

**External representation of multiple internal distinctions. Sub-typing Transylvanian Gypsies in  
18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Transylvanian writing**

**Marian Zăloagă**

Our title proposes a new approach by identifying references to those elements (individuals or subgroups) which did not confirm the standardized schema of external-representation and which can be noticed even from the 18 and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries' writings.

**Theoretical concepts: activation and outcomes**

Multiple approaches of the present time social sciences have begun from the 1980's to refine their research on stereotypes formation and implementation. We are usually taught that stereotypes change very hard, that they are stable and simplistic mechanisms that are much faster and conveniently accessed by our mind especially when confronting with Otherness. Obviously they are culturally built and are reaffirmed in their negative components more rapidly in limit or conflict situation, usually when settled and sanctioned hierarchies are challenged.

Revision of the stereotypes is at hand of the normative discursive monopolising groups. Even nowadays it is of limited effectiveness, the switch in the value of stereotypes being done stubbornly hard. This, especially because of the prior function of the stereotypes, that of preserving the differences between groups.

Among the processes that put to the test the validity of such stereotypes in everyday social life can be mentioned subtyping.

Within this process individuals who are highly counter-stereotypic are grouped into a new subtype that is mentally segregated from the rest of the group. As a result, the potential divergent attributes do not affect the perceiver's representation of the group as a whole.

**Gypsy studies and the subtyping mechanism**

The novelty of this approach consists of the relativization, if not breaking up with the schema of radical exclusiveness of the Gypsies from the normative society. If it would have been like that it is unlikely that these groups would have survived the centuries of continuous persecutions.

Extensive readings lead the (de)constructivist of discourse towards the schema of a victimized minority, whose survival and present day integration has been hindered by an overwhelming number of stereotypes and subsequent policies directed against its members. Surely this scapegoat role can not be denied. It has been so for centuries and they seemed to have been radicalised during modernity, when controlling and the ideal of uniformity lead to repressive policies which gained the support of central administration and of the emerging and dutiful social sciences themselves.

### **Contextualized Hetero-representation. Stereotypes, particularities and subtyping in the representation of Transylvanian Gypsy**

Transylvania constitutes a special case thanks to the over mentioned toleration towards its “elective unworthy”, unrepresented and later, for some, underrepresented ethnic and social categories (Romanians, Gypsy, Jews, Armenians, Greeks, etc.). From different reasons this province did not registered any sort of harsh policies towards the Gypsies comparable with those put in act in western European countries. Despite that, from the early modernity Transylvanian discourse regarding homeland Gypsies borrowed from the Western literature the sort of negative classifications coloured with many strongly unfavourable stereotypes.

Respectful to the authority of the bookish sources consulted, normative members of the Transylvanian estates operated by applying a levelling stereotyped discourse with prejudicing effect towards all groups designated as Gypsies, despite every day experience, which could have made them aware of the regional diversity of those juridical and culturally scattered Gypsies groups.

The intent of our study is to refer to those, rarely, but still present cases, which permits us to treat the theme of hetero-representation of the Gypsies in Transylvania in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries by means of identifying the subtyping process operated in the works of some Transylvanian elite members (Saxons and Hungarian mainly).

Has become common sense that present time stereotypes in use regarding the different groups of Gypsies are lazy, treacherous, delinquent and the list may very well continue with other stigmatising attributes. A similar situation, sometimes with even worse accents, culturally motivated, may be encountered in case of the 18<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> century discourse promoters, many of them in charge of different disciplining positions conferred to their profession by the modern state structures. Pretty much the same way, as some of the occupational (sub) groups are regarded in present time, with some degree of idealized toleration, we may notice the emergence of some favourable remarks firmly restrained to individuals or small groups back in the writings of the Aufklärung and Romanticism times. Such inconsistent information regarding some individuals or groups were converted in positive remarks contradicting the stereotypical standardized labelling bearing profoundly negative prejudices

and pointing against the Gypsies as a whole. In simple terms, this is what social psychologist concerned with the stereotyping mechanism towards the out - groups call subtyping.

In order to make the subtyping more obvious we will first set the stereotypes and will notice how some particular cases made them questionable. Aware of the power of the ideological frames of the Enlightenment and (Pre) Romanticism, we will project the process of subtyping on the historical background and attempt to explain its motivations.

Judgements and therefore exclusive strategies that allowed a positive reflection had been done according to the observer's standards of normality. Enrolment in lucrative activities, useful to the state or undertakings of some secondarily and less important as well as undisturbing activities like those of spoon, basket or broom makers received a praise-worthy evaluation. *Goldwäscher* were also somehow more favourably regarded in the descriptions dedicated to them thanks to their contribution to the state budget (Aerarium).(Ignaz von Born, Benigni, Joseph Benkö).

Of a particularly and considerably long-lasting positive image benefited some Gypsy individuals which proved very talented musicians (ab Hortis, Franz List). Despite this activity was generally regarded as a way of avoiding "real work" and from moral point of view invited to lust (physiocrat's ideology sharing the belief in the wealth agriculture might provide to the state), some individuals were appreciated thanks to their outstanding inborn musical abilities. Indirectly their qualities in this field were recognised by the Saxons, Hungarians and Romanians which could not imagine a celebration without a "Gypsy chapel".

In the language of the centuries the status of "civilised" people was overrated though restrictively and often subjectively applied. It remained the monopoly of the discourse' promoters and its distribution depended on the affinities of the observed with observer's community standards. In the description of the Transylvanian Gypsies, artificial but mentally and culturally operative representation followed the levelling pattern proposed by H. M. G. Grellmann in his cornerstone large essay "*Historische Versuch über die Zigeuner*" (1783). Consciously or not, Transylvanians also borrowed his implicit approaches deriving from his clerk position, turned into a loyal voice of the enlightened imperial politics, which at the moment was striving to put an end to mobility of any kind because it came to be associated with all sorts of deviances. Therefore, Transylvanian Gypsies, though conclusively regarded as a whole, enjoyed their nomination among the people with different degree of civilisation according to their sedentarization. As well known, Transylvanian Gypsies had rarely been permanent migrants, except some groups of them, which consequently were irremediably stigmatised and demonized, lowered to the lowest position on the ladder of human hierarchy. Provincial observers proved attentive to this internal segregation within the Gypsy communities, and consequently some mentioned it. Unfortunately, these radically stigmatized nomadic groups' lifestyles came to be regarded as

exponential for the Gypsy in general by resorting to such remarks with axiomatic or conclusive value. In this representational aprioristic context, subtyping, the mention of the exceptions to the “rule” followed naturally having inhibiting effect towards the fundamental re-evaluation of the centuries old stereotypes.

The national characterology numbered also cowardice and lack of any heroic attitude. At a moment when nations invented and sang the glory of their forefathers, this sort of argumentation could not do anything else but to support the common believe of an unworthy people. There is also an isolated case when a Gypsy individual had been mentioned as brave in war and conformist after being dismissed (Ab Hortis). This strongly contradicted the standardised labelling.

Generally speaking, the aim was to offer an outstanding example in order to sustain the argumentation of the imperial reformism, which intended to make Gypsies good citizens, land-workers and taxpayers. If such a case really existed –which is quite possible- is not important. What mattered was the intent of the discursive strategy.

As a matter of fact all the Aufklärung's and post - josephinist discourses (with lasting effect throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century) had this utilitarian intent, to give positive examples capable to contribute to the foreseen project of “civilisation”. Such remarks, followed by convictions in the incorrigibility of this people conceptualised in national herderian terms, along with the rehearsal of some older conclusions proves nothing else but the efficacy of the subtyping, and historically speaking, the reserves towards the imperial reformism.

The subtyping operated even by those supporting, through their position in the state, the reformist trend show once again that at individual level the premises remained negative. The explanation may have gained in favourable remarks but the final convictions remained tributary to the old cultural categories, therefore testifying for the efficiency of subtyping strategies.