

# Visions of Esmeralda Lock: Epistemic Injustice, ‘The Gypsy Woman’, and Gypsilorism

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Dr Kenneth Lee was born of a Romani father and a gaji Irish mother. He completed his first degree at the University of Liverpool, then emigrated to Australia, completing Master’s and PhD degrees there. He taught first in the Department of Geography at the University of Newcastle, New South Wales, Australia, then the Department of Sociology and Anthropology. He is a curable Romantic who does not look like a Gypsy.



## Abstract

Using a combination of Jodie Matthews' concepts of "The Gypsy Woman" as a product of successive trans-historical encounters (actual, literary, or visual) between Gypsy subject and non-Gypsy audience, formal Archival sources in the Scott MacFie Gypsy Collection at the University of Liverpool, Foucaultian *archives* of subjugated knowledges, and Miranda Fricker's approaches to epistemic injustices, this article examines the life-narrative of a Romani woman, Esmeralda Lock, and her changing relationship with her Gypsiorist interlocutors over 70 years of her life. Following the example of Laura Ann Stoler, "factual stories" in Esmeralda's life that re-affirm Gypsiorist fictions are also examined. Esmeralda was unique in that she was literate, and hence able to leave a small but important trail of correspondence spanning 62 years (including a hitherto unknown sketch and commentary) enabling a challenge to Gypsiorist (mis)representations of her life. Her correspondence also allows her changing epistemic value of Gypsiorists to be traced. Further analyses of epistemic injustices may offer new dimensions to understanding and explaining not just the construction of subordinating discourses but also the mechanisms of Romani epistemic suppression.

## Keywords

- Archive
- Epistemic injustice
- Esmeralda Lock
- Gypsiorism
- 'The Gypsy Woman'

## Introduction: The Force of Encounter and Stored Epistemic Injustices

In *The Gypsy Woman: Representations in Literature and Visual Culture*, Jodie Matthews (2018) argues that each trans-historical encounter (actual, literary, or visual) between Gypsy subject and non-Gypsy audience creates a friction that generates an opportunity to revisit and renegotiate the discursive and epistemic positioning of each encounter. This then allows interrogations of the epistemic imbalance implicit in the forces or frictions of such encounters. Hence, "... *different encounters open out on to each other*", producing resonant cultural effects (Matthews 2018, 9, emphasis added). Examining encounters with the fictional Gypsy figure across time and space trans-historically, enables us to understand how particular Gypsy stereotypes are "marked out through particular spaces, bodies and terrains of knowledge" (Matthews 2018, 189).

In her ground-breaking work, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, Miranda Fricker identified two types of epistemic injustice: testimonial, which occurs when "prejudice causes a hearer to give a deflated level of credibility to a speaker's word" (Fricker 2007, 1), and hermeneutical, which occurs because "the powerful have an unfair advantage in structuring collective social understandings" (Fricker 2007, 147). Hence, testimonial epistemic injustice is often an individual manifestation of deeper hermeneutical structural prejudice, and both types always indicate an asymmetrical epistemic relationship between dominant and subordinated individuals and groups. An example of one such dominant group, the Gypsolorists, studied Gypsies. In a broad sense, the term covers anyone who wrote about Gypsies; in a narrower sense, it could be restricted to those who were members of the Gypsy Lore Society (GLS) who wrote in the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society (JGLS)* founded in 1888. The GLS operated from 1888–1892 and was revived again in 1907, primarily through the work of Robert Andrew Scott MacFie, a wealthy sugar refiner who had developed an interest in Gypsies and financed the new Society. He was treasurer, secretary, and editor of *JGLS* until 1914, when he enlisted in the military. The GLS struggled on but ceased in 1919. After the war, MacFie retired in ill-health. The GLS was revived once again in 1922 by a large donation from William Ferguson, a wealthy cotton spinner, and continued until 1978.

Much of the work of English Gypsolorists was based on the recording, collection, and storage of dialects, customs, and cultures assumed to be degenerating and vanishing. They were particularly interested in kinship linkages and genealogies (which they called "pedigrees"), assuming that purity of descent and blood would produce quality information. This process was labelled 'salvage ethnography' by anthropologist Franz Boas, who argued that "... future generations will owe a debt of gratitude to him who enables us to preserve this knowledge, which, without an effort on the part of our own generation will be lost forever" (Boas, cited in Elliott 2002, 10). The first issue of the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* in 1888 aimed explicitly for a salvage ethnography for Gypsies as subjects, assuming their "race" and culture would soon disappear, writing that "... we trust to preserve much information that might otherwise perish" (The Editors 1888, 2). Gypsolorism thus developed as a site of both types of epistemic injustice.

In an interview, Fricker argued for an extension of her work, pleading for “more empirical work on how prejudice affects attributions of credibility” and “examination of the *dysfunctional* case from the point of view of those who are at the losing end” (Dieleman 2012, 256, Fricker’s emphasis). This article attempts such an empirical work by following the life narrative of a Romani woman, Esmeralda Lock (1854–1939), which shows the point of view of someone on the losing end.

The Locks were a Romani family who travelled in North Wales and along the English and Welsh border, the men horse trading, basket weaving, and knife grinding, the women fortunetelling and hawking. Ethnographic writings produced by Gypsilorists about Esmeralda inevitably involve asymmetric epistemic resources, which necessarily creates epistemological duplicity, thus creating both types of epistemic injustice. Traces of this duplicity are made concrete in scholarly articles and books, and especially in formal archives, thereby creating active sites of knowledge production and loci of stored epistemic injustice.

Foucault’s *Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972) is central to examining such forms of epistemic injustice. He argued that there were two types of archive, the formal Archive (always with a capital A and a standard font), comprising official government records, major libraries and universities, and other accessible sources such as books, magazines, and newspapers. In these “factual sources” were to be found the epistemic biases that generated particular views of Gypsies. In contrast, the *archive* (always with lower case and italic font) comprised biased selections, omissions, and subjugated knowledges, material deemed unsuitable that could have been preserved but was not.

By examining a series of *gaje*-mediated Archival sources about Esmeralda’s life from 1873 to 1963 a series of epistemic biases are revealed. However, there is a counter-narrative generated by correspondence from Esmeralda from the 1890s to 1938. Here, the formal Archives consulted are housed at the University of Liverpool, and “... comprise two separate but interrelated sections: the Gypsy Lore Society Archive and the Scott MacFie Gypsy Collections” (SMGC) (Hooper 2004, 21) which were “... to be kept intact for all time as a reference library for gypsy students throughout the world.”<sup>[1]</sup> Additional resources were found in the British Newspaper Archive<sup>[2]</sup> and Welsh Newspapers Online.<sup>[3]</sup> Although there are considerable inevitable omissions in the formal Archives of the SMGC, it is the most comprehensive record of Gypsilorism that exists, and is an essential source for postcolonial critique. The SMGC houses the majority of Esmeralda’s correspondence and acts as a crucial source of information about Esmeralda.

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1 See Yates 1953. Details of the Scott MacFie Gypsy Collection are available online: <https://sca-archives.liverpool.ac.uk/Record/71235> The copyright of SMGC material cited here is held by the Special Collections and Archives of the University of Liverpool Library and is reproduced with permission. Their cataloguing system is used in referencing their material.

2 Available online: <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk>.

3 Available online: <https://newspapers.library.wales>.

## The Evolution of Gypsiorism

Heinrich Grellmann's *A Dissertation on the Gypsies* (1873) presented the first systematic analysis of Romani people in Europe, and thus played a pivotal role in the expansion of Gypsy studies in the nineteenth century. English editions of Grellmann were published in 1787 and 1807. Many books about Gypsies in England subsequently were published, including works by John Hoyland (*A Historical Survey of the Customs, Habits, & Present State of the Gypsies* 1816); James Crabb (*The Gypsies' Advocate* 1832); George Borrow (*Lavengro* 1851, *The Romany Rye* 1857, *Wild Wales* 1862, *Romano lavo-lil* 1874); Bath C Smart (*The Dialect of the English Gypsies* 1863); Bath C Smart and Henry Thomas Crofton (*The Dialect of the English Gypsies, 2d Edition* 1875); Charles Godfrey Leland (*The Gypsies* 1882, *The English Gypsies and Their Language* 1873, *Gypsy Sorcery and Fortune-telling* 1891), Leland (first president of the GLS) and Walter Simson (*A History of the Gypsies: With Specimens of the Gypsy Language* 1865). There were also many works of fiction, newspaper, and magazine articles about Gypsies, including *In Gypsy Tents* from 1881 by Francis Hindes Groome, Esmeralda's second husband. Although George Borrow died before the GLS was founded, his books on English Gypsies became the introduction to Gypsiorism for many people and made him a crucial figure in its expansion. Importantly, Borrow introduced the concept of the *Romani Rai* (or *Rani*, if female), a non-Romani who claimed acceptance by Romani people, and thus access to their culture and language, thereby creating a role as a mediator who conveyed their intimate knowledge of Romani people to other *gaje* (non-Romani people). The *Rai/Rani* thus became literally an embodied creator of the documents and duplicitous Archives that maintain epistemic injustice. Epistemic imbalance between the *Rais* and their Romani informants was thus fundamental to Gypsiorist activities. Esmeralda Lock knew this, stating that "... All *Rais*, [...] are FISHERS, and if it's not words or tales, they're after, it's something else!" (Griffiths and Yates 1934, 61, capitals in original). Following Borrow, many other Gypsiorists sought *Rai* status, including Hubert Smith, (Esmeralda's first husband), Francis Hindes Groome (Esmeralda's second husband), and Charles Godfrey Leland, all of whom knew Borrow, and all of whom had written books about Gypsies prior to the formation of the GLS. With the formation of the Gypsy Lore Society in 1888, the quest for *Rai* status widened. Associating with Esmeralda was one way to enhance *Rai* status.

Building on Matthews' analysis of the Gypsy woman in art and literature, this article traces the frictions and forces of Esmeralda's real-life encounters. Her life narrative is a clear dysfunctional case, revealing her location at the losing end of evolving epistemic injustices, both testimonial and hermeneutical. Esmeralda is best known for having married two Gypsiorists and was also claimed as a Romani *Phen* (sister) by a third. Most of Esmeralda's life involved encounters with Gypsiorists, who selectively (mis)represented her voice, a situation made possible by the structurally prejudiced assumption that Romanies were non-literate. For example, in a whimsical self-published pamphlet, Scott Macfie wrote "... I venture to dedicate it to you, my oldest Gypsy friend, in the hope – *nay, with the sure conviction* – that you will never read a word of it" (MacFie 1909, 1, emphasis added). Unusually for a Romani woman, Esmeralda became literate in 1876 and was able to generate correspondence, creating through each of her letters a point of friction that allows deeper analysis of her relationship to her Gypsiorist interlocutors, thereby developing a fragmented counter-narrative which reduces the asymmetric epistemic relationship between her and Gypsiorists.

Esmeralda's relationships with Gypsiorists produced an intricate network that spanned over seventy years. To clarify this complex web, table 1 shows a timeline of Esmeralda's life and the main Gypsiorists involved with her, as well as the operation of the GLS.

Table 1.  
Timelines of Esmeralda, Smith, and Groome, and GLS/JGLS

Year	Esmeralda Lock – born 1854.	Hubert Smith –born 1822. Esmeralda's first husband.	Francis Hindes Groome – born 1851. Esmeralda's second husband	Dora Esther Yates – born 1879. Esmeralda's 'Romani sister'.	Status of GLS and JGLS
Pre 1870	Esmeralda and her family camp on Hubert Smith's land.	Town Clerk of Bridgnorth. Shows interest in Gypsies. Lock family allowed to camp on his land.	Begins collecting Romani vocabulary and dialect.		
1870	1 <sup>st</sup> trip to Norway	1 <sup>st</sup> trip to Norway	Starts study at Oxford		
1871	2 <sup>nd</sup> trip to Norway	2 <sup>nd</sup> trip to Norway	Continues collecting Romanes.		
1872			Elopes with Britti Lee, a married Romani woman. His family settle his debts and bring him home.		
1873		1 <sup>st</sup> edition of <i>Tent Life with English Gypsies in Norway</i>	Returns to Oxford but drops out. Travels in Europe. Collects Romani dialects.		
1874	Esmeralda sent to Norway.	2 <sup>nd</sup> edition of <i>Tent Life</i> . Hubert follows Esmeralda to Norway. They marry there in August then return to Bridgnorth.	Travels in Europe, returns in July to teach in Bath. Visits Smith at Christmas, starts (?) affair with Esmeralda		
1875	Esmeralda and Groome elope to Germany, they return to Edinburgh	Petitions for divorce on grounds of adultery.	In Edinburgh, Groome works as clerk.		
1876	Esmeralda marries Groome under Scottish law on 20 November.	Divorce heard: multiple newspaper accounts published. Divorce granted on 7 November.	Groome works as clerk and editor.		

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1881	Recorded as Groome's wife in Census.		<i>In Gypsy Tents</i> published.		
1888			Co-editor of <i>JGLS</i> 1888– 1892.		GLS founded. Funded by Da- vid MacRitchie.
1891	? Esmeralda and Groome already separated.		Another woman is re- corded as Groome's wife.		
1892					GLS and <i>JGLS</i> cease.
1895	Returns to her family. Friction with her relatives and other Ro- manies.		Continues to work as editor/writer.		
1899			<i>Gypsy Folk Tales</i> published.		
1900				Graduates MA Univer- sity College, Liverpool.	
1902			Groome dies.		
1907					GLS revived. Funded by Scott MacFie. <i>JGLS</i> published 1907–1919.
1911	Travelling and co-habiting with a <i>gajo</i> traveller. Visited by <i>Rais</i> , meets Dora Yates.	Hubert Smith dies.		Meets Esmeralda.	
1914	Ceases travelling. Sedentary, living in a wagon in Prestatyn, a coast- al holiday resort in North Wales. Remains there until her death.				

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1919					<i>JGLS</i> ceases publication.
1922				Dora Honorary Secretary of GLS.	GLS revived. Funded by William Ferguson. <i>JGLS</i> resumes publication.
1924	70 years old – eligible for old- age pension.				
1931				Appointed curator of John Sampson's literary estate.	
1935				Scott MacFie dies. His collection passed to Dora Yates, who in turn donates it to the University of Liverpool. Becomes SMGC.	
1938	GLS Jubilee Din- ner. Esmeralda excluded by Ithal Lee and Dora Yates.				
1922				Dora Honorary Secretary of GLS.	GLS revived. Funded by William Ferguson. <i>JGLS</i> resumes publication.
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1938	GLS Jubilee Dinner. Esmeralda excluded by Ithal Lee and Dora Yates.				
1939	Run over by a bus in Prestatyn; dies in Rhyl Hospital. Buried in Rhyl.				
1945				Appointed Cura- tor of the SMGC.	
1953				<i>My Gypsy Days</i> published. The chapter "My Romani Sisters" discusses Esmeralda.	
1963	Morley Tonkin, a Bridgnorth journalist writes an article about Esmeralda in <i>The Shropshire Magazine</i> .				
1974				Dora Yates dies.	
1978					GLS ends in England. JGLS ceases publication. USA Chapter of GLS continues.

## Affirming Fictions through Factual Stories

When examining Archives as sites of epistemic injustice, Stoler argues: “The task is less to distinguish fiction from fact than to track the production and consumption of those ‘facts’ themselves” (Stoler 2002, 91). She further argues that “*It was in factual stories that the colonial state affirmed its fictions to itself ...*” by being recorded in the epistemically privileged Archive, thereby producing mediated (mis)representations that suppressed potential contributions to knowledge-making (Stoler 2002, 97–98, emphasis added).

Hubert Smith was a solicitor, Town Clerk of Bridgnorth in Shropshire (which borders Wales), a mountaineer, traveller, militiaman, and guitar player. Like many Gypsiorists, he had become interested in Gypsies after reading George Borrow and encouraged the Lock family, who travelled in the area, to camp on his estate.

Hubert Smith’s *Tent Life with English Gipsies in Norway* (1873) was an account of his travels with Esmeralda and two of her brothers, in which Smith noted Esmeralda’s stereotypical “Gypsy naturalness” with her “...eyes full of fathomless fire [that] sparkled with merriment and witchery...” (Smith 1873, 10). He recorded a highly sexualised male gaze, describing the simultaneous figure-hugging and revealing nature of Esmeralda’s clothing, closely mimicking Victor Hugo’s fictional Esmeralda: “... the bodice was rather close fitting – scarcely room enough for development. [...] the dress was so made so that it seemed quite tight all the way down [...] There was no concealment of legs” (Smith 1873, 69–70). Later, imagining that Esmeralda had kissed him, Smith’s male gaze shifted to erotic fantasy: “Silently she gave us a chuma (gip. kiss). [...] We dismissed it as the chimera of a forest dream. We had forgotten it; yet it is upon our notes, and so it is left” (Smith 1873, 220–221).

Whilst fuelling Smith’s voyeuristic fantasies, Esmeralda was also relegated to the subordinate domestic sphere, where she “... would do all the cooking and undertake the arrangements of the tent ...” (Smith 1873, 9). She also cleaned Smith’s boots, brushed his clothes, and washed his garments, whilst he lounged by the tents. Her performative values as singer and dancer were also exploited by Smith, as Esmeralda played her tambourine and sang to accompany his guitar and her brother’s fiddle on the voyage to Norway. Most of the illustrations of Esmeralda in Smith’s book show her carrying a tambourine (see figure 1).

Following his male gaze and erotic fantasy, the final engraving in Smith’s book shows him grasping Esmeralda as his prize, removing her from her Romani family and culture (see figure 1).

After returning to England, Smith’s erotic fantasy became reality, when he and Esmeralda again returned to Norway and were married there in July 1874. Their short-lived abusive marriage ended in late 1874 or early 1875. In a letter to John Sampson, university librarian at the University of Liverpool, a prominent Gypsiorist and collector of the pure (sic) Welsh Romani dialect, Esmeralda confirmed details of this coerced and abusive marriage: “Things got from bad to worse when one day he [Smith] told me there was a romney rie [Romani *Rai*] coming to stay the [C]hristmas with us ...” (GLS C 8. 40). The ‘romney rie’ was Francis Hindes Groome, a young Gypsiorist, Oxford University drop-out and avid collector of Romani dialects and folk tales, who later featured in Esmeralda’s life. Although initially impressed by Esmeralda’s Romani language, Groome and Esmeralda soon began an adulterous affair, cuckolding Smith in his own house.



Figure 1. Hubert Smith claims his prize – Esmeralda and her tambourine (Smith 1873, 515).

In his quest for *Rai* status, Groome, when a student at Oxford, eloped in 1872 with a married Romani woman, Britannia Lee, spending almost five months travelling in England with her, even changing his name to Francis Lee. In October of 1872 his family settled his debts and made him return to the family home in Suffolk and to his original name. His *Rai*-hood quest continued when Groome and Esmeralda eloped to Germany in early 1875. Smith immediately began divorce proceedings. Later that year Esmeralda and Groome returned to live in Edinburgh. The divorce from Smith was made absolute on 7 November 1876, and on 20 November 1876, Esmeralda and Groome were married under Scottish law.

## A Remarkable Divorce Case

*A Remarkable Divorce Case* (or sometimes *A Romantic Divorce Suit*) was the headline in many newspapers (metropolitan, regional, and local, both in Britain and overseas) reporting on Smith's petition for divorce in May 1876. Although discussion of the entire proceedings is beyond the scope of this article, several salient points can be made. First, the reports of divorce proceedings vividly illustrate what Fricker calls "situated hermeneutical inequality", whereby the newspaper reports placed Esmeralda in a subordinate epistemic position, unable to counter media accounts of her behaviour (Fricker 2008, 70). Second, many Gypsiorlists knew of Groome's behaviour, both at the time it occurred and later, but no report of the divorce proceedings is held by the SMGC, thereby suppressing this scandalous episode in his life. The divorce proceedings clearly showed epistemic asymmetry and the patriarchal basis of the courtroom. The legal profession was exclusively male, the legal basis of marriage was patriarchal, and the common law principle of *couverture* (the legal fiction that husband and wife are one person) gave a husband rights over his wife and her property. The Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 was heavily gender-biased, allowing a husband but not a wife to sue for divorce solely on the grounds of adultery. Also, spousal abuse was effectively condoned: "A husband was not allowed to do violence to his wife, *except* as a means of ruling

and chastising her" (Blackstone 1765, cited in Siegel 2006, 2123, emphasis added). In court, the class positions of Smith and Groome as Gentlemen were introduced, and their respective male barrister and solicitor were identified. These powerful male protagonists in the legal arena, in conjunction with media reports, created a structure of hermeneutical epistemic injustice, where Esmeralda's female adultery was considered indefensible, leaving her at a considerable disadvantage (Fricker 2007, 147). Esmeralda, the 22-year-old Romani woman co-respondent, did not appear in Court or give any statement in her defence; by being denied a voice, she directly experienced literal testimonial epistemic injustice within the wider structure of situated hermeneutical inequality. Smith, as a solicitor, knew the penalties for perjury, and his testimony would have been accepted by the court as reliable, thereby confirming Smith's epistemic dominance over Esmeralda. In evidence, Smith admitted objecting to Esmeralda visiting her family. He claimed that she then threatened him with a brass candlestick; his response was that he "[d]id not deny boxing her ears two or three times on that day. *He was obliged to do so in self-defence*" (*A Remarkable Divorce Case* 1876, emphasis added). Smith continued, "... she had a temper and a spirit of her own", an undesirable challenge to the patriarchal standards of a respectable middle-class Victorian husband (*A Remarkable Divorce Case* 1876). The newspaper reports were an example of the intersecting structural and procedural operation of Victorian white male class power and privilege, aligned against a Romani woman who had been subject to testimonial and hermeneutical epistemic injustice. In the press accounts of the divorce proceedings, Esmeralda shifted in discourse from an earlier raven-haired temptress with flashing eyes of fathomless fire to a duplicitous and uncontrollable vampire-woman who, with her new lover, Groome, cuckolded, mocked, and deceived her older husband.

When the divorce was finalised, Esmeralda and Groome married in Edinburgh under Scottish Law. Groome found regular wage-paying work with *Chambers' Encyclopaedia* and *The Gazetteer of Scotland*, thereby losing his status as a Gentleman. His biographer noted that he rapidly settled into "the bondage of systematic labour" (Patrick 1912, 173). Groome also continued his Gypsiorist activities, publishing *In Gypsy Tents* (1881), *Kreigspiel*, a novel (1896), and *Gypsy Folk-Tales* (1899), and writing for and editing *The Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* from 1888 to 1892.

An anonymous author, writing in *JGLS* fifty years after the divorce, examined Groome's correspondence and knew of his activities but suppressed details, writing: "Into the subsequent divorce proceedings, the marriage of Groome and Esmeralda *against both their wills, under the persuasion of his family*, and his life in Edinburgh, there is no necessity to enter here ..." (Anonymous 1928, 68, emphasis added). If Esmeralda and Groome were indeed coerced to marry by his family, then it was Esmeralda's second forced marriage, and her second to end in separation.

Apart from a few references in *My Gypsy Days* about their mixing with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in London, there are few details of their life in Edinburgh between 1876 and their eventual separation. While living in Edinburgh, Groome boasted that his major find as a Gypsiorist was John Roberts, a Welsh harper, fluent and literate in English, Welsh, and Romani. Roberts corresponded with Groome, from 1877 to 1879, and supplied him with Romani genealogy, language, and folktales. Roberts was related to Esmeralda via his wife's family and was her honorary 'uncle'. It was improbable that Groome's so-called 'find' and subsequent epistemic appropriations occurred without Esmeralda's access to a network of Romani contacts.

Groome and Esmeralda were recorded living together in Edinburgh in the 1881 Census of Scotland. However, by the 1891 Census of Scotland, the only Francis H. Groome has a Mary J. Groome, aged 26, recorded as his wife. If this information is correct, the woman cannot have been Esmeralda (Census of Scotland 1881; 1891). At the 1901 Census of Scotland, Mary J. Groome was recorded as living in Edinburgh and Head of the Household (Census of Scotland 1901). At the 1901 Census of England and Wales, Groome was recorded at his brother's address in Surbiton, England, and his status was single. The exact date of Groome's and Esmeralda's separation is unknown but possibly occurred between 1881 and 1891. Both Esmeralda and Groome, in correspondence after their separation, had noted her difficulties in returning to a Romani itinerant life with her relations. Groome died in early 1902.

The most popular and accessible “factual” account of Esmeralda's life is found in Dora Yates' 1953 memoir, *My Gypsy Days*. Yates was honorary secretary of the GLS and editor of *JGLS*, and her connection with the GLS spanned over seventy years. Yates claimed that Esmeralda had been coerced into her first marriage: “... it was against her will that the elderly *Rai* [Hubert Smith] persuaded her rapacious parents to give him their daughter in marriage ‘bikin'd me like a tarni grasni’ [sold me like a young filly] she declared years afterwards to her *Romani Pen* [‘Gypsy sister’] ...” (Yates 1953, 102).

Yates, like Smith, portrays Esmeralda as an emotionally driven primitive, noting the “extraordinary magnetic force of her flashing eyes [...] passionate, violent tempered, tender, pathetic [...] such a wild child of nature” and, mimicking Smith, “eyes of fathomless fire” (Yates 1953). Hubert Smith had given in evidence at the divorce proceedings that Esmeralda had threatened him with a brass candle stick. Interestingly, in Yates' 1953 account, the threat with a brass candlestick was presented as an actual assault with two silver candlesticks that “... felled him [Smith] like an ox!” (Yates 1953, 105).

However, Yates did recognize Esmeralda's epistemic value, stating that “To many a *Rai* and *Rawnie*, Esmeralda imparted her store of Gypsy lore and Gypsy genealogies” (Yates 1953, 102–103). Yates presented Esmeralda's relationship with Groome as a lifelong, although often tempestuous, love-at-first-sight romance. This account conflicts with Esmeralda's record of her attitude towards Groome (discussed below). Yates' unlikely assertion that Dante Gabriel Rossetti painted Esmeralda on the parapet of Notre Dame again directly maps the real-life Esmeralda onto Victor Hugo's fictional Esmeralda. The final sentence of Yates' chapter re-emphasises her stereotypical view of Esmeralda as an emotionally driven primitive: “For over four-score years she lived her own Gypsy life in her own way, and the world of Romance is poorer without her. May the earth rest lightly on thee, my wild, wicked sister!” (Yates, 1953, 107).

“Esmeralda – The Gypsy Girl of 20 Could Not Sign Her Name – But Bridgnorth's 52 Years Old Town Clerk Wed Her – And Then She Ran Away with an Archdeacon's Son” was the title of a 1963 magazine article by Shropshire journalist Morley Tonkin. The article was possibly prompted by the fact that he once had owned the house to which Hubert Smith had brought Esmeralda as his bride. A detailed discussion of this article is beyond the scope of this research, but it is important to note that he had traced Groome and Esmeralda's wedding certificate; she had signed it, the first indication of her literacy. He had also studied the press reports of the 1876 divorce proceedings and wrote extensively of the material therein. He also interviewed a number of Bridgnorth people who had known Esmeralda as well as Dora Yates. However, he produced a much more detailed and nuanced account of Esmeralda's life than Yates. Although the magazine is held in

the SMCG, there is no record of the date of acquisition. Although the article added substantial amounts of information about Esmeralda's life, there was no mention or review in *JGLS*.

## Esmeralda's Letters: The Counter-narrative

The first clear evidence of Esmeralda's literacy is from her wedding to Groome in November 1876, as Tonkin had discovered. However, her available letters in the SMGC are few in number, sporadic in their temporal distribution, often undated, and without a return address. The earliest are from the 1890s. As Foucault suggested, some information may be deliberately suppressed or excluded from the Archive (such as the newspaper divorce reports absent from the SMGC), thereby contributing to the Foucaultian *archive*. Material may even have been deliberately destroyed, as Dora Yates did with some of John Sampson's after his death, when she "... burned everything of a painful nature to the [Sampson] family ..." (GLS D2 (82)). Despite such limitations, each of Esmeralda's letters records a textual encounter between writer and readers, which, as Matthews (2018) has shown, generates frictions and forces that allow re-evaluation of discourse and levels of epistemic injustice. Hence, Esmeralda's letters are valuable indicators of her capacity to construct epistemic counter-narratives to the Gypsiorist versions of her life. It is beyond the scope of this article to provide a detailed analysis of all her correspondence; however, salient themes can show the general nature of her counter-narrative.

As individual Gypsiorists consolidated their findings through personal meetings, correspondence, and publication in the *JGLS*, they thereby accumulated their stock of epistemic capital. By collecting and exchanging information they were able to grasp elements of Romani language and life in ways which Romani people themselves could not understand or were denied access to because of their non-literacy. When John Sampson's *The Dialect of the Gypsies of Wales* was published in 1926, it was the linguistic equivalent of locating an intact dinosaur skeleton after years of only bone fragments. He had found, recorded, and systematized an inflected and grammatical Romani dialect in daily use. Following this, the English Gypsies' Anglo-Romani was seen as merely a register of English with odd Romani words, and hence a degenerate dialect that reflected a declining and mixed-race group. It was labelled by Gypsiorists as *poggadi chib* (Anglo-Romani: 'broken tongue'). Having already collected substantial vocabularies from their various English Romani informants, culminating in Smart and Crofton's 1875 dictionary, there remained a diminishing source of material for Gypsiorists to collect. Hence their informants became epistemically superseded and eventually epistemically redundant. Esmeralda was a victim of both processes. Although Groome gave credit to his informant Roberts, he gave Esmeralda no credit for any assistance in his Gypsiorist works, never even mentioning his marriage to a Romani woman. At the 1901 Census of England and Wales, Groome was recorded as single. Thus, Esmeralda was not only bodily removed from a link to Groome but also textually (Census of England and Wales 1901). In 1899 Leland asked Groome for biographical information. In his reply, Groome likewise never mentioned that he had been married to Esmeralda, simply stating, "He [Groome] revisited Germany in 1875" (GLS XLIII /6/15). As shown above, Groome's denial of Esmeralda continued when he was recorded as married to someone else in 1891.

There are two sources of Esmeralda's writings, those in the SMGC, spanning from the 1890s to the 1930s: and an annotated sketch in the Special Collections and Archives of the Boston Athenaeum in

Boston, Massachusetts. Of course, there may exist other material yet to be uncovered. Quotations of her correspondence in this article retain her spellings and grammar.

In the 1890s Esmeralda was valued for her own knowledge of Anglo-Romani, but particularly as a direct source of knowledge about Smith and Groome as early Gypsiorists. John Sampson, university librarian at the University of Liverpool, was a prominent figure in Gypsiorism, most famously for his book *The Dialect of the Gypsies of Wales* (1928), which earned him the title *Rai of Rais*. He wrote to Esmeralda seeking information about Groome. In correspondence to John Sampson, Esmeralda asserted her epistemic value; "...then would be the time to write a book rie, you would be able to imagin yourself old Smith with esmeralda and the Donkies. What fun. *Of course, you could not get on my rie without me*" (SMGC A.6.4, emphasis added). Smith's patriarchal control, spousal abuse, and Yates' 1953 contention that Esmeralda's marriage was coerced, were reinforced by correspondence to John Sampson when Esmeralda wrote, "I was sent abroad to marry a man I did not like, started to knock me about" (GLS C 8 (40)).

## Scott MacFie Gypsy Collections 1911–1914

During the revival of the GLS from 1907, Esmeralda still was seen as a source of epistemic capital and the majority of Esmeralda's available letters are from this period. For example, MacFie asked her opinion of both Smith's and Groome's books. Asserting her epistemic position, her reply was dismissive: "*Merie comley Rie*. [My Dear *Rai*] ... about that book of that man Smith I think it should never have been written and Mr Groome's book is not much better. [...] kindest regards from Esmeralda Groome" (SMGC MS 2.15 (2)).

Of particular value is her correspondence with William Ferguson, the wealthy owner of a cotton-spinning mill, Gypsiorist, and president of the GLS in 1922. The majority of Esmeralda's letters are to Ferguson, who was not just her correspondent but also her benefactor.

Esmeralda also had developed a relationship with Lady Arthur Grosvenor, an aristocratic Gypsiorist, who was president of the GLS from 1913 to 1914. Esmeralda was teaching her Anglo-Romani. Lady Grosvenor, between 1906 and 1913, travelled each summer in a *vardo*, passing as a Gypsy named "Syrena Lee", accompanied by a Romani family. She also wrote for the *JGLS*, ironically, about a collection of Anglo-Romani vocabulary. Esmeralda tried to assert her superior epistemic value to Lady Arthur by offering to replace the other Romani family; however, this was unsuccessful.

Robert Andrew Scott Macfie, secretary of the revived 1907 GLS, sent many Gypsiorists seeking information on the life of Groome, Romani language, and culture to Esmeralda. Since Esmeralda was travelling in a fairly circumscribed area of north Wales, Cheshire, and the Welsh borders, and being literate, she was easily reached by post and readily accessible to Gypsiorists. Macfie commented in a letter, "I took him [Woolner, a noted Sanskrit scholar, registrar and principal of its Oriental College, and later Vice-Chancellor of the University of the Punjab, Lahore, in present-day Pakistan] to meet Esmeralda yesterday ... *She talked fluent Anglo-Romani, and he was much pleased*" (GLS A32, 792, 8, emphasis added). Macfie also sent William Ferguson to meet Esmeralda, writing: "... I thought you ought to know that so celebrated a gypsy was in our neighbourhood in case you should have been able to visit her. But you would find Esmeralda singularly easy

to get on with she will talk for hours about Hubert Smith and Groome" (GLS B 3 (12). Ferguson replied to Scott MacFie: "I will send a postcard to Esmeralda before going to see her. *I really think I ought to recompense her for the loss of a day's work* as it is not at all likely that she would care to be out of pocket in seeing such an uninteresting person as myself" (GLS A17, 57, emphasis added). The italicised passage appears to be the only time that any of the Gypsiorists ever considered that Esmeralda had to earn a living, and that making herself available to Gypsiorists had an opportunity cost for her.

Scott MacFie wrote to an unidentified addressee that Esmeralda "... has lived for many years now with a gajo traveller, ... called Henry Fowler, a decent old chap, but no Gypsy. It was Esmeralda and her brothers that Hubert Smith took to Norway. [...] He treated them rather shabbily" (GLS A 31, 243).

MacFie does not expand on the 'shabby treatment', nor how many years Esmeralda has been living with Fowler. Having had not one but two *gaje* husbands, and a relationship with a Traveller, and having separated from all three, as well as having lived in houses as a *gaji* for perhaps more than twenty years, Esmeralda was a boundary transgressor in both Romani and *gaje* worlds. By the time she was forty, Esmeralda had divorced Smith, separated from Groome, was single and childless, unusual conditions for a Romani woman of her age and era, and thus she found difficulty re-integrating into Romani life. After her separation from Groome, travelling with relatives had caused friction, and she ended up living and travelling with Fowler, likewise a boundary transgressor. In many of her letters to Ferguson, she complains of ill-health and poverty, often asking for help, and loans of money. Ferguson, however, was rather different to most other Gypsiorists, for he gave Esmeralda material assistance. She wrote "... at the present time I am nearly starving. I have not a penny in the world [...] my only real friend do you think you could possibly lend me a few poundes [...] just to give me a start again to buy something to sell for the summer and as soon as I can pick myself up again I will pay you every penny back" (GLS B 4 (2)).

She does not simply beg but asks for support to continue working. She is aware of the stigma attached to such a request, not wishing other Romani people to know of her plight. She refers to an altercation in which her partner Fowler was sent off, thereby leaving her on her own without any male support, making the necessities of nomadic life even more difficult. Ferguson provided the loan, and Esmeralda later wrote to thank him. Esmeralda continued to support herself by the perennial Gypsy standby role of fortuneteller, having "mastered the art of begging and fortune-telling" (Yates 1953, 102). Ferguson's generosity continued, since he also sent blankets to Esmeralda's brother. Esmeralda also continued to meet various *Rais* that had been sent to her by MacFie and other Gypsiorists, maintaining her belief in her epistemic value. She wrote to Ferguson; "My dear old friend. .... I had two Riers come to see me on Wensday evening. One was the Rie Macfie the other a Rie from India [Woolner, mentioned above]. They *were very pleased to see me*" (GLS B 4 (12), emphasis added).

The final letter from Esmeralda to Ferguson held in the SMGC discusses the location and travelling of her relatives. She also mentions the fact that Gypsiorists have hired her *var-do*, to experience nomadic Romani life at first hand. Such hiring was a novel economic niche for Romanies. The Rev George Hall recorded his travels with a Romani family in a hired *var-do* in *The Gypsy's Parson*; Dora Yates also hired and travelled in a *var-do*, whilst MacFie had regularly camped out in Romani tents. Ferguson and Lady



Arthur Grosvenor had their own *vardos* and regularly travelled in them. Esmeralda wrote “My dear Rie. ... Have you been out again this summer with your waggin. All the rier are still out travelling with my waggon. They seem to be having a good time.” GLS B 4 (18)

Although Dora Yates had met Esmeralda in 1911, and in *My Gypsy Days* claimed her as her *Romani Phen* [Romani sister], their correspondence held in the SMCG began in 1933 and continued until 1938, just before her death in 1939. All of Esmeralda’s letters to Dora were sent from Prestatyn (a holiday resort on the North Wales coast). Although Esmeralda and Dora Yates were of the same gender, the latter’s background of family wealth, university education, and involvement with Gypsiorism, is more appropriately considered as white class privilege.

Esmeralda had ceased full-time travelling in 1914, aged 60, and lived a single and semi-sedentary existence, based in her wagon at Prestatyn, until her death. She would travel short distances in a cart and tent in the warmer months; in July 1916, she was charged for fortune-telling at Connah’s Quay, 18 miles/30 kilometres from Prestatyn (Cheshire Observer 1916, 5). After 1918, Esmeralda’s epistemic value had diminished. Many of the proto-Gypsiorists about whom she had direct or indirect knowledge (such as Borrow, Smith, Groome, Leland, and Smart and Crofton) had died. With expanded studies of continental Romani people and their dialects, folktales and customs, the notion of British Romani people and their dialect as isolated and degenerate had increased. No longer was her Anglo-Romani dialect valued, no longer was there a succession of important *Rais* sent to visit her, but rather newcomers to Gypsiorism, who she found inferior to the *Rais* of earlier years. When the correspondence with Yates began, Esmeralda was seventy-nine years old and something of an anachronism, linked to an earlier era of Gypsiorism, becoming epistemically redundant, and effectively yesterday’s woman.

Esmeralda often wrote to Yates of her ill-health, as well as her precarious financial position, similar to correspondence with Ferguson twenty years earlier. She also solicits loans from Yates: “My Dear Dora. ... I have been so very ill and am so full of difficulties that I don’t know hardly which way to turn. [...]. I am asking you to do your best to borrow £ 7. [...] it will save my home been taken from me ...” (GLS C 8 (51). As with Ferguson, when she also asks for the loan, she is attempting to earn a living, and promises to repay the loan; “I am trying hard to sell this ‘Vardo’ and when I do I will return the money to you” (GLS C 8 (51).

Esmeralda’s views on the old *Rais*’ visits compared to the new ones indicate that she had absorbed Gypsiorist elements of the concept of *Rai*-hood: first, by accepting that there was such a status, and second, by positing a hierarchy of the good *Rais* of a recalled past in contrast to the acquisitive new *Rais*. Although both of Esmeralda’s husbands had claimed *Rai*-hood, she saw “her Frank” as being the better of them, and thus was sensitive to the ascribed *Rai*-status of the emerging *Rais*. She clearly had a nostalgic view of the older *Rais* as superior to the ones currently sent to her and was sensitive to her diminished epistemological value. “All the beautiful Romney Riars, *the good men, seem to have forgotten me*. As long as you can tell them all they want then they are finished. I also have finished” (GLS C 8 (54), emphasis added). Yates had sent Ferdinand Huth (known as Fred) to see Esmeralda. He was independently wealthy and ran a sack and bag business. Since it involved considerable travel by car, and he could collect Romani dialects, genealogies, and customs on his way. He joined the GLS in 1932 and visited Esmeralda, who was not impressed by him, recognising the exploitative epistemic asymmetry of the new *Rais*. She wrote:

*Dora my pen you gin what most of these mushers are. They com to gin saw If he will turn out to be a kaskow prall to mandy I will pucker you saw you comesti gin. What say tooty.*

Dora mysister you know what most of these men are. They love to know all. If he will turn out to be a good brother [used in the sense of 'friend'] to me I will tell you all you love to know. What say you.

– GLS C 8 (53)

She is scathing about Huth and his exploitative nature of his visits: "... When he went away from here he never even came to say good-bye. If I were you I should have nothing to do with him he is out for all he can get. ... I am sorry that man [that is, Huth] met Mr Ferguson all he wanted was photographs and he didn't want to see that *Purro Rie* [old *Rai*, that is, Ferguson] anymore" (GLS C 8 (52)). More importantly, Esmeralda continues to assert her epistemic value to Gypsiorism by suggesting to Yates that they could collaborate: "Sister Dora I have a scheme in my head between you and I, I think we could write a 'Book' on my experiences of Gypsy life" (GLS C 8 (51)). However, she later recanted, after Yates tried to extract some remaining epistemic value from her life. Esmeralda, recognising the loss of her epistemic value, plaintively replied: "What you asked me about my earlie life I will think it all over. *I am afraid it would not be much good to anybody*" (GLS C 8 (54), emphasis added).

Esmeralda continued to describe her plight to Yates: "Dear Sister Dora, I truely thank you ... for what you sent me. I really did want it I had'ent a penny to bless myself with. *I have nothing at all only the old age pension, and you know that is not much.* I have been very ill for a month" (GLS C 8 (54), emphasis added). Esmeralda's statement that her only income is an old-age pension (which was means-tested, and only claimable at seventy) contradicts Yates' claim in *My Gypsy Days*, and also in Tonkin's magazine article, that Groome's family had provided her with an annuity for life. Groome also wrote that he supported Esmeralda financially: "I walked with her straight to the lawyer in the New Town through whom *I weekly pay her a small sum* and she left Edinburgh that same afternoon, and I have never heard word of her since. Nor do I wish to" (GLS C2 (9), emphasis added). This payment may have been the *aliment* or spousal support payable after separation under Scottish Law. Esmeralda's final letter to Yates was sent about ten months before she died. She reiterates some common themes; the state of her health, her possible epistemic contributions, and her reaction to Huth, the upstart *Rai*.

My dear little sister, ... I am still very poorly myself. Will you promise to come and see me as soon as you possibly can, *as I have a great deal to tell you.* About ... Fred, [that is, Huth] never mind, all things will be settled bye and bye. [...] Cheer up my dear, & do come & see me, I want to see you badly. This is all until I see you. God bless you. From your sister, Izzie."

– GLS C 8 (55), emphasis added

After this letter, there is no correspondence in the SMGC that shows Yates and Esmeralda met or corresponded again.

## The Gypsy Lore Society Jubilee Dinner 1938

Throughout her life Esmeralda not only asserted her epistemic value but also sought recognition as an autonomous individual. These aims were thwarted in a particularly unsavoury way in mid-1938. Dora Yates had organized a Jubilee Dinner to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the GLS to take place on 11 June 1938. There were fifty guests, mostly *gaje* members of the GLS, and four token Gypsies: Ithal Lee<sup>4</sup> and his wife Mary Anne; Rosie Griffiths, and Harry ‘Turpin’ Wood. Each of these had been selected for their particular qualities as Romanies. Ithal and Mary Anne were seen as prime examples of traditional Romanies, and Ithal’s father had married into the Wood family; Ithal was also a good friend of John Sampson and scattered his ashes after his cremation. Rosie Griffiths was Dora Yates’s other *Romani Phen* (Gypsy sister) and had nursed Sampson in the weeks before he died. Harry Wood, son of Matthew Wood (Sampson’s main informant in his collection of Welsh Romani dialect), had corresponded with Ferdinand Huth by dictating letters and was a representative of the well-bred and linguistically pure Welsh Gypsies. As Yates explains, “I had intended to invite Esmeralda Groome, as the widow of our first Editor, to preside, but when I mentioned this to Ithal Lee, he assured me solemnly that if she were present, he would walk straight up to her and spit in her eye! For by the Romanies she was condemned for her infidelity to the Romani code of marriage,” having married two *gaje* men and cohabited with at least one other (Yates 1953, 177, emphasis added). Rather than risk disruption of the dinner, Yates acquiesced to Ithal’s view, and Esmeralda was not invited. Note that Esmeralda was to be invited as Groome’s widow, a mere appendage to one of the founding fathers of Gypsiorism and not as a Romani person of epistemic value in her own right, who had been associated with the *Rais* and *Ranies* of the GLS for 68 years, even before the foundation of the GLS. Nor was she to be invited as Yates’ own putative ‘Romani Sister’. These rejections of Esmeralda, first from her fellow Romanies, and second by her Gypsiorist ‘sister’ in the year before her death, was a brutal reminder of her life in liminal spaces. Ironically, the last letter from Esmeralda to Yates (discussed above) was dated the day before the Jubilee dinner. A further irony was that Augustus John unavoidably was unable to attend the dinner, and Lady Arthur Grosvenor, Esmeralda’s former pupil in Anglo-Romani, was asked to preside in his place. It is possible that Yates, having decided to reject her ‘Romani sister’ as unsuitable for the Jubilee celebrations, may have ceased corresponding with her. It is not clear whether Yates informed Esmeralda that she was not to be invited to the Jubilee dinner, nor if Esmeralda ever discovered this rejection in the remaining ten months of her life. In her final comments on the death of Esmeralda in *My Gypsy Days*, Yates also places Esmeralda as an appendage to Groome. She writes “... the same cry of yearning is forced from our hearts today now that *Groome’s Esmeralda* has left the stage” (Yates 1953, 107, emphasis added).

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4 Ithal Lee, who knew Esmeralda and blocked her attendance at the GLS Jubilee dinner of 1938, was my paternal great-grandfather. His son, my paternal grandfather, also knew her and her family; his first wife, Violet Lock, was Esmeralda’s niece. My father also knew her and her family and recalled meeting her on a few occasions as a boy in the late 1920s.

## Another Perspective: Esmeralda and ‘Pagerminge’

Challenging Smith’s male gaze view of Esmeralda, Yate’s saccharine account of Romantic love at first sight and life-long devotion in *My Gypsy Days*, and the rather more intricate and nuanced account by Tonkin, Esmeralda herself presents a picture of a difficult and tempestuous relationship with Groome. The Special Collections and Archives of the Boston Athenaeum in Boston, Massachusetts purchased papers and correspondence of Groome after his death. Amongst this material is a hitherto unknown, undated, annotated sketch by Esmeralda that could have been produced at any time after her marriage in 1876.

The right-hand page shows a caricature figure of Groome as a pig, and the following annotations, in English and Anglo-Romani.

“I will keep you from pulling my beloved long nose. Don’t you think my nose is not very much like a monkeys. Yes I really think it is”

“My dear Frank (that is, Francis Hides Groome) you are just like *pagerminge*” [Anglo-Romani, meaning “break vagina”, possibly meaning either the man who took her virginity or gave her a sexually transmitted infection, or both), most likely her first abusive husband Hubert Smith].

“*Kosko divus mel [?] minge jel to beng [?] jovelhave on “busstell [?] mell bull and mangery.”*”

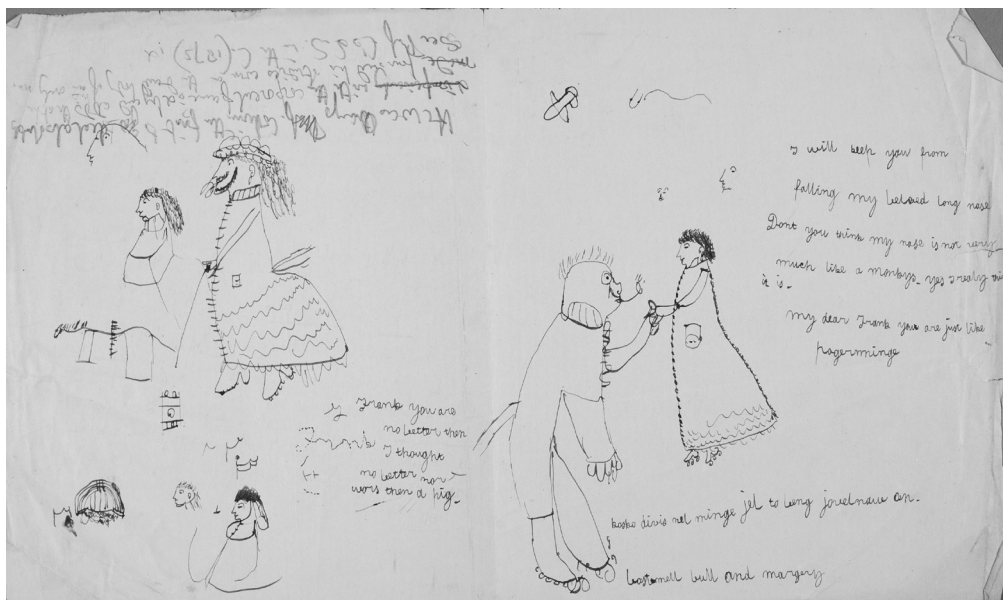


Figure 2. Sketch and comments by Esmeralda. Reproduced with kind permission of The Boston Athenaeum, Special Collections and Archives.

This means:

“Good day sweaty/dirty vagina, go to [the] Devil’s lousy name [and] sit down [on your?] buttocks and beg”

On the left-hand sheet, adjacent to the sketch of Groome as a pig reads:

“Frank you are no better than I thought no better nor worse than a pig.”

Clearly this item needs further semiotic analysis, but it is a crucial revelation about Esmeralda’s relationship with Groome. The volatility of their marriage and eventual breakdown was covered in reports of the divorce proceedings and also discussed by both Yates (1953) and Tonkin (1963). However, this sketch seems to be the only Archival evidence from Esmeralda herself that depicts the intensity of her negative feelings towards Groome. It is clear that Esmeralda’s profane language, denigration, and unflattering comparisons indicate a deeply unsatisfactory relationship with Groome and that Esmeralda used her acquired literacy to ventilate her feelings about both Groome and, if he was *pagerminge*, also Hubert Smith.

## Esmeralda’s Last Days

On 22 Feb 1939 in Prestatyn, Esmeralda was run over by a bus, taken to her *vardo*, remained there for three days, then moved to a hospital in Rhyl (a coastal holiday resort in north Wales, 4 miles/6 kilometres west of Prestatyn) where after six weeks she died on 4 April and was buried on 8 April. According to Dora Yates, she charmed the staff with her indomitable spirit. However, it is not clear whether Yates (or any other Gypsistorist) actually visited Esmeralda in hospital or even attended her funeral. Yates wrote an obituary in *JGLS* and also supplied details for newspaper obituaries. Edward Harvey, a recent member of GLS, visited Rhyl and Prestatyn a week after the funeral, and spoke to people there. He gave a detailed account of his visit in a letter to Yates, most of which, however, was not mentioned in *My Gypsy Days*. According to Harvey, a *gaji* neighbour paid for her hospital treatment and funeral.

Even after Esmeralda’s death, epistemic injustice prevailed. At her Coronial Inquest, the doctor who attended at the accident was not called to give evidence, only the doctor at the hospital. When the foreman of the jury objected, the coroner replied, “It’s my court, I will decide who gives evidence here” (*Dundee Evening Telegraph* 1939, 2).

## Conclusion

Just as the colonizer ‘speaks for’ the colonized, so Hubert Smith, Francis Hindes Groome, Dora Yates, Morley Tonkin, and others, ‘spoke for’ Esmeralda as successive manifestations of “The Gypsy Woman”, a trans-historically persistent trope, which can be re-imagined and reconstructed through the forces and frictions of encounter. Esmeralda was successively (mis)represented first as the alluring

Gypsy girl with flashing eyes and raven hair, attractive figure, and a hint of display of flesh, Yates' "wild and wicked sister" who was a subject for the male gaze and fuelled male fantasies. Next, under the scrutiny of Victorian-era media, Esmeralda becomes the Carmen-like femme fatale who drains male life-force, bringing disorder and death. Finally, in her sedentary years in Prestatyn, Esmeralda is shifted to the Wise Old Gypsy Woman, with occult powers, known for her fortunetelling skills. Each (mis)representation of Esmeralda is derived from shifting levels of asymmetric epistemic injustice, exploiting her knowledges and experiences. Each misrepresentation also blighted her life in real ways. Her domestic skills as Smith's servant in Norway and Groome's wife in Edinburgh were exploited, and her performative values as singer and dancer were also exploited; Smith (1873) notes her tambourine playing, to accompany his guitar and her brother's fiddle, on the voyage to Norway. Most of the illustrations of Esmeralda in Smith's book show her with a tambourine. During her elopement with Groome in Germany, her singing and dancing in cafes supported them, as Tonkin noted. She also had value as a trophy Gypsy wife for both Smith and Groome, bolstering their status as *Rais* in the world of Gypsiorism. Groome even suggested that Smith had married Esmeralda merely to promote sales of his book. However, by resisting such pressures and asserting her autonomy and agency, at considerable personal cost, Esmeralda left fragmentary traces of her experiences over sixty years, thereby challenging the Gypsiorists by claiming her own unique and privileged epistemological position. Paradoxically, like many Gypsiorists, Esmeralda lamented the loss of a mythical vanished Gypsiorist past, of "the good old *Rais*", valorising 'her Frank' [Groome] as a major Gypsiorist scholar.

The realignment of Esmeralda's life-narrative presented here shows that Archival/*archival* sources can be approached as loci of power/knowledge and sites of active construction of Foucaultian discursive formations, as Stoler argues. The life of Esmeralda as examined here reconstructs and challenges the trans-historically persistent tropes(s) of "The Gypsy Woman". As Medina points out "The counter histories that critical genealogies can produce are possible because *there are people who remember against the grain ...*" (Medina 2011, 12, emphasis added). Esmeralda was one such person, who, through her correspondence, provides an anamnesiac counter-narrative to the discourses of the white class privilege of Gypsiorism. Bringing Esmeralda's challenges to view is important, for as Suzannah Lipscomb points out: "We erase lives from history not by rewriting history, but *by failing* to rewrite it" (Lipscomb 2021, 107, emphasis added). By considering Stoler's suggestion to seek the pulses in the construction of the Archival narrative, it is possible to develop readings that "... rediscover the methods of knowledge production and how particular knowledges achieve legitimacy and authority at the expense of other knowledges" (Nakata 2007, 195). Challenging such processes of "legitimizing" is crucially important for Romani people, since it also involves distributive justice. For as Fricker herself points out "we should leave room for something called 'epistemic injustice' that is *primarily a distributive injustice* – someone's receiving less than their fair share of an epistemic good, such as education, or access to expert advice or information" (Fricker 2017, 60, emphasis added). She also argues that "[b]y studying the negative space of epistemic injustice, the positive space of epistemic justice is revealed; and so, we learn what virtues we may need to cultivate in order to make our epistemic conduct at once more rational and more just" (Fricker 2008, 71). Hence, extended analyses of epistemic injustices by Romani scholars may offer new dimensions to understanding and explaining not just the construction of subordinating discourses but also the mechanisms of suppression, thereby developing the virtues that could produce more rational and more just treatment of Romani people.

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The address is available online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dVWwRK2Zsj8>.

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