

CONCLUSION

RITUAL, RAPTURE AND REBELLION



Like many other cultural minorities in the Western world, such as the Amish or the Hasidim, Gypsies have managed to stay apart from the larger society ... More than has generally been recognized, their decision to remain an enclave was deliberate; indeed, they might properly be called the ultimate anarchists. They are eminently successful as rule breakers. In fact, their anarchy may be one of the keys to their survival, for it has brought them a measure of prosperity and has spared them some of the perils that go with full participation in a nation-state.

—M.L. Kaprow, ‘The Ultimate Anarchists’

With this concluding chapter of the book, I pick up previous threads and arguments to highlight those aspects of the Rastro Gitanos’ lives that have to do with their collective disarticulation from mainstream society. I do this through the combined vocabulary of Turner (1969, 1974) (structure, anti-structure, liminality and *communitas*); Blake (1790) (contraries); Lévi-Strauss ([1955] 1961) (binary oppositions) and the extended literature connected to the dual nature of Simmel’s figure of the Stranger (1908). With the book’s title ‘Ritual, Rapture and Rebellion’, my focus has been on the Rastro Gitanos’ alternative ways of living and ways of making a living. As we have seen, this alternative is produced through their ritual engagement in *el culto*; the entrepreneurial pleasure-pain and rapture of creation in church, at the market and in their social life; and their rebellion against mainstream models of social control, stratification and evaluation. The Gitanos of el Rastro stand in reciprocal relation to mainstream Payo society – a society that they show little intention of being assimilated into. Integrated yes, but not assimilated. Hence, I would argue that their mode of living is not only a response to mainstream society but even more so an

explicit ideological choice with emphasis on their own alternative values, virtues, practices, norms and conduct. In other words, à la Simmel's figure of the Stranger, they stand in dual relation to mainstream society, and they do so in a *communitas*-like fashion (e.g. Turner 1969, 1974). For what does Kaprow (1984) imply when she uses words such as 'anarchists' and 'rule breakers' to characterize the Amish, the Hasidim and the Gypsies? Many critics have accused her of having stereotypical ideas about these groups in depicting them as unruly, unsociable and/or unreliable thieves and rogues. Could it not be that Kaprow is implying that these groups have institutionalized something akin to Turner's *anti-structure* and *communitas*, as well as the dialectics of structure/anti-structure, as part of their very existence and continuity as social groups – and that they have done so successfully?

The ethnographic distinctiveness of the Gitanos of el Rastro compared to others has analytical and theoretical consequences¹, one of them being their ideologically and cosmologically coloured creation of a society within society. Within the field of Roma, Gypsy and Gitano research, my approach is not without controversy, but neither is it without ethnographic and theoretical support. Apart from my own ethnography and analyses, I build on ethnographic explorations and findings that in a variety of ways show how various Gypsy/Roma groups distance themselves from the mainstream societies in which they live: Martin Fotta (2018), who sees the Bahia *Ciganos'* disarticulation from society as an active moral and value-based choice. Patrick Williams ([1993] 2003), who argues that the Manus of Central France employ a principle of 'cosmological subtraction' when they absent themselves from Gadzo society through their notions about the dead. Michael Stewart (1997), who writes about Hungarian Vlach Rom that refuse to abandon their way of life and accept assimilation into the majority population – despite heavy pressure in the past to become part of the socialist working class under communism, and violent discrimination and dislocation caused by the return to capitalism. Miriam Lee Kaprow (1978, 1982, 1984, 1991), who called her Gitano informants 'the ultimate anarchists'; Salo and Salo (1982), who described how the American 'Romnichels' (i.e. Roma) of urban New England in the period 1850–1930 managed to maintain their integrity and avoid proletarianization, impoverishment and other negative effects of urbanization despite heavy pressure; the Chicago School-inspired special issue of *Urban Anthropology* (1982), which emphasized the culturally, socially and economically entrepreneurial, creative, performative, well-functioning and ideologically grounded Gypsy/Roma way of being within a non-Gypsy/Roma urban setting; Rena Gropper (1975), who with her study of Gypsies in New York opposed theories of acculturation as explanatory for urban dwelling Gypsies, and rather emphasized 'choice-making'; Teresa San Román (1997), who described the

anti-assimilation strategies of historic Gitano groups in Spain. Judith Okely (1983), who pointed to the anti-proletarianism and self-employment of her Traveller-Gypsy informants; Sharon Gmelch (1986), who described groups that, in fact, do ‘not want in’; David Mayall (2004), who wrote about ‘Gypsy identities’ and the historical Gypsy/Roma label of ‘masterless men’; and finally, Brazzabeni et al. (2016), who summarized parts of this tradition in their book *Gypsy Economy*, with emphasis on the ‘cosmological choice’ of Gypsy/Roma groups. This ‘cosmological choice’ is ‘understood as a self-defining capacity to determine for oneself a posture vis-à-vis the workings of states, markets, money, bureaucracies and so on within the modern societies – through which each community seeks to guarantee its continuity’ (ibid.: 2). In addition, writers on ‘peripatetic peoples’ and ‘peripatetic niches’ (Berland 1979, 1982, 1986; Berland and Rao 2004; Rao 1987) have greatly inspired my analytical approach on this topic.

All these writers emphasize, in my view, Gypsy/Gitano/Roma/etc. *agency* in their writings – that is, they do not seek to undermine or trivialize the sufferings or persecution these groups have been subjected to but acknowledge a certain degree of agency and autonomy as the basis of their continuity as a distinct social group that is worth examining. It is this agency that I have first and foremost explored in this book, and that I will follow up more closely in this last chapter. By this, I do not mean to trivialize the sufferings and precarity of so many Gitanos in either el Rastro or Spain in general, rather I wish to stress that Gitano marginality always should be an empirical question and not an ethnographically a priori assumption. Such presumptions would in my view only lead to further prejudice, reductionism and victimization.

Despite their history of persecution and harassment, Gitanos, Gypsies, Roma and similar groups have long insisted on a position that is distinct from mainstream society, refusing total submission to the power and monopoly of violence of European nation states (Mayall 2004). Historically, these groups have suffered everything from slavery to forced labour camps, sterilization and sedentarization to the present day EU policies that promote – voluntary, but no less pushy – housing regimes, vocational training programmes and education plans (e.g. Brodersen and Røyrvik 2021). In a critical understanding, one can see both past and present violent strategies as attempts to tie these groups to prevailing economic relations and structures – that is, attempts to make them feel obliged to participate in and submit to capitalist work relations and the state (see, for example, San Román 1997). Contrasting these attempts, in the subsequent sections, I identify the cultural premises and ethos underlying the Rastro Gitanos’ alternative social organization and meaning making, drawing on historical and theoretical resources for comparison and analysis.

'TO WHOM SHALL WE KNEEL?'

The question 'To whom shall we kneel?', addressed by Fyodor Dostoyevsky in 1915 (Dostoyevsky [1915] 2003), with reference to Satan's temptations of Christ (the Holy Bible), highlights the issue of submission to authority and power. Figuratively, it concerns the acceptance of 'daily bread' from a higher authority (for example, an employer) and, as I came to learn in the field, the acceptance or non-acceptance of gifts, or the Rastro Gitanos' different evaluations of wage labour versus self-employment.

Despite their long working hours, heavy workloads and unstable and unpredictable income, the Gitanos of el Rastro express that the freedom and flexibility of their economic practices make up for the negative side of things: analphabetism is much higher among the Gitanos than the rest of the population; on average, Gitanos die ten years earlier than their Payo neighbours; Payos prefer drug addicts to Gitanos as neighbours (Briggs 2013); the Gitanos suffer from continuous harassment and prejudice; and the Gitanos' socio-economic position is characterized by significant precarity and insecurity. Nevertheless, as they themselves emphasize, the Gitanos of el Rastro revel in the fact that they are not bound to work that involves defined hours and tasks, in which most of the profit goes to management and owners and in which they lack influence over their time, effort, colleagues and work products.

Manuel and Bobola have two sons, both in their 30s. After completing a higher education degree in economics, Yoan (aged 31) got a very good job working as an economist for a multinational company, while Xavier (aged 34) has a master's degree in fine arts and plays online poker games for a living. At times, Xavier's income is meagre, but this can change in an instant, if he wins a large amount of money from his poker playing. On one occasion during my fieldwork, he even bought himself a North Face parka worth 400 euros to celebrate a large victory. Although Bobola and Manuel are proud of Yoan's success as an economist and his accomplishments in *el mundo de los Payos* ('the world of the Payos'), they view Xavier's lifestyle more favourably because it allows him greater flexibility, freedom and, at times, a surprisingly large income. With respect to Yoan, Bobola and Manuel cannot understand the idea of working 9–10 hours a day for nothing more than average pay and an even worse pension, with the same work tasks and work relations day in and day out, all to satisfy managers and owners of a multinational company. Rather, this situation reinforces their negative feelings towards unnecessary submission to Payo authorities and power relations.

Manuel and Bobola also connect their sons' lifestyles to Gitano identity, seeing Xavier as 'more Gitano' than Yoan. While they describe the former as impulsive, intelligent, streetwise, humorous, passionate and 'warm', they

consider the latter polite, well-mannered, controlled, structured, somewhat uptight, serious and 'cold'. Moreover, their characterizations of their sons as more or less Gitano also seem to map onto their sons' outer appearances: Xavier has dark hair and skin, while Yoan has blonde hair and light skin – something Bobola and Manuel eagerly points out.

Manuel is proud of Yoan, often bragging about him and telling others how important it was for him as a father to give his son a good education. On the other hand, he and Bobola often give more credit to the things that cannot be learned in school, holding that one can become too 'narrow-minded' with formal education. They claim that the Gitano mode of learning by doing leads to a much larger range of improvisational skills, social skills and cleverness for application in daily life. Having said this, although they highly value Xavier's streetwise and somewhat entrepreneurial spirit, they also understand that his path in life is hard, precarious and unpredictable. In sum, in a multitude of ways this family demonstrates the tight conceptual link between the Rastro Gitanos' understanding of identity, economic practices, 'ways of living', the ethos of being one's own master, personhood and even physiognomy.

THE POWER OF GIFTS

Related to the question, 'to whom shall we kneel?', time and again during my fieldwork, I encountered a very explicit idea among the Rastro Gitanos about the power – and potential danger – of gifts. For instance, every time I brought a small gift (e.g. flowers, a dessert or soda water) to a dinner at Bobola and Manuel's house, they always insisted on giving me something in return (e.g. a sweater, argan oil or pastries), and they were always complaining greatly when receiving gifts. On one occasion, they invited my mother to dinner, and showed great discomfort when she arrived with a large bouquet of flowers. Similarly, every time I shared a drink with people at a café or bar, my companions always insisted on paying my tab. When my relationship with some Gitanos grew stronger, I was eventually permitted to help them out financially (e.g. by buying school supplies for their children), and pay for drinks. Nonetheless, when I invited people out for a meal at a restaurant, they always felt that they should 'pay me back' somehow – albeit often in non-monetary goods, such as stories, insights and 'revelations' from *el pueblo Gitano*, which they knew I valued greatly. For my Gitano friends, there seemed to be danger associated with the acceptance of a gift, related to the social obligation such an act may carry (e.g. Mauss [1925] 1966).

The potential social hazards of gift giving were also revealed to me on other occasions during my time in Madrid. Once, while enjoying a significantly

overpriced bottle of sparkling water at an outdoor café, a woman I took to be an Eastern European beggar approached my table. She told me that she was thirsty, and she asked for my water. Having already poured some of the contents into my own glass, I gave her the bottle. She took it, filled her mouth, gargled it and spit it out. She repeated this move a couple of times, then poured the rest of the contents onto the street, placed the bottle back on the table and walked away. In similar episodes, I was spit on and yelled at by Eastern European beggars in the streets of Madrid and elsewhere after giving money to them. Similar ethnographic examples are documented by, for instance, Røyrvik (1998) in his study of Bulgarian Gypsies.

A related example of how the Gitanos in Madrid view the power of the gift was revealed to me in my conversations with Payo friends about the Gitano lifestyle. I was told that Spanish Gitanos are strictly patriarchal, family oriented and governed by norms and morality, and that they have their own religion, politics, rules and laws. Finally – and this seemed to be the most annoying characteristic for my Payo friends – ‘they do not want to receive any help [from the state]! And if they on occasion accept some help, such as a house to live in, they typically destroy or sell everything within that house!’ Right or wrong, my Payo friends nevertheless touched upon the potential complexities concerning gift giving – and the problems of clientelism – between state authorities and the Spanish Gitano population (e.g. San Román 1997). Gay y Blasco (2003, 2016) shows that such state ‘gifts’ – as for instance special typology housing programmes or segregated schools and classrooms – never come without expectations that such groups should adopt a certain attitude and way of living.

Importantly, I do not consider the above examples as indicative of a pattern of ‘ethnic’ practice but rather as the Rastro Gitanos’ deliberate disarticulation from society or, more precisely, from the subsuming force of patron–client relationships and state efforts to assimilate them into society. The power of the gift jeopardizes such a deliberate disjointing. As a symbolic act, by rejecting or destroying a gift we might say that the Gitanos of el Rastro break with the *hau* of the gift – the spirit, force and intention of the giver through the gift (Mauss [1925] 1966). Seen in this light, when refusing to receive a gift, or in some cases spitting or yelling at a gift giver, some groups seek to uphold their disarticulation from patronizing giver–receiver relationships.

In the next section, I consider several historical patterns regarding the question ‘to whom shall we kneel?’. The descriptions concern the historic status of these groups as ‘masterless men’ (e.g. Mayall 2004) or people who do not properly submit to a ‘*señor*’ and are without acknowledged work, residency, lifestyle, customs and traditions; in short, people who do not display the proper form of social being (San Román 1997). As previously

mentioned, the phrase ‘masterless men’ is a metaphor and an historical analogy for the present-day Rastro Gitanos’ ethos of being their own masters.

MASTERLESS MEN

Alongside the story of the Gypsies’ persecution and discrimination, I argue, there is another story – sometimes ignored and forgotten – of the Gypsies’ opposition to assimilation. Both ethnographic and historical studies show that, since feudal society, through the establishment of nation states and up to the modern era, Gypsies have – to varying degrees – resisted amalgamation into the established social and cultural order, defied submission to the political authority and state powers, and dismissed mainstream economic work and relations (e.g. salary work and the employee–employer relation) (e.g. Mayall 2004; San Román 1997).

While there are historical and ethnographic accounts of both suppressive and violent acts towards Gypsy/Roma peoples, there are simultaneously many stories of Gypsy/Roma peoples insisting on being ‘masterless men’, even in times when every person in the lower strata of society was obliged to be someone’s property (i.e. to have a master) (Fraser 1992; Mayall 2004: 58–59; Pym 2007; San Román 1997). The transition from feudalism to capitalism involved changes in political and economic organizing. It also transformed the relation between the state and the Gypsies/Roma. In Europe, and in Spain more particularly, the period between 1560–1640 saw a peak in state activity against vagrants.

From the first Catholic Kings, the governing idea of social, cultural, economic and religious homogenization was strong, and continuous attempts were made to get the Gitanos under control. Already in 1499, Gitanos were being harassed by a law that required that they settled, left their itinerant life, submitted to a master (*señor*) and took on a proper work, phrased as either *oficios conocidos* (‘recognized work’), *oficios suficientes* (‘proper work’) or *oficios honestos* (‘honest work’). Simultaneously, the law obliged the Gitanos to stop being the social beings they were by leaving their language, ways of dressing and decorating, their customs and internal social relations and loyalties (San Román 1997: 17). The governing political idea was either they submit or they leave, in both cases facilitating the creation of a homogenous state. However, of the fifteenth-century Gitano population’s lack of will to assimilate – with reference to the name of the first Gitano ‘dukes’, ‘lords’ or ‘counts’ – San Román (1997) writes that with the good relations established with various royal authorities in Spain, ‘it does not seem like either Martín, Jacobo or Pablo had any interest in settling, integrating or leaving’ (ibid.: 11, my translation). Their strategy as political

chameleons and pilgrims had brought good results. Later, however, when they decided to settle, they were not permitted to do so, and rather driven from one place to the other, or simply restricted to settle in politically decided localities: in 1695 there were 41 localities in Spain in which the Gitanos were permitted to live; later the number was reduced to below 30 villages or sites (ibid.: 27).

The proceeding centuries perpetuated these assimilative measures, with expulsion replaced with slavery in the colonies when demand was high. In the years between 1499–1799, the ideologically motivated political aim was assimilation by means of persecution. In fact, the threat of expulsion, persecution and enslavement should, according to San Román (ibid.: 17–24), be seen as a means of homogenization and assimilation and not targets in themselves. In this same epoch, there were increased restrictions on where Gitanos could settle and which professions they were permitted to take on. Carlos II (1695), for instance, reduced their labour to agriculture and restricted their movement to place of residence (San Román 1997: 21). There were no longer church asylums, and nomads were left outside the law. By now, Gitanos were no longer considered foreigners (*extranjeros*), neither were they a *nacion* or a *pueblo*, as other minorities in Spain. Instead of ‘Gitano’ they were to be called *nuevos castillanos* (‘new Castilians’). They were further required to ‘adapt their temperament and idiosyncrasy’ (ibid.: 23), and the trade of horses, mules, donkeys and cattle was forbidden for Gitanos.

According to San Román (1997: 6), the political quest for the elimination of Gitano culture and sociality has been there from the very beginning, from the moment it became obvious that the Gitanos were not going to leave. What we can learn from history, San Román writes, is that the assimilation of Gitanos has more or less been a permanent pursuit, from the Catholic Kings to present-day democracy. Gitanos have been threatened with expulsion, the galleys, death or they have been tempted with social and legal advantages or subsidies of the welfare state. Paradoxically then, policy in Spain has always been about persecution for incorporation (ibid.: 21) or assimilation by exclusion; for purposes of assimilation, the Gitanos in Spain have been pushed into marginalization and criminalization (ibid.: 24). This important point was later picked up by, for instance, Gay y Blasco (2003) in her ethnographic study of the creation of special housing colonies for Gitanos in the 1980s and 1990s, and of school segregation policies and practices in Madrid (2016), where the implicit political motto has been ‘assimilation by segregation’.

With a focus on the wider European context, Mayall (2004: 58) states that, ‘they [the Gypsies] were masterless in a period when the able-bodied were supposed to have masters, and by turning to itinerancy they also

broke with family, economic, religious and political convention'. Equally important was the transition from bound to free labour, or no labour at all, meaning that 'traditional social relations, and with them mechanisms for social control, were being broken down. Masterless men, at the political, economic and ideological levels, thus came to be perceived as a danger to the established social order' (ibid.). Mayall's emphasis on the Gypsies as 'masterless men', which he holds as the key to understanding state attitudes and responses, is equally stressed by Lucassen, Willems and Cottaar (1998) and linked to the writings of Charles Tilly (1979) on state formation, capital and coercion.

Lucassen finds that 'it is also the case that laws to restrict and curb all migrancy, except in the occasional circumstance where it was considered essential and productive, can be found across all periods and in all European societies' (cited in Mayall 2004: 59). Therefore, an examination of broader European tendencies – beyond the nation state – might shed light on more local restrictions of Gypsies. Underscoring this point, Mayall (ibid.) concludes that:

The core argument is that stigmatization and repression have to be located within the structural economic developments occurring from the Middle Ages onwards and related to the move from bound to free labour, and so from a feudal to a market-oriented capitalist system. Repression, by means of Vagrancy and Poor Law statutes, was a means of controlling the labour migration of so-called 'masterless men' and of ultimately binding them to capital.

Adhering to Mayall's remarks and based on the material presented in this book, I argue that one might view the Rastro Gitanos' disarticulation from capitalist work relations as their explicit resistance to hegemonic attempts to bind them to a particular kind of capital – that is, those of state and private enterprises and companies. The Gitanos of el Rastro do, however, simultaneously embrace the 'market' through their economic practices as merchants. Nevertheless, they do so on their own terms and by so doing escape the commodification and alienation that comes with regular wage labour. Their alternative economic model embraces distinct work relations – that is, alternative forms of social obligations and social relations, and new and distinct grounds for social control. Through their ideologically grounded position as self-employed traders, we can thus say that they express anti-proletarian, anti-authoritarian and anti-establishment attitudes and practices.

The work of Bereményi and Carrasco (2015) offers an analysis of the social and educational situation of the Gitano population post-2008 recession and its neoliberal management by Spanish authorities. Almost thirty years prior to their study, the contrast between the Gitano way of life and

market-orientated neoliberal Spain was noted by Mariano Enguita, exemplified by the cover text for his book *Alumnos gitanos en la escuela paya* (1991). He writes:

Minority, culture, ethnic group ..., Gitanos are not only characterised by a differentiated symbolic universe ... but also and above all by a material way of life, largely alternative ... The school, for its part, far from being simply at the service of human development, manifests itself as a key mechanism in the formation and reproduction of this society: sedentary, individualistic, nuclear family, market society, dominated by organizations, with a predominance of salaried, legal, liberal and democratic work ...

Thus, from a state authority point of view (e.g. San Román 1997; Mayall 2004; Tilly 1979), with their break with conventional economic practices, one can argue that the Gitanos of el Rastro simultaneously break with other conventions, such as those relating to family and social life, religious affiliations, the valuation of knowledge and the education of children. In all these breaks, a significant factor is their articulated scepticism towards submission to the power structures of capitalist work relations – that is, proletarianization.

Charles Tilly (1979) describes proletarianization as a process in which a person loses control of his or her own work and becomes dependent on selling his or her own labour. Proletarianization can also be understood as a process that forces people to become substitutable workers – also known as ‘deskilling’ – within modern industrial society (ibid.). As shown in Chapters 3 and 4, the present day *comerciantes* of el Rastro possess specialized skills that they have honed through their particular lifestyle, upbringing and socialization. Hence, as I see it, by insisting on something akin to a total social alternative to hegemonic society, they resist deskilling and other efforts to transform them from specialist self-employed middleman traders into substitutable workers in a capitalist work chain, with work relations, processes and outcomes that they cannot themselves control.

When the historic feudal relation between master and client dissolved, so too did the traditional modes of social control. Thus, in modern industrial societies, it became important for both capital owners and state powers to gain and develop new forms of social control over their workers and citizens (ibid.). Not only were work relations and working conditions controlled but also workers’ life outside of the workplace. In the modern or postmodern context, control over people’s spare time by the state, company or ‘establishment’ is known as ‘cultural monitoring’. Often, this manifests as implicit or explicit pressure to adopt bourgeois, genteel and ascetic manners, in contrast to popular, boisterous and vulgar behaviour (e.g. Kaprow 1982, 1999; Tilly 1979). Thus, one could argue that the Rastro

Gitanos' disarticulation from neoliberal work relations is not only a resistance towards becoming bound to a particular type of capital but also a way of escaping state and other modes of social influence and control – an issue I will address in the following sections.

BOURGEOIS VERSUS BOISTEROUS

Kaprow's ethnographic studies of firefighters in New York (1991, 1999) and Gitanos in Zaragoza (1978, 1982, 1984) show how certain groups purposely produce and uphold a reputation as vulgar, wild and untamed through their boisterous (i.e. un-bourgeois) behaviour. Kaprow does this without dismissing or trivializing power structures that pull such groups towards increased proletarianization – on the contrary, this is an important part of her argument. In the study of New York firefighters (1991, 1999), she shows how they oppose bureaucratization and maintain control over their spare time through, among other things, a game they call 'Scrotum on the head'. In this game, one firefighter is tied to a fixed object and another firefighter places his scrotum on top of the tied firefighter's head while shouting, 'Scrotum on the head!'

In the case of the Zaragoza Gitanos, Kaprow (1978, 1982, 1984) shows how they manipulate a reputation as scandalous and disreputable in line with the Payos' image of them as lacking in social etiquette and tact. She further claims that these acts are aimed at making them appear unsuitable as labourers, in order to avoid proletarianization – and thereby the Gitanos remain in control of their own work and resist state incorporation measures. Thus, through their strategies of 'resisting respectability', they gain the 'rewards of disreputableness' – that is, resistance to assimilation and economic and social success and survival in their 'disarticulated' position within the larger society. Of course, as history and current-day Spain clearly show, what Kaprow (1982, 1984) calls the 'rewards of disreputableness' sometimes turn into the 'curse of disreputableness' in the shape of negative stereotypes and prejudices about the Spanish Gitano population.

Max Weber's theory of class ([1913] 1978) is distinguished from the Marxist approach in several respects – most notably in its focus on consumption patterns as a class-defining mechanism. Following a similar interest, Pierre Bourdieu (1979) was concerned with how more or less subtle forms of power are transferred between generations, and how aesthetic judgements relate to social position or, more accurately, are themselves acts of social positioning. As shown in Chapter 2, the Rastro Gitanos, in their conceptualizations of social differences and identity, very explicitly relate to both a bourgeois demeanour and comportment (*comportamiento*) and a

boisterous and vulgar appearance. These mannerisms also play a role in their differentiation between the ‘saved’ and the ‘damned’ in the Gitano community – that is, between the Pentecostal converts and the non-converts.

The bourgeois aspect of *creyentes* manifests itself during evening promenades in the finest areas of old Madrid. They use the word *pasear* to describe these evening walks, which often take place after *el culto*, especially on Sundays. During these walks, families, couples or friends stroll together in a cheerful mood, while perhaps also engaging in serious discussion about politics, family, business, religion or secular affairs. These *flaneurs* may stop along the way to pick up a snack or a drink, or they may sit down for a while, before continuing their promenade. As in *el culto*, on these evening strolls, the Rastro Gitanos are nicely dressed, wearing outfits that resemble the finer fashions of the 1950s and 1960s. Also, their manner of speech and gesture is polite and refined. When promenading, they walk studiously. The men behave gentlemanly towards the women, and all demonstrate a hushed, restrained and distinguished demeanour.

The *creyentes* also engage in boisterous play from time to time – both for each other and for their Payo neighbours and spectators. On these occasions, they present animated, raucous and unruly behaviour, with shouting, wild gestures and overt pathos. Through these enactments, the Rastro Gitanos seem to produce a Gypsiness *par excellence*, as envisioned in the minds of their Payo onlookers. Seen from the opposite perspective, the Payo antique dealers I spoke with complained about the Rastro Gitanos’ nightly littering and noisiness when gathered in large groups; they found these groups of Gitanos to be frightening and disturbing and claimed that they themselves had to clean up after the Gitanos each morning, outside their antique shops in el Rastro.

So then, ‘to whom shall we kneel?’ Concerning the issues of power relations and (non)submission to such relations, I have argued that the Gitanos of el Rastro resist incorporation into the labour market, refuse to submit to what they see as a patron–client relationship and engage performatively with mainstream notions of proper demeanour and conduct. That is, in the words of Münzel and Streck (1981), we might perhaps claim that they reject ‘the totalization of the bourgeois order’. Rather, they emphasize the ethos of ‘being one’s own master’ through an ideology of self-employment, anti-authoritarianism (e.g. the patron–client relation) and anti-proletarianization, and they play out and perform bourgeois and boisterous virtues and values as they please, often to cause unease among nearby Payos and to affirm their disarticulated position in society. In a *communitas*-like fashion, we might on a further note see their play between the bourgeois and the boisterous as a very concrete example of their avantgarde engagement with the dialectics of structure and anti-structure; testing, weighing, appropriating and

challenging common notions and structures connected to extended forms of social control.

TOWARDS A PRIVILEGED STRANGER POSITION

The Rastro Gitanos' ethos of 'being one's own master' and not 'bending the knee' to Payo authority summarizes their resistance to hegemonic attempts to proletarianize them and submit them to state and corporate social control (e.g. Tilly 1979). In the following analysis, I explore the Rastro Gitanos' resistance to proletarianization and capitalist work relations as a fight to *maintain* their position as something akin to the 'old', premodern stranger. To do so, I first have to address the figure of the 'Stranger' (Simmel 1908) and how it relates to the present case.

In his classic essay, Georg Simmel (1908) describes the stranger as one who comes today and stays tomorrow. He is, in other words, the stranger within. To give an example, the first Gitanos coming to Spain were received as honourable guests, and they were welcomed and given both the material and political help needed to travel through Spanish Kingdoms. However, as we have seen, once the governing authorities understood that these pilgrims had no intention of either settling, submitting or leaving, they became subjects for assimilative political strategies (San Román 1997).

On a further note, this stranger trope describes the formal position, the emotional attachment and the generality of features held in common – that is, the relational features produced when people bring into a group qualities not already inherent in it (e.g. Levine 1977). As such, my own usage of the stranger trope in relation to the Gitanos of el Rastro stands quite directly on the shoulders of Simmel (1908) and the writers that have followed in his theoretical footsteps (see below), while I also consider the criticism highlighted, for example, by Martin Fotta (2018) and Jackson et al. (2017), who emphasize the need to include the hyper-diverse and super-mobile character of postmodernity in our analyses.

In the literature, there are several types of 'stranger' identified in analyses of Gypsy/Roma relations to the state and mainstream society. Specifically, Berland and Rao (2004) suggest the concept of the 'customary stranger', and Marlene Sway (1988) described the California Gypsies she studied as 'familiar strangers'. Both these types of stranger play with Simmel's (1908) figure by underscoring the dual status of these peoples within society – simultaneously inside and outside, near and remote. For Zygmunt Bauman (1991a), strangers are neither friend nor enemy; they are the 'undecidables' of the modern world, and in this role they are often depicted as a threat to the hegemonic social order. Various authors writing on Gypsy/Roma issues

have built on Bauman's (e.g. 1991a, 1991b, 1995) figure of the stranger, addressing, for example, the ambivalent place of Roma people in European modernity (Bancroft 1999; Bhopal and Myers 2008; Grill 2012; Hadziavdic 2012; Myers 2016; Sigona 2003: 70).

The old, preindustrial or premodern stranger (e.g. Simmel 1908) appears in society as a 'modernizing element'. He is someone who is highly skilled and often performs tasks that the natives are incapable of carrying out. In present-day societies, on the other hand, the stranger, in the shape of the postcolonial or postmodern stranger (Karakayali 2006; Brodersen and Røyrvik 2021), is no longer that of the skilled artisan, craftsman, trader or judge of the past, who enjoyed a somewhat favourable position. He is rather the underprivileged migrant worker, the guest worker, the performer of 'dirty jobs', lacking special skills and employed in heavy manual labour such as elder care, cleaning services, construction or seasonal farm work. These undesirable jobs are depicted as vulgar, dirty or dreary tasks that the natives are unwilling to carry out. Hence, as we can see, the role of the stranger is intrinsically connected to the social division of labour in society, which again affects the process of social differentiation (e.g. Karakayali 2006). I suggest that the Gitano *comerciantes* of el Rastro historically, and to a large extent still today, can fruitfully be described using Simmel's notion of the 'old' Simmelian stranger relation. However, this privileged position is challenged by current economic and political developments in Spain and the EU, including policies of ethnic reclassification of Gitanos into Roma that might be seen as transforming this positive stranger into an underprivileged neoliberal stable stranger (e.g. Brodersen and Røyrvik 2021). Yet, still in the present, the Gitanos of el Rastro find themselves in relation to mainstream society characterizable as simultaneously inside and outside, locked in a 'relational simultaneity' but perpetuating room for agency, autonomy and freedom to maintain their difference – thus holding many potentially contradicting positions at the same time.

While the 'post-modern' stranger trope (ibid.) is largely comparable to the modern (Simmel 1908) or postcolonial stranger (Karakayali 2006), the postmodern stranger is additionally created through the apparatus of neoliberal governmentality and realized through large-scale integration and mainstreaming strategies that could potentially affect as many as 11–12 million Roma people. Brodersen and Røyrvik (2021) further argue that current European efforts to construct and unify a standard Roma ethnic group paradoxically reify the Gypsy/Roma as a new kind of stranger, viewing them as perpetual migrants to the system and manageable objects for policy intervention, and as an underprivileged and largely unused labour stock for flexible capitalism.²

In order to understand the contemporary EU inclusion strategy of ‘conditional acceptance’ (e.g. Wood 1934) and the potential political and economic gain for European elites and authorities as a result of this approach, we must return to the very definition of the stranger. With Simmel’s theory of socialization (1950), we can say that stranger relations represent distinct forms of interaction and power relations; they are all comprised of a certain content and form, and they all involve a dynamic between underlying interests and the realization of those interests. From this perspective thus, one can argue that for the Spanish authorities the Gitanos’ non-conformity is a major problem, articulated as ‘a threat to the nation because the group becomes a living example of successful disobedience’ (Kaprow 1984: 41). Throughout history, hundreds of decrees have been directed towards the forceful integration of this very small minority (Alfaro 1993, 2009), seeking to transform them from travelling jugglers, dancers, actors, sheep shearers etc. into landless day labourers (Leblon 1991, 1993). In addition, Spanish Gitano NGOs (like Roma NGOs elsewhere) have generally followed in the footsteps of the EU by promoting (albeit with good intentions and at times also good results) vocational training for wage labour, literacy programmes, child education, low-rent conventional housing, inscription in the national Civil Lists and, finally, cultural training and monitoring (Gay y Blasco 2016; Kaprow 1984;). Hence, with Brodersen and Røyrvik (2021), we can reason that, from an EU or nation state point of view, a refashioning of Europe’s ‘largest minority’ – the European Roma population – into the figure of a postmodern stranger would channel these people into low paid, ‘dirty jobs’ at the periphery of neoliberal societies – jobs that the native population deem undesirable.

RELATIONAL SIMULTANEITY

So then, how can we sum up the Gitanos of el Rastro’s relation to society in the twenty-first century, over one hundred years after Simmel published his work on the stranger? From an analytical perspective, I see their position as defined by their relation to the division of labour in society; constituted in the empirical context through the Rastro Gitanos’ actions as self-employed middleman traders. Furthermore, I argue that, in its ontological being, their position is fundamentally simultaneous due to the various dualities it incorporates – that is, nearness and remoteness, inclusion and exclusion, freedom and constraint, subjectivity and objectivity – and the way they work these dualities in the cultic realm. Moreover, ethnographically I have explored the Rastro Gitanos’ class-transgressing qualities in terms of how they manoeuvre class notions and ideas with their alternation

between moments of economic prosperity and downward mobility; high-end clientele and itinerant trade; and bourgeois and boisterous behaviour, manners, ways of dressing, speaking and gesticulating. However, though such qualities make up part of their self-identificatory ideas and claims, the overall ethnographic context indicates that their ability to transgress classes might have been severely weakened within the last ten to fifteen years. Nonetheless, I would argue that the concept of simultaneity is key to understanding the Rastro Gitanos' position in and relation to the larger society, as well as their culturally specific, multiplex ways of making sense of the(ir) world, cosmologically and ontologically.

Supporting this claim, I argue that akin to the stranger trope, the Gitanos of el Rastro, through their resistance towards total incorporation into mainstream society, thus end up holding a *dual* rather than a marginal status. Consequently, Robert E. Park's (1928) 'marginal man' and Simmel's (1908) stranger become social types of very different kinds. I have ultimately come to see this duality as central to the Rastro Gitanos' particular way of being in the world *a la manera Gitana* ('the Gitano way').

ON THE CONTRARIES

In more ways than one, this book lingers in liminality and dwells in the experiences of a social corpus that has both incorporated and institutionalized the simultaneous existence of frictionally opposing dualities; binary oppositions (Lévi-Strauss 1955), contraries (Blake 1790) and the dialectics of structure and anti-structure (Turner 1969, 1974). Every chapter is a manifestation of this; however, coming to an end, there are two major contributors to my analytical approach and ethnographic findings that I have not yet addressed explicitly: Victor Turner and William Blake. This is as much a nod to future anthropological speculations as it is to what has already been written.

Turner's message is simple: there are two dialectically opposed and mutually indispensable human conditions. On the one hand, there is the normative realm of social structure, social status, rank, property, self, secularity, and essence. On the other hand, there is the realm of liminality, a realm of statuslessness, equality, poverty, self-denial, sanctity, and existence. 'Communitas' is Turner's label for the egalitarian, personal social relationship which obtains among those who share liminality. (Gardner 1971: 451)

To reach this organic partnership of communitas, people need to open themselves up in radical ways, much as the *creyentes* in *el culto* 'open up' and 'let go' in order to let *el Espíritu Santo* in. William Blake's 'offering up of self' and Martin Buber's 'search for the essential we' stand for Turner

(1974) as a precondition for true, *communitas*-like conversing with others (Fernandez 1975).

Combined, liminality and *communitas* make up what Turner describes as anti-structure. Anti-structure is not chaos, neither is it the negation of structure, rather we are talking about two major models for human inter-relatedness (Turner 1974). In other words, structure and anti-structure are two dialectical processes working in tandem, in a constant back-and-forth movement, one evolving from the other.

Structure and anti-structure are not Cain and Abel, to use a metaphor familiar to ourselves; they are rather Blake's Contraries that must be 'redeemed by destroying the Negation'. Otherwise we must all perish, for behind specific historical and cultural developments, East versus West, hierarchical versus egalitarian systems, individualism versus communism, lies the simple fact that man is both a structural and an anti-structural entity, who grows through anti-structure and conserves through structure. (Turner 1974: 298)

As we can observe in *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*, Turner (1974) makes explicit his inspiration from Blake's Contraries, and it is obvious that there is a strong conceptual link between their two ideas. In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790) William Blake writes,

Without Contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human existence. From these contraries spring what the religious call Good & Evil. Good is the passive that obeys Reason. Evil is the active springing from Energy. Good is Heaven. Evil is Hell. (in Erdman 1988: 34)

For Blake, contraries are opposing states necessary for any forward movement in both society and person. When contraries are allowed to exist simultaneously, as in the liminal realm of *el culto*, they clash and collide and by that prevent negations, neutrals and non-engagement. Following Blake, when incorporated into a social system, contraries offer options and allow people to choose which route to follow and which features of either side that are truly good and truly bad (Facemire 2012). In these social systems, binary oppositions do exist, but they are held together within a greater epistemological and ontological order. Turner (1974) equally distinguishes between those 'root paradigms' that can or cannot 'bring different orders of being – structure and *communitas*, for example – into a vital whole' (Swanson 1975: 309). As this book has hopefully shown, for the Gitanos of el Rastro, frictionally opposing dualities – contraries, binary oppositions and the dialectics of structure and anti-structure – are held together through their creation of an alternative social corpus – a vital whole or 'root paradigm' in Turner's vocabulary (1974). Their engagement with existentially

opposing principals is further constantly and continuously kept alive by their Simmelian relation to their hegemonical surroundings, and their own (*sui generis*) continuation through change – that is, the very manifestation of the dialectics between structure and anti-structure.

According to Dale McLemore (1970), Simmel (1908) was fascinated by the ‘mixture of opposites’ constitutive of the stranger; established as a result of the stranger’s dual relationship to mainstream society. This dualism can, for instance, be exemplified by the stranger’s in-between position as middleman trader, agent, labour contractor, rent collector, money lender or broker; as positioned between producer and consumer, employer and employee, owner and renter, or between the elites and the masses, where they have been seen to ‘plug the status gap’ (Bonacich 1973: 1). According to Bauman (1991b), the stranger disrupts the dichotomous harmony of the world and rebels against the ‘cosy antagonism’ of the world as made up of enemies and friends (*ibid.*: 55). The stranger resists and disorganizes the neatness of binary oppositions inherent to society and has the ability to ‘befog and eclipse boundary lines which ought to be clearly seen’ (Bauman 1997: 25). More so, the stranger has the power to ‘destroy the world’ by unmasking ‘the brittle artificiality of division’ (Bauman 1991b: 59; see also Rumford 2013). In my view, all these theoretical insights confirm the value of my attempt in this book to highlight the more existential – or ontologically constitutive – nature of the dual relationship of the Rastro Gitanos to their non-Gitano surroundings (i.e. *el mundo de los Payos*), as well as the internal feelings and ‘mixture of oppositions’ (e.g. McLemore 1970) produced by this dual relationship.

Theoretically, due mainly to the combined social distance and physical proximity between the stranger and his or her ‘host society’, the dualism of the stranger can be depicted as the co-occurrence of ‘complete liberation and absolute fixation’ (McLemore 1970: 1). Interestingly, the simultaneous manifestation of ‘complete liberation and absolute fixation’ could also work as a comparative metaphor for the central act of the *creyentes* in *el culto* – that is, the ‘opening up and letting go’ of their own stable selves and their rational day mind, as well as their more or less fixed social position among family and kin in order for them to feel ritually liberated and let *el Espíritu Santo* (‘the Holy Spirit’) in. With ‘the very emotional dissonance embodied’ in the dualism experienced by the stranger (Levine 1977: 21), we might say that an important part of the motivation for the *creyentes*’ ritual emotional and aesthetic expressivity, especially concerning their ritual engagement with frictionally opposing dualities (Chapters 5–7), lies in the potential resolving of – or at least engagement with – this emotional dissonance – that is, between ‘complete liberation and absolute fixation’ (McLemore 1970: 1).

Finally, the stranger also implies a freedom from convention (McLemore 1970), from 'habit, piety and precedent' (Simmel 1950: 405). This supports my explorations of the Rastro Gitanos as not only *makers* of tradition but *breakers* of tradition (e.g. Chapter 4). Moreover, it invites us to look at their social, economic and religious activities and cultural expressivity as intrinsically entrepreneurial – that is, if we think about the entrepreneur as someone who produces something new by breaking with already existing conventions and traditions (e.g. Barth 1967; Schumpeter [1934] 2000).

A DUAL EXISTENCE AND AN ONTOLOGY OF SIMULTANEITY

All through the book, the *dual* or *simultaneous* nature of the Rastro Gitanos' relation to mainstream society has worked as a kind of key metaphor or trope in my analyses: In Part I, in the Rastro Gitanos' ideas about belonging and identity; in Part II, in my description of the Rastro Gitanos' alternative economic practices and model as self-employed middleman traders – positioned simultaneously as part of and apart neo-capitalist economic society; in Part III, in my explorations of their ritual engagement with simultaneously existing tensional oppositions; and in Part IV, in my examinations of their combined essentialist and processual way of engaging with the construction of signs and objects (conceptual and material) grounded in an 'ontology of simultaneity'.

As shown, the Rastro Gitanos' creation of an alternative social corpus still manifests and embraces a relation to larger society as something akin to the old, premodern, privileged stranger. In my analysis, this has to do with the freedom to 'bend the knee' to whomever or whatever they – as a collective – choose. So, to whom do the Rastro Gitanos kneel? The obvious answer would be that they kneel to nobody but God; he is, so to speak, the one and only '*Señor*' in this picture. It might seem like a great contradiction that the Rastro Gitanos should hold an ethos of being their own masters at the same time as they practise a Pentecostal ideology of subjection unto God and the Holy Spirit in such an intense manner, and so it is a marriage between heaven (, earth) and hell, to paraphrase Blake (1790). There is no doubt that they make themselves into subjects of God's will and purpose, and not only that, they are also immensely concerned with his plan and purpose for their lives. Moreover, one could argue that God could come to resemble a totalitarian power and 'master' in his omnipotence and way of managing their lives. However, that being the case, God, for the Gitanos of el Rastro, is also viewed as a loving, caring, healing and understanding father. He judges and tests, yes, but in a fair and righteous way that acknowledges the shortcomings of man. Moreover, at least to a certain extent, he is a God

of their creation – that is, a culturally shaped God of their own choosing and making. Nevertheless, as a cultural product, this interventionist God might also carry unforeseen consequences and powers, beyond the control of the Rastro Gitanos. With that said, both *creyentes* and the pastor often advocated that the relation between themselves and God should be a personal relationship, with no pastor or church hierarchy mediating it; hence, in one sense, one could argue that the distance to power (God) is presumably shorter than in the case of an employer–employee relation. After all, God empowers man to do great things, but it *might* be hard to find the same strength, freedom, health, comfort and love in state authorities or managers of large companies. Again, the God that ‘walks around el Rastro’ and ‘the God that the Gitanos know from when they are very small’, as one pastor candidate put it, is a collectively self-chosen and culturally fashioned God – and after all, is it not so, as Bob Dylan (1979) sings, that ‘Everybody gotta serve somebody’?

Having dealt with the apparent paradox between the Rastro Gitanos’ subjection to God and their ethos of being their own masters, there is yet another answer to whom the Rastro Gitanos ‘kneel’, something that also seems to include a subjection to God – that is, they kneel to the Gitano way of life – life *a la manera Gitana* – as promoted and practised in the context of el Rastro. This kneeling implies, perhaps, the renouncement of a certain amount of individual freedom in favour of a stronger Gitano collective – a *communitas* (e.g. Turner 1969, 1974). Moreover, although I see the Rastro Gitanos’ disarticulation from society and their ‘kneeling’ to the Gitano way of life as a deliberate ideological and cosmological choice, this choice does not come without a cost, as exemplified by the high levels of analphabetism in this community; the fact that they, on average, live ten years shorter than their Payo neighbours (Briggs 2013); the prejudices they meet in Payo society; and also, in the story of 16-year-old Manuel, who was expelled from *el pueblo Gitano* after breaking off his engagement with a Gitana girl, to mention a few examples (for several other examples, see Brodersen 2021).

As shown, the Rastro Gitanos’ fight for a privileged position in relation to the larger society is marked by their ideological, cosmological and ontological ideas and notions directed towards the creation of a ‘root paradigm’ (Turner 1974) – that is, holding together contraries, binary oppositions and the dialectics between structure and anti-structure in a ‘vital whole’ (e.g. Swanson 1975). This fight can be seen as a struggle to maintain agency and control over their own lives and to protect their own autonomy and freedom. As we have seen, this freedom becomes manifested in their *making of market*, through their self-creation of a particular socio-economic niche. It evolves in their *making of mercy*, through a ritually created liberation from their social and rational selves towards an extended form of *communitas*.

Finally, their *making of meaning* implies a freedom to produce objects, signs and interpretations based on flexible, simultaneous, oxymoric, contrarian and – not least – spiritual grounds. In sum, their struggle becomes a fight to defend the freedom to creatively experience and engage with the ‘existential beginnings’ of both structure and anti-structure.

This book has been the result of four main analytical strategies: that of ethnographic identification; the ‘anthropologization’ of these identificatory findings; that of ethnographic surprises and discoveries; and finally, that of extending my philosophizing outside the ‘ivory tower’ to engage in a process of co-speculation with my friends in el Rastro regarding ideological, cosmological and ontological matters. In a variety of ways, and by various means and aims, I learned how they ask themselves and each other existential questions on a daily basis. In my view, their questions are not only posed intellectually and spiritually within a ritual and religious context but also suggested in their entire lived experience. As I increasingly came to know them, I would say that they act out and practice these questions, inviting answers to emerge from all of life’s facets and nuances; furthermore, they do so not blindly or submitting, but knowingly, with rapture and rebellion. The Rastro Gitanos’ moral, spiritual and religious work is tough and time consuming but made bearable by their sense of God’s infinite love and liberating force. ‘We shall feed on the words of God, but oh Lord how good it tastes with a juicy hamburger!’, yelled the pastor to the congregation. With God’s word and holy bread in one hand and earthly bread and life’s multiple joys, sorrows and necessities in the other, I argue that it is existence, *per se*, that is at stake for these evangelical Gitanos of el Rastro, and through their ‘expressive existentialism’ I have sought to show how they offer us their lived answers to speculations of the existential kind. On these grounds, this book and its analyses have aimed at engaging deeply with their lives, in an effort to shed light on their lived answers to general existential dilemmas concerning submission to power, the liberating force of mercy, the pleasure-pain of creation and the human endeavour of making sense of the world we all live in.

NOTES

1. For a similar ethnographic case, at least in terms of middle- to upper-class belonging, see Arias (2002) and Lemon (2000).
2. For a historical example of how Gypsies have been seen as an ‘unused labour stock’, see Stewart (1997).