ‘will of the people’: “they shall not enter the Kingdom, and those who are within its territory shall leave it” (1526), or “they shall be flogged in public, and put to the pillory”, and on re-incidentence they shall lose “all their goods and chattels” (1538) and be “banished forever to the galleys” (1579); “if they gather in bands, they shall be executed with no appeal or reprieve possible” (1592); that no “*cartas de vizinhança*” (“letters of settlement”) shall be granted to them (1608); they shall be forbidden from “speaking *geringonça*, using gypsy costumes, and palmistry”, under penalty of service in the galleys for the men, and exile to Angola or Cape Verde for the women, separated from their children (1647); **“judges will not allow Gypsies to raise their sons or daughters after nine years of age**, and if they are capable of entering service, they shall do so, as is the custom with orphans” (1647); it was deemed necessary to “extinguish the name and way of life of these vagrants, the gypsies, to uproot completely their way of life and any memory of these vagabond people, who have no home, nor settlement, nor parish, and no employment beyond the thieving off which they live” (1649); “having arrived from Castile, they shall be exterminated” (1686); “all the Gypsies born in this kingdom who do not find proper means of sustenance shall leave this kingdom within two months, or they will be put to death” (1694); “capture those who roam the kingdom, (...) and the children of both sexes shall be transported to the Casa Pia orphanage in Lisbon and schooled” (1800).

Different voices in Portugal

We could, as hoped by a number of essentialist historians, legitimize the past with a hypothetical (im)moral homogeneity of the time. At the time, they say, this was just the way things happened. The problem is that, when official history is questioned, there are different voices, such as that of a judge in Elvas, who from early on recognized that the people were ‘shocked’ at the thefts that were blamed on the Gypsies, “*since the witnesses do not know precisely which of the aforementioned Gypsies are the guilty parties*” (1597); there are decrees that show that significant parts of the population, from the lower classes to noblemen, supported the Gypsies by finding them and giving them shelter or renting them



houses (1649), despite the severe punishment they faced; there are official voices who praise the courage of approximately 250 Gypsy men who “currently serve on the borders” in the defence of Portugal against Castile and suggest that the widow and children of one of these Portuguese Gypsy heroes of the Restoration “be given citizenship of the Kingdom” and that the hero [Jerónimo da Costa] be “knighted” and “his descendants be exempt from manual labour” and “serve as soldiers” (1646); there are yet voices, as that of a Governor of Angola, who instead of accusing the Gypsies of theft and invoking slavery or extermination as a reward, asked, in the name of the colonial future of the Portuguese, “*to be sent many Gypsies with their wives, because they best adapt to the climate and have evidenced no ill tract.*” (1754).

From the will to exterminate, to classificatory ‘science’ and ethnic stratification

A second possible interpretation of the strategy of forgetfulness which targeted this more openly extreme phase in the history of inter-ethnic relations is that since Liberalism affirmed itself in the 19th century, the Portuguese (as other ‘Europeans’ in many other countries) found (for a while) a much more efficient and much less guilt-inducing approach. The virtual invisibility of this strategy enabled them to simultaneously operate at the ‘scientific’ level, by ‘studying gypsy culture’ as an ethnographic case of persistence of ‘primitive traits’ (‘nomadic’) and at the social level, ‘granting scientific legitimacy to the relegation of gypsies to third-class ‘nomadic’ citizens (after the second-class rurals and poors), and upon this basis to create the stereotype of the ‘bad Portuguese’ – ‘vagrants, liars, dirty, aggressive, disobedient, insubordinate, and unrepentant’⁴.

After the end of absolutism in Portugal, it was indeed the new Liberal era of the 19th century which, while facilitating the end of slavery for Africans, and as an extension, for Romanian gypsies, which had continued unabated since the 14th century, resorted to much more subtle ways to continue the project not of extinction – despite its brief reinstatement by the Nazis⁵ – but to relegate them to the oximoric identity of marginalized citizens, impoverished, inferiorized, marginalized and policed, a strategy based on the essentialization of ‘nomadism’

⁴ The fact that we face identity processes is shown by the fact that the Portuguese population attributes almost the same identity profile to Spaniards (J. Bastos, 2000, 2002), to the ‘bad Portuguese’ (S. Bastos, 1997; J. Bastos, 2000) persecuted by the Estado Novo (the corporatist ‘New State’ that ruled Portugal between 1928 and 1974) and to Portuguese Gypsies (Bastos, Correia & Rodrigues, 2007). In this identity process or construction of an external or internal collective ‘bad object’, we could suppose that ‘nomadic’ and ‘primitive’ would be the differential attributes reserved to Gypsies, terms which however were also used by the scientists of Estado Novo to ‘characterize’ the ‘bad Portuguese’ (S. Bastos, 1997).

⁵ The Porrajmos – the Holocaust of Gypsies in Nazi-ruled countries of Europe – produced half a million victims, a number that is questioned as both too low or too high. But ethnic killings are killings, whatever their numbers and their greater or less ‘effectiveness’ in the extermination of an ethnic group and the fact functions as a relevant symptom of the Narcissistic ‘moral’, when assumed by ‘elites’ and by those strata of people tuned into the elite’s ethnic discourse.

which was simultaneously produced – by driving them out – and used to accuse gypsies of not being ‘sedentary’ as ‘the good people’ were, with home, parish, and employment in farm work or manufacturing.

Social scientists today are well aware that any ‘accusation’, ethnic and/or ‘moral’, is one of the most typical ‘rational’ processes to which hegemonic populations resort not merely to ratify in ‘good conscience’ a feeling of identity superiority, but also to simultaneously maintain or strengthen processes of domination and exclusion of wide strata of ‘others’, whose impoverishment and marginalization serve to materialize and support the very ‘social’ representation of their ‘superiority’ (Freud, 1930; Cohn, 1973; Sibley, 1981; Kephart, 1982; Bastos, Correia e Rodrigues, 2007). ‘Scientifically described’ as ‘nomads’ and, for that reason, among others, accused of being ill-suited to ‘Western civilization’, everything was done to force them to conform to the labels of ‘nomads’, ‘primitives’, ‘unschooled’ and ‘untrustworthy’: preventing their settlement, both urban and rural, systematically pushing those who had settled back into a situation of **forced nomadism**, and a constant seizure of goods and chattels, based on the unproven supposition that they had **always** been stolen. Everything was attempted to ‘delay’ the socio-economic progress of Gypsies and/or to make it impossible for them to persist as a culturally differentiated entity in Western ‘societies’ - all to no avail, since nothing kept Gypsies from maintaining remarkably high birth rates, their status as trade and cultural mediators, and to persist in their attempt to settle in cities and towns, and on their outskirts.

The survival culture of Gypsies – systematically and disproportionately persecuted for ‘crimes’ that were never either numerous, or serious – then resulted in the production of a ‘scientific’ discourse, supported by the academics of the 19th century, which contains the minimum of ‘general culture’ that the educated strata of the population use against the gypsies: ‘they’ are supposed to be a culture of itinerant nomads, who once left India for ‘unknown reasons’⁶, and who lost the memory of their origin, and therefore became unable to return to their starting point. Since the Liberalist era they were accepted as citizens, but they supposedly persisted in their nomadic vocation as errant travellers, who should thus be preserved, in ‘respect to their culture’. And, in a rhetorical stroke of genius, they could even be seen as the idealized forefathers of tourists,

⁶ The scotomization of the kidnapping of Indians and their diffusion in East Europe as slaves by Islamic Turks has many versions. The lightest is the idea that they “left the Indian sub-continent” (EC, 2004: 7). The repeated ideology that Gypsies voluntarily left India ‘because they were nomads’ supports the ideology that even today ‘true Gypsies’ are ‘nomadic by vocation’. In France, ANGVC (L’Association Nationale des Gens du Voyage Catholiques), created in 1997, thus presents Gypsies: “Voyageurs, semi-sédentarisés ou sédentaires, (...) ils se répartissent en diverses ethnies (...) Ancrés dans un même gout du voyage, ils ont en commun un attachement inaliénable au mode de vie itinérant (...).”



campers, hippies and environmentalists, and as the emancipatory cause for the 21st century, so devoid of causes to fight for ⁷.

Romantic uses of reconstructive history

‘Children of the road and wind’: thus did the Romantics see Gypsies as an example of love of freedom and nature who, *avant la lettre*, lived an ecological life, with no timetables or competitive stress, unshackled from the capitalist and industrial burden, and the evil urbanization of social life, by their persistent initiative. The term ‘bohemian’ became a synonym for a multiplicity of meanings which included night, music, dance, passion and freedom, all of which became the idyllic *imago* of Gypsies and the banner for those who tried to keep apart from the emerging industrial society. **French writers of the 19th century (from Chateaubriand to Baudelaire), in their peregrinations through Spain, devoted a whole century of picaresque descriptions to Gypsy life.** In a few European countries, the support of the Romantics helped them become the imagetic focus of national identity through art – namely music and dance. In the Austro-Hungarian Empire, they became the most popular representatives of the ‘national soul’, and Liszt and other musicians of the time resorted to their music and dances to represent in an erudite form ‘popular’ creativity (Williams, 1996). In Spain, guitarists who specialized in the *canto jondo*, flamenco dancers, and noble bullfighters, were celebrated by García Lorca, and finally elevated by American novelists and filmmakers as the icons of Andalusian Iberia, in an emblematic “fusion of Roma, Andalusian, and Spanish identity” (Charnon-Deutsch, 2003: 31-32).

No such thing happened in Portugal. The Portuguese Romantic movement was negligible, it was soon disproved that Severa (the ‘mother’ of Fado music) had been a Gypsy (Tinop), the myth of Marialva which brought together the aristocracy, poets, and the people soon waned⁸, and the great rationalist concern of Adolfo Coelho (1892) was to investigate whether alcoholism was a part of the ‘cultural essence’ of the gypsies, as was believed of them (and of the Portuguese ‘white’ people at large). Gypsies in Portugal were therefore simultaneously made invisible and imagined as the representatives of some of

⁷ A possible play on words that is embedded in the law to allow for the legal exercise of gypsy-phobia in a covert way, in order to escape the accusation of State racism, consists – in the U.K. (Okely) as in Portugal (Bastos and Bastos, 1999, 2000; Bastos, Correia and Rodrigues, 2007) – in naming, in the legislation within which the Gypsy ‘nomadism’ is enforced, not the Gypsies themselves, but rather ‘nomads’, ‘travellers’, ‘gens du voyage’, or ‘unauthorized campers’. The Supreme Court of Portugal, faced with the analysis of the legality of the Law that commands police forces to pay special attention to ‘Nomads’, declared that the Law was legal because no specific ethnic group was mentioned. As another example of the tyranny of the categorizing processes in identity classifications, the Vatican ---

⁸ Cervantes with *La Gitanilla* (1613) can be considered the first *imago* producer of the ‘confusion’ between aristocrats and Gypsies, a plot based in the inversion of status between the extremes of the social pyramid, produced by the kidnapping (or expulsion) of rich children, and enlarged by the democratic myth of social affluence (or the return to ‘social order’), that Romantic writers repeated in varied versions. Cf. Hector Mallot, *Sans famille* (1878) and *En famille* (1893), Mark Twain, *The Prince and the Pauper* (1882), etc.

the negative dimensions of identity they shared with other Portuguese⁹. And while Adolfo Coelho was certainly no Romantic, he was well aware that, due to what he called the “moral insensitivity of the Portuguese”, the situation in Portugal was clearly well behind that of Spain (as still happens today).

Moreover, the most accurate historical reconstructions have found no romantic ‘nomads’ whatsoever roaming voluntarily towards the West, but rather (1) tens of thousands of Islamic slaves, torn since 1019-20 from their urban settlements in the Northeast of India *manu militari* as spoils of war (Lamanit, 2007) (2) subsequently enslaved for a number of centuries in the central hubs of the burgeoning Islamic empire (Syria, Iraq, Turkey, Egypt, Greece, etc.) and in the vassal principalities which later became the Great Romania (Wallachia, Moldavia, etc.) (Hanckock, 1987); a small percentage of these then (3) escaped from these territories to the Christian world, when religious wars on their borders opened a temporary ‘escape route’ in the early 15th century, and the temporary protection of popes, emperors, and the noble classes gave the fugitives relative respite for almost a century.

History is the past, but its long-term social consequences are the present

The socio-cultural divide between the poor Portuguese, migrants from the former colonies, and the Portuguese gypsies who shared the same shantytowns and degraded housing – a product of the protracted gypsy-phobic action of the twentieth century – is clearly documented by Bruto da Costa and Manuel Pimenta (1990). In their unpublished but notable research, these authors revealed that the situation of Gypsies was immensurably worse than that of the other transnational inhabitants marginalized by the dominant strata of the Portuguese society.

Other sociological data from the Nineties also show that literacy among adult Gypsies and school attendance among their children were at much lower levels than average (Bastos and Bastos, 1999; Casa-Nova, 2006), while the political parties did not question this situation, nor the successive Governments take action. Data also show rates of preventive custody ten times those of the rest of the Portuguese population, in the case of men, and twenty in the case of women; data that led social scientists to reflect upon racism within processes of ethnic incrimination (Moreira 1998).

⁹ Adolfo Coelho (1995 [1892]).



Table 2. The absence of domestic appliances in Gypsy homes – comparative analysis

	Absence of Domestic Appliances				
	Gas cooker	Refrigerator	<i>Heater</i>	Washing Machine	Radiator
Cape-Verdeans	4.5	14.8	66.4	64.0	83.3
Guineans	2.4	22.2	70.4	69.4	85.6
Santomeans	5.2	27.8	76.3	71.9	82.3
Angolans	2.7	20.0	63.6	65.5	80.0
Mozambicans	0.0	9.0	58.2	44.8	71.6
Indians	3.0	34.1	73.5	80.9	68.9
Timorese	0.0	2.9	35.3	23.5	70.8
Gypsies	32.1	66.1	88.4	92.0	98.2

More than the relative absence of domestic appliances in comparable 'housing' conditions was the extreme feeling of being 'poor' or 'very poor'.

Table 3. Self-evaluation of the economic condition of Gypsy families – comparative analysis

	'rich'	'neither rich nor poor'	'poor'	'very poor'	'don't know'	'poor' + 'very poor'
Cape-Verdeans		38.5	53.3	7.1	<i>1.1</i>	60.4
Guineans	3.1	40.2	52.0	3.1	<i>1.6</i>	55.1
Santomeans		54.2	42.7	3.1		45.8
Angolans		50.0	40.0	9.1	<i>0.9</i>	49.1
Mozambicans		71.5	28.5			28.5
Indians		76.3	19.7	2.8	<i>1.3</i>	22.3
Timorese		82.4	14.7		<i>2.9</i>	14.7
Gypsies	0.9	11.1	49.1	38.0	<i>0.9</i>	87.1

Xenophobic consent and blaming the victim

More recently, a third hypothesis of serious interpretation is that forgetting the history of inter-ethnic relations, which included genocide, a culturally ethnocide forced assimilation, and the well-defined invention of a group of 'primitive nomads' who refused to be Portuguese and Christian, may be used to naturalize the results of criminal history and towards the cultural essentialization of the social divide that was fed during the twentieth century and thus led to the comforting possibility of creating a xenophobic consensus that results in the democratization of popular accusation, institutional

persecution, and social marginalization, and therefore in the circular confirmation that led to blaming the victim.

Blaming the victim is a power strategy which aims to maintain hegemonic asymmetries by attributing to the subjects of socio-historical groups which have been directly or indirectly, brutally or subtly, attacked, the 'blame' for the acts perpetrated upon them by the agents of State and/or cultural power. The most well-known example is the humiliation, in police stations and courts, of raped women, who are accused of having encouraged the violation with their 'bad behaviour'.

The democratization of gypsy-phobic persecution has been well documented over the past decade (SOS Racismo, 2001; Bastos, Correia & Rodrigues, 2007: 50-82). Popular vigilantes, supported by local authorities and the police, chase gypsy families from their own residences, with no reaction from the judicial system; conveniently anonymous local associations threatened to set on fire the property of those who rented houses or sold land to Gypsy families, and the political parties remained silent; parents' associations 'forbade', with the complicity of school authorities, the enrolment of Gypsy children in their offspring's schools, or forced apartheid schooling, and successive Governments did nothing; municipal councillors and policemen cooperated in maintaining Gypsy families outside the municipal borders, keeping them corralled in garbage dumps, or kept 'kicking them out' of their territories each time they came back, thus (re)producing the forced nomadism of four thousand years of Gypsy history, and the Bishops deemed there were more pressing moral issues on which to collectively discourse, since 'their' issue is with lay democracy and liberal sexuality, and not with Gypsies forced to nomadism, who do not exist to them, except at an episodic, caritative and vaguely 'pastoral' level. And even ACIME (*High Commission for Immigration and Ethnic Minorities*), the governmental department with responsibility in the matter, thought it better to change its name to ACIDI (*High Commission for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue*), since – as it was explicitly stated to me – the same Constitution that treats the Gypsies as undifferentiated, 'equal' Portuguese citizens does not merely make them invisible; it also makes it impossible to repair the social injustice that persecuted them before the revolution of 25th of April 1974, and still persecutes them today as yesterday, and foreseeably tomorrow as today, since it prohibits any action of positive discrimination¹⁰ aimed at overcoming

¹⁰ The policy of positive discrimination was introduced, with notable success, in the Indian Union, by the Congress Party, to overcome the historical deficit of 'equal opportunities' between Hindus and other theist religious groups (Sunni Muslims, Ismailis, Jains, Parsis, Budists, Sikhs, Christians, etc.), on the one hand; and between the untouchables (Deds, Haridjans) and tribal populations, on the other. Due to this policy of positive discrimination, in 1991, the Governor of Diu was of tribal origin, and the last President of the Republic of India was an 'untouchable'; this represents, in just a few decades, the identity subversion of thousands of years of 'purity hierarchies' in India.



the more than obvious historical deficit of ‘equal opportunities’ between the Gypsies and other Portuguese.

Unwittingly compensating the mistakes of history – from per to rsi

The single significant step taken in recent years appeared in connection to the fight against excessive and obvious poverty, beneath the threshold of decency. The implementation of the PER housing project, which resettled thousands of families who lived in shanties and illegally-constructed neighbourhoods was not tailored to Gypsies. However, with great indignation on the part of the more extreme Gypsy-phobes, it did result in the resettling of the great majority of the Portuguese Gypsy population, thus making possible their return to sedentariness. In this case, the great change of the Nineties, which ‘gave a home’ to most Gypsies, focused upon council estates that were more or less isolated from the urban network, and made many families dependent on the RMG (*Minimum Guaranteed Wage*, a welfare payment), and subsequently to the RSI (*Social Insertion Wage*, a welfare payment which also includes measures towards the social and work insertion of those who receive it); both of these were not tailored to Gypsies, brought together very different histories and ways of life, and eventually contributed to increasing the Gypsy-phobia of the populations and several of the middleman professionals working for the State, who believe that gypsies (as though they were a collective and organized entity) currently are “the largest owners of real estate in the country”.

Should Adolfo Coelho come back to life in 2008, he would see that Portugal still lags well behind Spain. Since the Second Vatican Council, Spain has seen the flourishing of Gypsy associations and federations, strongly supported by movements of Catholic and Evangelical militants (Gimenez, 2007). Hundreds of Gypsies enrol in Universities, and many are professors there. The Gypsy arts maintain their identity centrality in the representation of the ‘soul of Spain’. No such thing happens in Portugal, perhaps because associated to their “collectivism” (Hofstede, 1991) and easy sociability (Bastos, 2000, 2002), the moral insensitivity of the Portuguese in relation to Others is a marked national character trait, and may require much longer to become diluted.

Trying to be fair – this history is not merely Portuguese, but based on the white pride of the ‘civilized’

If we wish to be impartial, we have to admit that the situation of gypsies is reason for concern all over Europe (Helsinki Watch, 1993; Forman, 2000; Greek Helsinki Monitor, 2003), that Gypsy-phobia is widespread, and that they are the target of both physical aggression (Mendes, forthcoming), as well as verbal and institutional, cultural, and identity-based racism. There is no lack of international reports to state this ever more repeatedly and clearly. Otherwise said, the romantic ‘good practices’ of Spain and Hungary are positive from the point of view of identity; however, human beings do not live on self-esteem

alone, and the situation of economic precariousness, lack of basic conditions for living, and ghettoization promoted by the institutions of the State, accompanied by violence promoted or safeguarded by the police, who look the other way in the presence of attacks on the part of skinheads, as the main representatives of popular 'white' pride, has been worsening over the past few decades, in the presence of a climate of economic crisis, especially in the countries of Eastern Europe that recently integrated the European Union. Let us agree on the fact that Gypsy-phobia is not a nationalistic phenomena, but rather the dynamic result of an identitary euphorization of the white pride that narcissistically sees itself in the magical mirror of 'Western civilization' as a WASP civilization, imagined and idealized, made exemplary after its purification from all the crimes it accumulated, and the rediscovery of the greco-roman and judeo-christian patina that so ennobles it. It is not merely in Portugal that researchers attributed to gypsy an infant mortality ten to fifteen times higher than the European average, and a life expectancy of 15 years less than that of the rest of the population. And it is not only in Portugal that this type of State crimes are ignored by governments, intellectuals, 'civil society' and the parties and voters who self-define as 'Christians' or 'of the Left', even when a number of NGOs¹¹ and researchers insist in refusing to be complicit with the diffused criminality that targets Gypsies and the subsequent shifting of the blame.

Gypsy fragmentation in Portugal

In Portugal, the survival culture of gypsies has led to a territorial hyper-fragmentation and to forms of social stratification oriented towards the identity desinvestment of those with a lower status. This survival dynamics turns Portuguese Gypsies into an 'imagined community' (in the eyes of the 'Lords', as they call the hegemonic population), which however lacks any internal organization, any solidarity between genealogically differentiated groups (*raças*) or the possibility to steer their own emancipation as 'ethnic minority'; therefore, the recognition that they are indeed one has been of little use, and may even be harmful to the situation of inter-ethnic relations.

At a level that feeds the idea of a pariah group, approximately four thousand gypsies live in Portugal at a minimum level of survival, since they are forced by local authorities to move in repeated circuits that keep them out of towns and cities. Many remember clearly the time when they had settled, and the bulldozer came to tear their shanties down, together with the police who sent them on. Once separated from their local roots, no municipality wishes to hear of them, and as far as we are aware, nor do the members of the national governments and Parliament. The adults are virtually illiterate, and the children are destined to repeat the lack of chances that characterized the life of their parents. Their

¹¹ In Portugal, SOS Racismo is particularly noteworthy.



existence serves to confirm all Gypsy-phobic stereotypes. They are the 'nomads', 'paupers', 'dirty', who end up begging or stealing to make it day by day.

At a second level, we find, namely in the North of the country, the *Chabotos* or *Recos*¹², of whom the 'true gypsies' (Ciganos, Gitanos, Quitanos, etc.) are ashamed (Nicolau, 2008), and wish to be set apart from. They live in '*chabolas*', that is, in slums, at the outskirts of towns and villages, doing rural seasonal work, begging or reading the future; they marry within their group and not with the 'true gypsies', and do not observe many of the dictates of the Gypsy Law (namely, they recur to marriage by abduction or elopement, and they accept remarriage after separation or widowhood, etc.), are sometimes mistaken for Romanians who arrived a few generations back, and do not speak the *calon* language.

The *Chabotos* whose shanties are torn down by local authorities are frequently relegated to the lower level, going back to forced nomadism; this continues to feed the Romantic myth of gypsy nomadism as an ethno-cultural vocation opposed to urban life, wage-earning work, capitalism, sexual liberalism, and consumerism, all of which are ideologically interpreted by them as pathological and deviant in terms of 'human nature'.

At a higher level, we find Gypsies (*Ciganos*, as they call themselves) settled on council estates, who often are recent arrivals to the outskirts of cities and recently removed from slums by the PER housing program, which while not targeted at them specifically, did swallow up most of those who were then registered as poor and lacking housing, and as a 'shame' to the eyes of the foreigners who 'visited' us in their travels as tourists. They trade in popular fairs, practice illegal peddling, or live in a state of dependence from the State (as social workers like to describe the situation, negating their right to be supported by the State since "nobody gives them work", beginning with all the State machinery and its hundreds of thousands of civil servants).

Many of the council estates, or suburban agglomerations studied by anthropologists and sociologists (Nunes, 1980, 1996, Machado, 1994, Casa-Nova, 1999, 2002, 2007, Mendes, 2005, Magano, 2006, Lopes, 2008; Brinca, 2005, 2008; Bastos, Correia e Rodrigues, 2006, 2007), saw an excessive concentration of gypsies, against their will, who are afraid to create '*contrários*' ('opponents'), and "prefer to live among the Lords"; other times, clearly ghettoized in Estates or 'Nomad Sites' planned to separate Gypsies from the rest of the population (and at best, 'to prepare them to enter civilization in a near future').

¹²'Chaboto' is name derived from the Spanish word 'chabola', which refers to 'slums'; 'Reco' is a popular term for pigs, animals that by definition are 'dirty' and 'impure'.

Next to the Council Estates within the urban network, it is still possible to find Gypsy families who live in tents on public land; however these are distinct from the four thousand nomads mentioned above. Similarly to those who live in the open air or sheltered in trailers, these are more or less close family members of those who have been resettled in Council Estates, who are waiting for their own opportunity of rehousing, that is, of socio-identity ascension. And there also are the ‘shacks’ of those who, for any number of reasons, were not included in the PER housing lists at the proper time and who are now once and for all excluded since the program vanished from the politico-moral conscience of many politicians and of their technocratic representatives.

At a higher level, in terms of identity stratification, we find families who are well off or on a trajectory of social ascension, with a family past of which they are proud, who own more economic resources and/or socio-cultural capital, many of whom live in detached houses or apartments in areas within the urban networks that are not associated with the presence of Gypsies. Some of them are leading families among gypsies, other live their gypsiness in clandestinity, worried with the realistic menace of losing their jobs, while yet others try to appear as ‘whites’ and not to be associated with the ‘infernal’ past of their families.

Finally, the new generations, and namely those who have been rehoused, have witnessed the appearance of new identity elites, based on religion, who were initially, in the 70s, associated to the *Pastoral dos Ciganos* (a Catholic organization targeted at gypsies) and, more recently, to the Churches of *Filadélfia* and *Cristo para Todos* [Christ for All], that is, ethnic evangelical churches who encourage cultural and moral change, and approximation to the majority of the Portuguese population. We believe that these churches, rather than associations or any attempt at the creation of a political conscience led by NGOs or State departments, are at the root of a new hope on the part of Gypsies to rebuild their moral, and even economic, dignity, something that had been gradually stripped from them over the past few decades. The stance of these churches on prolonged education will determine the formation of entrepreneurial and intellectual elites and the presence of Portuguese gypsies in Universities and the liberal professions, which has been a reality for decades all over the world (Sutherland, ; Gimenez, 2007), with the exception of Portugal.

Other dimensions of the survival culture

Within their survival culture, Portuguese Gypsies display a high rate of endogamy (despite the existence of a significant number of mixed marriages) and early marriage ages, after puberty, in order to defend this very same endogamy. Early marriages, through an offer of marriage (*pedimento*) or elopement, lead young Gypsies to leave school – if they ever attended it – and to immediately acquire the statute and responsibilities of young adults, who must build their own economic and family life according to the Gypsy Law, a



cultural Law designed to defend cultural continuity and prevent assimilation. By looking up to their elders, the young learn that they have to be smart and make do, as the elders did before them, while guarding their honour; and they internalize a justified conviction of the pointlessness of staying in school (even when their families have the means for them do so), since given the complicity of the authorities in their omission or more or less subtle actions, they are well aware that, just as no one will rent a house to them, no one would give them a stable and integrated job in the world of careers. On the other hand, as well as marrying early, they maintain a very high birth rate, which quickly leads to problems of overcrowding and an undesirable dependence on the older generation, thus preventing them from consolidating their status as young adults, and threatening their strategy of family diversification.

Sintra municipality carried out a research project, but the problem is political, at a national level, and its solution cannot be merely local

The study "*Gypsies from Sintra*" (2007), and the participation in other previous and later research projects and initiatives has shown that the xenophobic outrage that is the identity and objective situation of these tens of thousands of Portuguese Gypsies is a problem that exists on a national (and European) level, and thus urgently requires a corrective intervention Plan, also at the national level. And the delay in the appearance of such a Plan requires the mobilization of creative solutions; otherwise, everything will stay the same, or possibly become worse, in terms of inter-ethnic relations, over the next few decades.

The central Government and its branches, by perpetuating the invisibility of Gypsies and irresponsibly denying that a serious historic problem exists which requires a solution (Machado, 1994; Bastos, 1997; Bastos e Bastos, 1999; Bastos, 2007), keep 'shifting' their responsibilities upon municipalities; quite rightly, some of the latter attempt to solve the problem by implementing 'localist' solutions (some good, and some less so). Lamentably, their 'good practices' absolve the Parliament and successive Governments from constructing a phased national policy, as other countries have done, a policy able to remedy the wrongs done and to lead Portuguese Gypsies back to the same area of dignity that is expected for all Portuguese, while recognizing their right to live their culturally differentiated status.

The municipal leaders in Sintra or Coimbra, correctly or even exemplarily, became concerned, researched, attempted to solve the issue of housing, and examined the question of the economic, social, cultural, and identity strengthening of Portuguese Gypsy families. However, many other of the more than three hundred municipalities show no action deserving of the name, or could easily be singled out as the example of prolonged 'bad practices' and persistent Gypsy-phobia, rooted in the belief that in the Portuguese cultural tradition, customary 'law' and the 'will of the people' protect them.

From the juridical idiom of ‘citizenship’ as the idiom of accusation to the political idiom of recognising the consequences of the historical persecution of a minority, represented as the undesirable image of the law-breakers or ‘self-excluded’ from identity hegemonies

The gypsy-phobe language takes inspiration from the Constitution, and uses the language of citizenship in order to regularly attempt to make invisible the gypsy-phobia of a large part of the Portuguese population of all social strata. The language of citizenship uses the reciprocity between ‘rights’ and ‘duties’, in order to accuse gypsy of merely aspiring to have (cultural and economic) ‘rights’, while not fulfilling the (civic) ‘duties’ they say they observe, and opposing any form of positive discrimination, which is seen as threatening to a project of assimilative ‘integration’ (in the job market, through prolonged education) they idealize.

“The culture of gypsies is only mentioned when rights, and never duties, are the question.”
[Coordinator of Observatory 5]

“If we adopt the principle that the gypsy community deserved special attention, different from others, this is another form of discrimination. There must be no special treatment. Municipal authorities (...) must do for them what they do for all the community. I believe that such positive discrimination does not help integration either. (...) If gypsies do not abide by the same rules as we do, they will never be integrated.” [Chairman of Local Authority 5]

Thing is, in order to require each and every one of the Portuguese gypsies to ‘fulfil their civic duties’ (e.g. in itinerant trade, as demanded by Father Vaz Pinto, a former ACIME president), **the Government of Portugal must first return to them, as a cultural minority, the civic, economic, cultural, moral, and identity rights which were gradually confiscated during the five centuries of their presence in Portugal, and which have still been confiscated in the three decades of recent democracy.** The latter, through its omissions, has become an accomplice in the informal policy which promotes forced nomadism, social exclusion and marginalization, illiteracy, impoverishment, and the incarceration of vast swathes of this minority – social degradations usually attributed not to the action of many institutionally well-integrated Portuguese, but to the very ‘cultural characteristics’ of (Portuguese) gypsies who, according to the gypsy-phobes, are supposed to be the culprits for their own social degradation because “they do not cooperate with those who try to help them”.

Such a rights-and-duties language does a splendid job of hiding gypsy-phobia, forgetting the default of age-old persecutions, disproportionate to the ‘crimes’ attributed, and makes the gypsies responsible for the civilizational block which is imposed upon them. It does so by creating an unsolvable dilemma – either they are an ‘ethnic minority’, which would confirm their ‘hopeless’, ‘uncivilized’, and ‘primitive’ (and in this case, ‘nomadic’) status, closed by its blind



obedience to its own cultural law; or they aren't an ethnic minority, and they must be forced to 'fulfil the duties' imposed by the law upon all citizens.¹³

Such a civilizational discourse appears in our research (in the fourth largest municipality of the country, which contains large 'dormitory towns' for the capital), as clearly dominant among police and municipal authorities, as well as among housing, 'social security', school, and health officials who deal directly with gypsies. While they are unaware of this, such a gypsy-phobe discourse connects the great anthropological and civic ideologies of the 19th century, mixing evolutionism with 'primitivist' criminal anthropology (after Lombroso), and 'science'-based educational projects, that is, technocratic ones that closely associate school and work, hygiene and civic obedience, and possibly even religious submission to the 'authorities'.

In the discourse of the 'anthropology of the primitive peoples', so-called 'evolutionist' (because the 'whites' are supposed to have 'evolved', while the 'others' haven't, or have done so to a much lesser extent), Portuguese gypsies either do not have the preconditions to 'evolve' (they are 'primitive', 'nomadic', etc.), or 'should be treated as any other citizen'. Obviously, these two positions are logically incompatible, but gypsy-phobia feeds precisely off its unresolved and hidden discursive and ethical (emotional) contradictions.

"(...) the organization of gypsies is very much based on families, they are like clans, like those tribes there were in early gregarious societies, but different..." [President of Local Authority 5]

"Gypsies are a very free race, you know how it is... When I think of gypsies, I am always reminded of free-range chickens, and you know how we say: free range chickens will not be enclosed in a hen house." [President of Local Authority 3]

"They have a house here, one there, on in Lisbon, another in the Alentejo, yet another in the Algarve, and another in Porto, and they hop between one and the other. They are a very nomadic people, and this too makes it difficult for us to work with them." [President of Local Authority 1]

"The main problems with gypsies are connected to their cultural characteristics: trade and nomadism, their cycles." [Principal of Primary School 2, 3]

"Nowadays, gypsies are about 30 to 35% of the population our institution supports. However, these numbers may be deceiving, since this population is so variable." [Director of Community Centre 6]

"It is not all politics in the gypsy issue. After all, they do want to live this way. (...) You can't just take them and put them where you want! They have their own culture, and we have to respect that." [Chief Nurse 7]

¹³Such Durkheimian confusions were opportunely challenged by Malinowski (cf. Concluding Remarks).

The ‘primitivist’ argument is directly associated to the one that articulates the notion of civilizational lag (or exteriority to the ‘civilized’ space) with notions of aggressiveness, violence, and danger, on the one hand; and social inadaptability, delinquency, marginality, and untrustworthiness, on the other.

“Gypsies do as they please, they do not serve in the army or anything! And why is that? Because they run! The State must also be aware they are gypsies, and does not want them there, either. And they shouldn’t bend to the rules...” [Chief Nurse 7]

“It is a very unified group. And very impermeable too! They have a different culture, we are not prepared for it, and this upsets us.” [Doctor in Local Health Centre 10]

“They do not listen to us, do not open up. They always believe they are innocent, victims, and immediately become aggressive. (...) Once an old lady came here with a stick hidden beneath her skirt, and began beating up everybody. This is widespread.” [Teacher of Primary School 18]

“Since gypsies are an ethnic group that always acts as a group, as a unit, there always is tension, mistrust, and fear of conflict and that crowd reaction, which is characteristic of the culture.” [Police Chief]

“There is great mistrust on the part of the population and the police too, and they do as they please. They know that people are afraid, and take advantage of that. (...) And the Housing Department? They don’t care! They know that in our municipality, and in the other, they make demands, and raise their voices, and they end up giving in and assigning them a house (...). The problem of the gypsy community is the strategy of intimidation through which they succeed, for example, in getting several council houses in different municipalities.” [President of Local Authority 1]

“The gypsies here in Market 7, they make threats a lot when they come in, and do not pay what they owe. Once they came here, they owed and were complaining, we were very afraid they would show up with a snake, because that has happened before, they set some animals free in the municipal offices.” [Social Worker of Local Authority 9]

From the dominant point of view, as well as ‘aggressive’, gypsies are seen as social parasites who live off the State, Municipalities, and all the individuals vulnerable to their pressures or calls for compassion, and they are believed to systematically recur to lies and deception.

“Gypsies are a people who take every chance they get. Whatever they can get off municipalities, and not only municipalities, they do.” [President of Local Authority 1]

“I often say that the gypsy population is the largest real estate owner in the country! You know, they have the following strategy: they live in one municipality but, as we all know, they have family all over the country, and are all related. If they learn that a municipality has a PER rehousing programme under way, they immediately move there and camp in their trailers next to the slums, so that they too will be rehoused. And there may even be families with PER housing in several municipalities! Sometimes they are found out, others not.” [Department head of a Municipality]



"(...) something which is typical of gypsies is that, if they are to (...) receive, there they are, while if they have to pay up something, then they're gone." [Director of Community Centre 6]

"People are always complaining, but they don't act to improve their situation. And this is even more characteristic of gypsies." (Coordinator of Observatory 5]

"And they are great liars, they cover for each other, it's amazing." [Headmistress of Elementary School 8

The generalized attack on the gypsy identity is not limited to inter-ethnic relations, but also includes gender and intergenerational relations within gypsy families. Men are accused of machismo and parents of being 'bad parents', of neglecting the health of their offspring, of lacking interest in the future of their children, and not encouraging them to attend school and thereby gaining access to jobs that may guarantee them a career.

"You want to know what I think of gypsies? I never saw a more reactionary and chauvinist community! The men are terrible to their women. (...) They don't go to school, and won't let the women study either (...) to keep them from becoming superior to them. Now, is that right? This is why gypsies are uneducated; it is mostly their own fault, the men's in particular." *"You know how it is, gypsies have their own way of life and culture. If, for example, I should get the crazy idea of 'hanging out' with a gypsy woman, woe to her, right? At least this is what they say of gypsies..."* [President of Local Authority 3]

"(...) they saw some kids kissing and took their daughters away from here. (...) their patriarch is very rigid. (...) His daughter was promised in marriage, and at 16 rejected her fiancé. The father was really angry, and she was cut off by the family and forbidden from taking part in after-school activities at our association." [President of Cultural Association 10]

"Gypsy women have babies very young because they have no family planning, and at times you notice they neglect their children a bit..." [Nurse of Local Health Centre 10]

"Those who are rich (...) they don't care, they don't want more for their children, an education, a career." [Doctor at Local Health Centre 10]

"Gypsy children miss a lot of days, and it's also terrible because you can't do anything with them, they are awful, and have no interest at all in school..." [Coordinator of Elementary School 8]

The logical consequences of the above sequence seem paradoxical, since it only includes two contradictory extremes: either because they are culturally different ('primitive', 'nomadic', etc.), gypsies must be left to their own devices, out of 'respect' for their essentialized cultural difference; or they must be forced 'with an iron fist' to submit to the same rules that apply to the whole 'community', with no positive discrimination, in order to force their 'integration'.

“There must be no special treatment. What the Municipality needs to do for them is what it needs to do for the whole community. (...) I believe that we must do all in our power to integrate gypsies in the community, without giving them any primacy. If gypsies do not abide by the same rules as we do, they will never become integrated. (...) The State must not abdicate its social responsibilities to gypsies. (...) It must use an iron fist in the face of school abandonment, and not turn the other way as it often seems to happen.” [President of Local Authority 5]

Gypsies – seen as a homogeneous entity – constantly draw the short straw in their comparison with the idealized ‘national community’ (supposedly hard-working, peaceful, healthy, compliant, etc.) which is also seen as a homogeneous positive, despite all known and obvious exceptions. However, this **accusatory discourse** is not the only one on gypsies. As happens in the cases of figure-background inversion studied by Gestalt psychologists, there currently is another representation, whose premises and conclusions are very different, as already happened over the centuries of ethnocide persecution. This is a **discourse that represents gypsies as systematically persecuted, and therefore having developed a survival culture**. All that to others appears as ‘primitive’ is now read as ‘defensive’, as a function of the actions of the gypsy-phobic majority.

“The way of life of this people must be understood (...) they have a relation to the surrounding space that is different from other people. A house only serves to sleep in, and everything else is done outside. (...) What happens with gypsies is that they need to have an escape route, because despite everything they have been much persecuted.” [President of Local Authority 5]

“Gypsies could not stay there, near X, because people there immediately attempted to remove them. There used to be many gypsies in that area, but with Expo ’98 they were evicted. Now, occasionally a few will show up, an old man who camps there for a few days, but the Municipality immediately has them move on.” [Teacher at Primary School 1]

“These people are full of mistrust, and when one calls their kids ‘meninos’ (a respectful form of address for boys), they say: “Oh, so my son is ‘menino’ too? And they are happy because we have to treat them as equals.” [Teacher at Primary School 2]

On the other hand, there are those who perceive that some of the accusations levelled at gypsies in general, are not specific to them, as the same problems also exist in large strata of the Portuguese population at large.

“Many of the problems are linked to the gypsy community, but they are general; this has nothing to do with gypsies, there are many Portuguese who are dependent on welfare payments.” [Coordinator of Observatory 5]



“They do not want their women to take the pill because they do not want to give the woman the power of not conceiving. But this doesn’t just happen with gypsies...” [Social worker 10]

Despite the systematic suspicion and rejection of gypsy adults and children by the majority of the population and school mates, the data recorded do not seem to confirm the accusations that are levelled at them.

“The police always see gypsies as those who don’t pay their taxes, and got their Levi’s jeans ‘off the back of a truck’ and stuff like that. And often that’s not true.” [President of Local Authority 3]

“I have come across gypsies who want to work, and no longer want to be stallholders in markets. Just the other day, I was talking to a gypsy woman who told me, ‘You know, I’m no fool, I have a teachers’ assistant diploma, but since I’m a gypsy, no one will employ me!’ And it’s true, no one will employ a gypsy.” [Social worker 3]

“Their race is printed on their faces. They go looking for a job, and the employer will say, ‘Gypsies? No thanks!’ And then we have trouble stimulating the young, because they see these cases and say, ‘Look, so-and-so studied and cannot get a job anywhere, so why should I study?’” [President of Local Authority 6]

“Some non-gypsy kids threw stones at the gypsies who walked up to the school fence. They were doing no harm, but the others reacted immediately, just because they were gypsies.” [Teacher of Primary School 8]

“A gypsy may even be armed, but usually not because he wants to steal, rob, or anything like that. It’s more to defend himself in the case of a settling of scores. We have had 40 people in preventive custody over the past year and a half, and I can state that not one of them was a gypsy.” [Police Chief]

“There has never been any trouble with gypsies (here)...” [President of Local Authority 5]

From this perspective, there is an inversion of the accusation made by the majority, and the gypsies are pictured as very attentive parents, both in their health care and in some cases, perceived as less common, in the academic support of their children. Their children are seen as smart and quick-witted, and they become friendly with their teachers. According to this viewpoint, and especially as far as healthcare is concerned, gypsy parents appear as not merely careful but – in comparison with those of other ethnicities – exemplary.

“(...) they are very attentive to their children, and not just the mothers but the fathers too are very interested in their children from birth.” [Nurse in Local Health Centre 3]

“The involvement of the father in their offspring’s medical examinations is quite different from that of other ethnicities, and that’s great. The father is very interested in the health and well-being of the child. They are very concerned and active fathers. If, on a rare occasion, the

father can't come, the mother will come with her mother-in-law." [Doctor of Local Health Centre 8]

"There is a little gypsy girl in this school, whose parents are really involved in her school performance, they encourage her to study, they verify her attendance register, and show great interest in her and really count on her succeeding." [President of the School Council of Primary School 11]

"My gypsy students are very different from other gypsies. Their mother is very concerned with the education of their daughters, and they always come to school very clean and well-dressed." [Headmistress of Primary School 3]

"The families of these [two] students are both very rich, they bought expensive split-level apartments! One sells shoes, the other carpets. They are very well-educated people, and the parents have always shown great interest." [Teacher at Primary School 13]

"One of the problems of gypsies is their low educational level, but they are very intelligent and quick-witted. They are very good at maths." [Coordinator of Community Centre 8]

"I regret that there are no gypsy children in this school, or in this school district, and I've been here for 20 years. Because in the school where I was before, I had gypsy students, and with them, you make friends for life! I mean, consider how many years have passed, and if they pass me by on the street, to this day, they say hello and make a fuss about me." [Teacher at Primary School 8]

Having taken note that their behaviour is reactive to the traumatic persecutions that always have and still do target them, namely in hindering their access to the job market, even when they are qualified; having recorded the existence of internal differentiation and cultural change under way; having discovered their positive and even exemplary characteristics; the conclusions that are reached are exactly the opposite of those of the accusatory and repressive line. Given certain cultural characteristics that may be explained by the persecution itself, as is the case with early school abandonment, it would be important to develop a number of programmes targeted at gypsies, something that does not currently happen.

"We don't have any specific current or future programme to work with the gypsy community here (...) I believe it would be important to devise some programmes targeted at them." [Psychologist of Local Authority 2]



Returning to the issue at hand: what do the ‘other Europeans’ have to offer to ‘European Gypsies’ other than invisibility, accusations, persecution, and a lowering of their identity?

In economic terms, ending forced¹⁴ ‘nomadism’ and the fixed camp sites inhabited by approximately a hundred families who anxiously await rehousing, as promised by the municipal authorities – sometimes decades ago, or which seems ever out of reach¹⁵ – is viable for any State budget, and does not pose great problems; what seems to be lacking is the political will to act in this direction, given the widespread gypsy-phobia. The same gypsy-phobia also explains the passive resistance of Western European governments in the matter of attributing gypsies in each of their countries the statute of ethnic minority, thus enabling them to gain access to representation, both at the national and municipal level in the areas where they are highly concentrated.

A possible political way to overcome gypsy-phobia could lead to the creation of a National Advocate [Ombudsman] for Gypsies, who could receive and follow grounded complaints of institutional and popular gypsy-phobia, a function ACIDI seems to have abandoned, if it did ever perform it. Another solution could be the creation of a Foundation with State and private patronage which, similarly to the Gandhi Foundation in Hungary or the Foundation Secretariado Gitano, could promote and coordinate the project of positive discrimination of Portuguese gypsies on the basis of ‘private initiative’, thus overcoming the oppressive question of historical irrationality.

Finally, and in the absence of any other option, there is the possibility of turning to national courts and/or the European Court of Human Rights; however, the passivity of Europeans in matters of the law, and the absence of a gypsy lobby as a consequence of the gypsy strategy of dissemination of Honour, which aims to avoid inequality in conflicts, makes this last strategy relatively unreal.

The idea that a specific State (or European) programme should aim to the non-assimilative reintegration of European gypsies, compensating them of the persecution and the moral and material damage they have suffered, promoting a period of positive discrimination, enters into constant conflict with the perception that any Government or Municipality that were to attempt it would be committing political suicide.

“You know what happened in my vilage? 99.9% of the people had voted for the Communist party for generations. The Mayor found housing for the gypsy families who lived

¹⁴ Always, and when it is ‘forced’; we have yet to detect a gypsy family whose greatest wish isn’t that the police would stop the persecution imposed by local authorities, and that “they be given a little house” where to stay, or one who prefers that the State waste money building ‘Nomad Sites’ around the country.

¹⁵ Given the way in which they are forced to leave the territory of a given municipality within 24 or 48 hours, even when the private owners of the land where they are camping have authorized them to do so.

on a campsite, and in the following elections, the Communist party lost.” (Lisbon taxi driver, 2008)

In such a perspective, those who act according to a non-gypsy-phobe perspective are faced with the same kind of social punishment that we saw applied in 1649 against those who sheltered or protected gypsies; a persistent dynamics (insensitive to the differences between an absolute monarchy and democracy) seems to be producing identical results in very different ‘contexts’, due to a causality that is made invisible and thus goes uncontrolled and ignored.

The historical situation is paradoxical. The Government cannot currently correct accumulated errors, and repair the crimes committed because, due to a **persistent policy of invisibilization of these errors and crimes**, either it is not aware of them, or it is unable to recognize them as historical errors, because such an admission would clash with their vision of ‘their’ civilization, or they suppose that the majority of the population would reject such an identity volte-face. This explains the persistence of **an oscillation between the policy of invisibilization, and the tactic of ignorance, when necessary coupled with the strategy of accusation of the victims**, usually left to municipal councillors and the middle management of ‘welfare’ institutions. These middle management figures themselves live a paradoxical situation, desperate in the face of the resistance they encounter when they scotomize the underlying motivations to the ‘calling to trade’ of gypsies and fail in the attempt to convert their families to the ‘work ethic’, because they are aware that the *de facto* job market excludes gypsies, even when they attend the training courses required by RSI, and will continue to exclude them no matter how many courses they complete, given **the complicity of the State and the Catholic Church in disguising the situation and its moral and juridical responsibilities**.¹⁶

According to Roman legislation, “ignorance of law benefits no one”; however, this is a case whence the ignorance of the crime benefits identitarily the legislators and the ‘worshippers of the laws’ as applied to others, who are essentialized as ‘naturally criminal’, that is, ‘outside the law’.

In a small part, this is due to the actual ignorance on the part of Governments and populations regarding the infernal history to which European gypsies were subjected for centuries and up to the present; but this very ‘ignorance’ is cultivated through the invisibilization, by historians,

¹⁶ Currently (since March 2008) and for the first time, the Portuguese Parliament is promoting a public audition on the situation of Portuguese gypsies. Gypsies, social services officials, and teachers repeatedly presented cases of social exclusion in the job market (with the refusal to employ gypsies) and in the school system (with the promotion of school apartheid); however, whenever the members of the Parliament felt it their duty to submit these infraction to a court of law, the result is not action, but the production of a Report that could come to be examined by Parliament. A first report ordered by the Government (1998) and the creation of a Work Group on Gypsies, constituted by social services officials of different Departments, has been ignored and changed almost nothing.



politicians, and the clergy¹⁷, of the criminal dimension of this 'legalized' history, since it becomes almost impossible to reconcile high ideals and the lofty collective self-image with the acts perpetrated during 'modern times'. Such persistent violence is not scotomized 'at random'. It makes it possible to understand that Nazi violence was not a single, locally isolated event in the history of 'Western civilization'; rather, it has long-reaching roots in the history of Europe, is part and parcel of the construction of the 'superior' identity of the 'white race', exists in its latent state in Europe today (violent sterilization, attacks with Molotov's cocktails and guns, etc.), and emerges with increased violence each time that the political-identitary dynamics, and/or an economic crisis, threaten white pride and give it a chance to thrive.

Concluding remarks

In this article, we focused upon the relevance of identity processes and dynamics in the analysis of an historical case of inter-ethnic relations marked by the violence and criminality of a project of extermination that can oscillate between genocide, marginalization and administrative 'governance' of an ethnic minority resisting undesired assimilation.

On the philosophical-scientific side, this means that the elitist discursive side of 'superiority' legitimation, Positivist and Empiricist ideals of 'Rationality' and 'Objectivation', have for far too long justified the exclusion of psychology and subjectivity (i.e., identity-based motivation) from the space of social sciences and led to the babelization of disciplinary discourses disputing the ultimate explanation of human (anti)social behaviour, using fragmentation, hierarchization and reduction as epistemological tools.

At the same time, modern social sciences have become dependent on Durkheimian confusions about the 'mechanicistic' relations of 'primitives' with cultural Law¹⁸; Malinowski tried to dissolve these confusions, albeit by proposing new ones of his own¹⁹. However, he did

¹⁷ "Portuguese Bishops never spoke out and you can resign yourself, because they will never speak about the situation of Portuguese gypsies", was the public answer of the President of the Pastoral dos Ciganos, the department of the Catholic Church intended to work with gypsies, in the Meeting in Fátima (2007)

¹⁸ Malinowski criticized Durkheim, calling attention to different fundamental aspects of the identitary contradiction of 'Whites', namely, the pseudo-scientific contradiction that attributed a 'mechanical' obedience to collective Law to the 'primitives', while in loco observation showed the exact opposite: "Whenever the native can evade his obligations without the loss of prestige, or without the prospective loss of gain, he does so, exactly as a civilized business man would do. Take the real savage, keen on evading his duties, swaggering and boastful when he has fulfilled them, and compare him to the anthropologist's dummy who slavishly follows custom and automatically obeys every regulation. There is not the remotest resemblance between the teachings of anthropology on this subject and the reality of native life." (2002 [1926]: 31).

¹⁹ The criticism of Durkheimian confusions did not avoid the appearance of the Malinowskian confusions which we encounter today in the discourse of social welfare 'officials': "The man who would persistently disobey the rulings of law in his economic dealings would soon find himself outside social and economic order – and he is perfectly well aware of it. Test cases are supplied nowadays, when a number of

acknowledge for the first time the narcissistic project of (his) anthropology and how the ‘civilizational’ discourse of white men came to be seen as untrustworthy and dangerous to international / interethnic relations.²⁰

In recent years, Scheff proposed a new theory of emotions and identity, one of ‘social integration’, based upon the dynamics of pride and shame, supporting the integrative view that “the emotions are the psychological sides of social relations, just as relationships are the social aspects of emotions” (Scheff, in Calhoun, 1996: 298). In operational terms, Scheff introduced the concept of the “infernal machine” to define the dynamics of “unacknowledged shame” (Lewis, 1971) which becomes the “the fuel for an infernal machine, an insult-retaliation motor that can run forever” (idem: 288). Although Scheff’s central historical focus is the Holocaust, as suffered by Jews, Gypsies were also affected by the European project of extinction of minorities without State (by assimilation or genocide)²¹, and we therefore wish to propose that the systematic persecution of gypsies in ‘Rational, Christian and Humanistic’ Europe is a self-inducer of unacknowledged shame based upon the contradictions of White destructive identity pulsions, and the refusal to

natives through laziness, eccentricity, or a non-conforming spirit of enterprise, have chosen to ignore the obligations of their status and have become automatically outcasts and hangers-on to some white man or other. The honourable citizen is bound to carry out his duties, though his submission is not due to any instinct or intuitive impulse or mysterious ‘group sentiment’, but to the detailed and elaborate working of a system, in which every act has its place and must be performed without fail.” (Crime and Custom in Savage Society, Routledge & Kegan Paul: 41-2).

²⁰ Malinowski is clear in his observation that the scientific project of colonial anthropology was a narcissistic project at the service of the ‘white race’, which made ‘promises’ to “other races and other peoples”, which had “not been redeemed”: “The missionary spirit in its crudest form will have to be modified, at least. Nationalism, in the sense of a conservative reaction and the recognition of the integral value of its own culture by each nation, is spreading like wildfire all over the world. We, the members of the white race, are primarily responsible for that, and we have been giving our religion, our education, and many other spiritual boons to other races and other peoples, with an implied promise that once they accept our civilization they will become our equals. This promise has not been redeemed. We are beginning now to see how dangerous it is to speak about the white man’s burden, and to make others shoulder it and carry it for us. We give all the promises implied in our concept of human brotherhood and of equality through education, but when it comes to wealth, power, and self-determination we refuse this to other people.” (2001 [1943]: 219).

However, Malinowski was unable to take a step forward in the direction of the theory of identity processes, already inaugurated by Sumner (1906), continued by Benedict (1934), and later developed by Erikson (1950, 1969), Leach (1967), and Barth (1969, 1998). This anthropological theory articulates ethnocentrism with inter-ethnic relations, and the compulsion towards cultural differentiation, to the expense of the peoples it supposedly wished to study or promote to a status of fraternal equality: “Though it may be given to us for a moment to enter in the soul of a savage and through his eyes to look at the outer world and feel ourselves what it must feel to him to be itself – yet our final goal is to enrich and deepen our own world’s vision, to understand our own nature and to make it finer, intellectually and artistically.” (1922 [1972]: 517-518)

²¹ To understand the ‘scientific’ indifference towards the genocide of Nations without State, the academic discourse of Lévi-Strauss [1959-60] acquires particular significance; he was commenting on the rapid extinction of dozens of ‘primitive’ languages and tribes in Amazonia and of 80% of the ‘aborigines’ in Australia, something that concerned his ‘scientific’ ethos, demanding more field work to collect anthropological information while witnessing the ‘disappearance’ of the last ‘primitives’, or the conversion of indigenes into indigènes (Lévi-Strauss, 1984: 19-36).



acknowledge the unquenchable pride of gypsies who endure their suffering, supporting the apparent passive resignation of gypsies and their absence of retaliation along the last centuries.

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