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Original Citation

Matthews, Jodie (2015) Gypsies in Germany and Italy, 1861–1914: Lives Outside the Law. *Social History*, 40 (4). pp. 553-555. ISSN 0307-1022

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Jennifer Illuzzi, *Gypsies in Germany and Italy, 1861–1914: Lives outside the Law* (2014), vii +216 (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, £60/\$85 hardback)

In a chapter focusing on Germany between 1870 and 1909, Jennifer Illuzzi reports on a meeting in Berlin at the end of that period, at which Reich and Prussian officials met to discuss Gypsies and freedom of movement. What were the gendarmes to do, the officials wondered, with Gypsies who had legal papers and had committed no crime? We are, perhaps, used to the idea of the pernicious criminalization of the Romani minority across Europe. However, this stark description of the law-abiding, legible Gypsy as a problem *because* she or he is law-abiding retains the power to shock. The officials' concern gets to the heart of Illuzzi's impressive work. Her subtitle is deceptively understated: the lives outside the law of which it speaks were not individuals transgressing legal and social norms, but lives deliberately *placed* outside the law by the state and its apparatus.

For Illuzzi, the categorization of people as Gypsies and persecution of those placed in that category in Italy and Germany was a process that highlighted a fundamental conflict within the operation of a nation-state committed to a liberal universalist concept of law. To put it crudely, some people were more universal than others. The ideal of the coherent national community clashed with the reality of a heterogeneous population, elements of which state powers wished to exclude. Nationalism's need to create categories of exclusion caused the violation of constitutional principles.

One note that sounds clearly throughout the book is the immense ideological, legislative, and bureaucratic labour involved in creating a state of exception for Gypsies. The reader gets a sense of the knots in which various authorities tied themselves trying to remain faithful to the idea of legal equality while simultaneously singling out Gypsies for maltreatment in their territories. The work-around in both Germany and Italy to this liberal

conflict was to 'foreignize' Gypsies in order to renege on their legal rights as citizens. They were dealt with outside the law. They became '*homines sacri*, abandoned to the violence of the executive authorities, with no authorities to defend their rights' (p. 63).

Illuzzi's use of Giorgio Agamben's writing in *State of Exception* (which itself draws on Judith Butler's work on Guantanamo Bay) and *Homo Sacer* locates Agamben as potentially very important to theorizing Romani Studies – though, ironically, Illuzzi points out that Agamben 'would not have thought to consider' Gypsies in his work (p. 179). A recent article by Riccardo Armillei on the blog of the European Academic Network on Romani Studies returns to *Homo Sacer* in his exploration of cultural diversity in relation to Romani camps in contemporary Italy.¹

Foreignization and criminalization were not, however, fail-safe solutions to the anti-Gypsy conflict within the nation state. Amorphous definitions of the group meant that, on the ground, police were 'never quite sure exactly whom they were targeting' (p. 38). In Italy, the law assumed that Italians could not be Gypsies, but what were officials to do (to echo the quandary of the Berlin meeting) with people who seemed to be Gypsies but could also prove their Italian birth and ancestry? People moved in and out of the category 'Gypsy', giving the lie to the positivist theories of those who, later in the period under discussion, attempted to define an eternal, criminal 'Gypsiness' – not necessarily one based on race. In Germany, where 'native Gypsies' officially existed, the police were confused by those who looked and acted like other Germans.

There is political risk in positing a central thesis such as Illuzzi's: if the modern exclusion of Gypsies is so tied up with the emergence of the bureaucratic state, how can that exclusion end without a revolutionary shift in power in Europe? However, the subtlety of her

¹ R. Armillei, 'The Camps System in Italy: Corruption, Inefficiencies and Practices of Resistance', *EANRS blog*, <http://romanistudies.eu/the-camps-system-in-italy/>. Accessed 27 April 2015.

argument in scrupulously demonstrating the process of exclusion as one that contradicts the foundations of liberal universalism (plus the detailing of occasional incidents when Gypsies emerged from a state of exception to find protection under the law) allows theoretical space for another way, a less shameful relationship between national majorities and their others; Illuzzi gives short shrift to cosmopolitan citizenship as the answer. She is careful, too, not to frame the modern, liberal bureaucratic nation-state as an inevitable pre-cursor to fascism, preferring to examine what it was about the choices of states such as Germany and Italy that ‘unintentionally cleared the way to the *Porrajmos*’, the Nazi genocide of Romani people in the mid-twentieth century (p. 9). Drawing comparisons with fascism alone is ‘too easy’, she asserts, as it does not fully contend with the project of making citizens legible in modern and bureaucratic nation-states (p. 8).

This is, despite its incredibly detailed attention to national, regional, and local levels of executive power, a very human approach to history. Unperturbed by the archivists’ insistence in Northern Italy that ‘we didn’t have Gypsies then’, Illuzzi persevered by searching databases using profession-based keywords and knowledge of common surnames and then reading case file after case file. The result is not only an important theoretical contribution to the field, but the retrieval of compelling individual stories that are deliberately excised from national histories. Illuzzi does not paint a picture of a passive people, powerless in the face of bureaucratic agency, rather explaining the ways in which Gypsies intelligently acted to thwart various forms of surveillance – surveillance they knew existed to punish them for who they were.

Romani Studies is dominated by important, temporally and geographically wide-ranging monographs, including: Angus Fraser’s *The Gypsies* (1992), Yaron Matras’s *The Romani Gypsies* (2014), and Becky Taylor’s *Another Darkness, Another Dawn* (2014). Illuzzi’s work is a demonstration of the need for regionally expert, chronologically tightly-

focused studies that complement these broader sweeps and are able to critique historiographical orthodoxies precisely through attention to detail and immersion in the time and place under scrutiny.

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