Romani Music Collections, the Ruptured Archive, and Epistemic Justice in the United States

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Abstract

Creating collections and archives of genres such as csardas, parallel to holdings of Romantic compositions based on those styles, affords a means for contemporary Romani performance to provoke institutional recognition of Roma's historical influence on art music. This essay analyzes an instance of such a project at Oberlin College & Conservatory, while also advocating for a rupturing and resuturing of traditional archival data. *A Storied People*, an online Romani music project bridging collections of musical media and oral histories of csardas musicians in the Hungarian/Slovak Roma community around Cleveland, Ohio, USA, went public-facing in 2019, showcasing a Romani music collector's donations and work by a Romani activist and historian in Cleveland, Oberlin Library staff and seminar students, and an ethnomusicologist. This article considers how acquiring the collection intervenes in 21st-century Romani music studies, musicological and archival practices, and their interrelations. Rather than having the collection sit for future research and pedagogical purposes, we connected it through two integrated online platforms to streamable, keyword-linked local oral histories relating to the collection's traditions, performers, and compositions. The resulting online resource makes the music collection and oral histories more meaningful and accessible, at Oberlin and beyond. It thereby ruptures the collection, suturing its material resources to new musical performances and storytelling before it has a chance to reify into an institutionally contained unit. Addressing the sociopolitical context of this work and Roma's ambiguous status within American epistemologies of race and ethnicity, the article analyses the successes and limitations of this approach to collaboration and the need for applied ethnomusicologists to learn from and integrate with applied community-making coming out of musical communities who have long been both wary of and invested in the processes of their public representation.

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How might Roma's contemporary performance of Romani music best provoke institutional recognition of their historical influence on art music? And how do such institutional provocations affect public epistemes of Romani history, experience, and activism? It has been common for institutions to assemble collections of and archives for genres that were created or at least heavily influenced by Roma musicians (e.g. csardas, nóta, romances) while also using their holdings of such materials to promote critical understanding of the histories and continuing status of non-Romani artists who have drawn upon those styles. One such approach has successfully been modeled by *RomArchive*, a Berlin-based digital archive project whose music contributors span Europe and North America. Through genre-crossing performances of Romani anthems like Gelem Gelem[1] on site in Berlin, and through online curation by scholars and practitioners of Romani traditions, many of them residing in the United States, they present numerous "intriguing examples of Romani creativity as well as Romani influence on mainstream cultures, while questioning certain long-held assumptions" (Gelbart, Silverman, and Lie n.d.) about the boundaries and diversity of Romani music.

Fully U.S.-based examples include Michigan State University, where the cataloging and online presentation of the Romani Music Collection has similarly afforded Romani music special prominence within the Lockwood Collection of Romani Ethnology and Gypsy stereotypes, of which music notation and recordings form a comparatively small part, yet are granted pride of place over the collection's non-musical texts, despite being greatly outnumbered by the latter (Smeltekop et al. 2016). The approach here, however, is otherwise quite different in terms of emphasizing media that have already been published or released by other institutions and supporting the creation of knowledge by researchers who come from outside of the archive to use its materials, whereas *RomArchive* and other institutions situated physically in Europe, or dispersed geographically but closely connected to European musical and archival collaborators, participate more actively in the creation of new sources and the shaping of knowledge about Romani music. The latter goals have also characterized certain Romani archival and research projects in the United States that have focused largely on non-musical topics, and the time is ripe for institutions here to integrate music collections into new research, performance, and archival work in order to make audible and legible their potential challenges to long-held assumptions about Roma musicians and their relationships to longer-standing archives that institutions have formed with the artistic canons and aesthetic systems of the dominant societies in mind.

In this essay, I analyze an instance of collecting at Oberlin College & Conservatory, located near Cleveland, Ohio in the United States, in which I participated. I advocate here for rupturing and re-suturing traditional archival data, not as an end-goal but as a continuing process of archival engagement that one can establish in the interrelations of metadata. *A Storied People*, an online Romani music project bridging collections of musical media and oral histories of csardas musicians in the Hungarian/Slovak Roma

[1] See, for instance, the 2019 performance by Lindy Larsson and Petra Gelbart (QRTV Europa 2019).

community around Cleveland, Ohio, USA, went public-facing in 2019, showcasing a Romani music collector's donations and work by a Romani activist and historian in Cleveland, Oberlin Library staff and seminar students, and myself, an ethnomusicologist.[2] This article considers how acquiring the collection intervenes in interview-based research with and on Roma communities, in 21st-century Romani music studies, in musicological and archival practices, and, finally, in the interrelations of these practices.

As a non-Romani researcher and as an employee of Oberlin, which has the oldest continuously operating conservatory in the United States, I represented an opportunity for the collector, a Romani violinist named George Batyi, to place materials in his possession – especially recordings and notation of Romani compositions and of Romani renditions of Gadje compositions inspired by Romani traditions – in a leading Euro-American institution of musical performance. Collections that are so housed frequently just sit for future research and pedagogical purposes, but my understanding of Batyi's desire for these musical materials, as well as my relationship with him and other Roma in the csardas tradition, provoked an ongoing effort to place the collection and the stories of those it represents in continually expanding ways. To do so, we have connected the Batyi Collection through two integrated online platforms to streamable, keyword-linked local oral histories relating to the collection's traditions, performers, and compositions. The resulting online resource makes the music collection and oral histories more meaningful and accessible, at Oberlin and beyond, while providing multiple pathways between media by which we seek neither to objectify nor to flatten individual stories. It thereby ruptures the collection, suturing its material resources to new musical performances and storytelling before it has a chance to reify into an institutionally contained unit. Addressing the sociopolitical context of this work and Roma's ambiguous status within American epistemologies of race and ethnicity, the article analyses the successes and limitations of this approach to collaboration and the need for applied ethnomusicologists to learn from and integrate with applied community-making coming out of musical communities who have long been both wary of and invested in the processes of their public representation.

Epistemes of Romani History and Experience

Collections of music are not the only examples of such undertakings in the U.S. The collecting of oral histories and their analytical treatment has also been common in a number of recent studies. Some of these include some of the very same Romani American voices and collaborators with whom my students and I have worked: Martha Bloomfield's (2019) oral history-based monograph *Romanies in Michigan* and a study, conducted jointly by Harvard University's Bagnoud Center for Health and Human Rights and by the organization Voice of Roma, called *Romani Realities in the United States* (Matache et al. 2020). From the vantage point of our project, the most notable individual

[2] The site may be accessed at https://astoriedpeople.oberlincollegelibrary.org/.

intersecting these various projects is Steve Piskor, who appears as an expert interviewee and point of contact in both of these studies. Mr. Piskor, who was one of the primary collaborators on our project, is a noted Cleveland-based Romani historian and activist known for his work on causes such as the recognition of Roma as official minorities in the United States and the reform of laws and practices safeguarding residents of elder care facilities and retirement homes from abuse. When we started our collaboration in the winter of 2016–17, Mr. Piskor mentioned his involvement with those other projects and his general interest in supporting Roma studies, as well as his hope that any interviews serve to preserve the stories and views of individuals, rather than merely to support an excerptive scholarly analysis of trends across the span of experiences of individual interviewees. As Mr. Piskor put it when he gave our site his stamp of approval, for one of the other studies in which he was interviewed, he had "asked them to use case studies with names to the people interviewed so you can know the source of the study," yet was left feeling "not sure how they are going to use the interviews," specifically, whether they would publish them "as case studies or integrate it all into one study" (email, September 20th, 2019).

Piskor's desire for the presentation of case studies, characterized not just by the crediting of names but also by their wholeness and individuality, is borne out in his own study, *Gypsy Violins* (2012), a deeper history of Roma-Gypsy performers in the Midwest that he created "basically for my family, so that they can see [their history]" (interview, October 13th, 2017). It was also shared by other Roma with whom we worked and were in contact for the project. I have had family members approach me for access to the interviews, describing them as "a little piece of family history" and valuing them as individual stories and, to the extent that they are interested in connecting them to other Roma, see them as important in how they relate to the stories of other relatives, rather than for the themes that an academic study might extract from them and from various other interviews. Interviewees such as Jacquelynn Gaines (interview, October 27th, 2017) have similarly brought photographs of their ancestors and other family knowledge, including recipes and songs, to the interviews in order to fill out for us the web of family relations in which their "case studies" are situated, as opposed to seeking primarily to relate their stories to those found in scholarship or that could be traced by comparatively following a theme between the experiences of unconnected individuals. Such concern for how knowledge is cared for, situated, and disseminated speaks to broader epistemological stakes for Romani lives, music, and activism in the United States and beyond, which is an issue that I take up throughout this writing.

First, some discussion of the published project and of the musical and terminological (self-)representation of this particular Roma community is warranted. *A Storied People* is a collaborative online Romani music project bridging collections of musical media and oral histories of csardas musicians in the "Hungarian/Slovak Roma-Gypsy" community in and around Cleveland, Ohio, in the USA. I use here the term for this population that Steve Piskor has put forward. Mr. Piskor, like many in this community whose ancestors emigrated from the Slovakian and Hungarian regions of the Austro-Hungarian

Empire, identifies with the term "Gypsy" and sees the word "Roma" as a term once reserved for internal use (when speaking with others who identify as Roma, Gypsies, or Roma-Gypsies) that Gadje wouldn't recognize. In his estimation, "Roma" has been politicized as it has entered public discourse, and he tends to call himself a "Gypsy," while he finds "Roma" useful when he wishes to specify his particular subset of the group originating in South Asia, to which he collectively refers as Gypsies (including not just Roma-Gypsies but also the two other large groupings: Sinti/Manouche and Gitanos and Gitanas). Mr. Piskor's views are not ubiquitous among those in North America with backgrounds among Slovakian and Hungarian Roma, some of whom see ethnic terminology and the embrace of the term Roma as crucial to Romani representation and empowerment. In the project, and in this article, I predominantly use the term Roma, but also refer occasionally to Roma-Gypsies since this is the term generally preferred by those the project represents, and since both terms are widely in circulation in the media and performances of those musicians who remain active in Cleveland, Ohio and nearby cities such as Pittsburgh, Detroit, and Chicago. The issue of terminology and representation is an important part of the context and epistemological impact of the collaboration, as I started working with Steve Piskor early in 2017 when a new, self-proclaimed "nationalist" presidential administration had just come to power in the U.S., signaling the end or at least the suspension of the progress that Mr. Piskor felt they had made under President Barack Obama's administration in trying to get Roma recognized as a minority classification that members of his community could claim as they sought the type of support then available, for example, to African Americans in areas such as education. Because Roma arrived in North America after emigrating from Europe, they have been discouraged from classifying themselves as anything but European in origin, and this category often is conflated with whiteness, despite the fact that many Romani-Americans have socially been denied belonging to the racialized category of whiteness. Whiteness in North America typically involves much more than perception of skin color, often including ideas about European cultures and assumptions about innate capacities for behaving according to these cultures' norms. Yet Hungarian and Slovak Romani-Americans have in recent decades found epidermalized racism to be a persistent boundary, with those of lighter skin having the option of assimilating more fully into White American society, and others confronting the sorts of racialized ideas and impediments that Mexican- and Indian-Americans face from White Americans who sometimes misidentify them with these groups (MacMillen 2020).

Steve Piskor uses the term Roma in this push for federal recognition of his people, a strategy that stands to avoid the conflation in American society of the term "Gypsy" with a nomadic and/or unregistered existence, and that emphatically references Roma's historical marginalization as part of broader patterns of racism in the United States. As he noted in one of the interviews that he gave my Roma Studies class in the fall of 2017,

> Because "Roma" is classified as "from Europe," on the application [. . .] if they put down anything, they have to put down "White." So we've been telling everybody not to do that. We've been telling everybody: "put down 'other'" and then write in. Because [. . .] if you

> put "White" down, you're not going to be eligible for anything. And, trying to get them classified into a minority group is, I mean, we've been trying for, I don't know how long here now. . . twenty, thirty years trying to get them included. (Piskor, interview, November 29th, 2017)

The historical and ongoing prejudice that many Roma have faced in the United States is at odds with Roma's classification as being "from Europe," insofar as "Europe" is conflated with "White" racial characterization within American legal and public spheres. This inconsistent racialized logic is the same as that behind the so-called "Gypsy laws" still maintained in some U.S. cities and states. Governing bodies adopted these out of anxiety over various Romani groups' difference, responding over the centuries to emerging ideas and prejudices about perceived differences in appearance, culture, religion, and socio-economic position. One can trace such laws back to the seventeenth century, when English settlers prosecuted colonial "Egyptians" ("Gypsies") for offenses including fortune-telling, fornication out of wedlock, and vagabondage, or wandering (Ostendorf 2017:6); and while that era's "color line" similarly placed "Egyptians" and the English apart from "Negroes," the "law explicitly utilized the terminology of 'Christian' to define the boundaries of the law's application," excluding "Egyptians" along religious lines that placed them in a legal category more akin to that of "Indians" (ibid.: 9). Following the advent of nineteenth-century race science and concerns that intensified through World War I about "undesirable" immigrants arriving from Central, Southern, and Eastern Europe, the 1920s brought significant nativist immigration reform, motivated in part by anxiety over Roma enclaves in places like New York City, as well as attempts to halt Romani-Americans' domestic migration for seasonal labor (Wakeley-Smith 2023). Up through the 1960s, numerous states and cities introduced laws outlawing fortune-telling, trading/dealing, and impermanent residence while "be[ing] a Gypsy" (Hancock 2010: 197–198), and in the subsequent decades, police officials established new Gypsy task forces (Hancock 1987: 111–113) and pseudo-scientific theoretical guidance for its officers (Sutherland 2001: 239–240). Police departments thereby continued to enforce laws that, following the Civil Rights Movement's legislative successes, should not have been able to permit the racial profiling of Roma, but that would have been reduced to pure tautology, were it not for the racialized logic of targeting Roma (if "Gypsy" referred only to certain types of occult, commercial, or peripatetic activity, how was one to know when to charge a person with telling fortunes, bartering, or holding impermanent residence while "be[ing] a Gypsy"?).

Although the slipperiness of the enforcement system and the nature of peripateticism and seasonal labor migration make it difficult to account for the number of people these laws have impacted, their widespread passage and continuing (if now reduced) enforcement has affected many lives, both of Roma and non-Roma. For Roma, the laws targeting impermanent residence and migratory commerce practices became self-fulfilling, reinforcing socio-economic marginalization by forcing non-settled groups to move elsewhere. At least theoretically, some laws have also been enforced against people on the basis of behavior, and not strictly on the basis of background, such that

"White" individuals and communities have also been subjected to Gypsy laws, permitting a sort of racial forgetting with respect to the legalized targeting of residents who initially were singled out for their ethnicity. Laws against fortune-telling are perhaps the clearest examples of the latter phenomenon: New York State residents in the early twentieth century closely associated palmistry and related traditions of prediction with Roma (Wakeley-Smith 2023: 71–72), and by 1967 the state had passed its still operative Fortune Telling law, which forbids profiting off of "claimed or pretended use of occult powers, to answer questions," unless one "engages in the aforedescribed conduct as part of a show or exhibition solely for the purpose of entertainment" (Consolidated Laws of New York: Penal Law n.d.: § 165.35).[3] As Dalen Wakeley-Smith writes, after World War II, and following increased racialization and targeting by police in cities such as New York, but also the disappearance of prominent Romani leaders from public view, "the 'Gypsy' had become untethered to many of the actual Romani lives that it supposedly represented" (2022: 18). Thus in its application even in recent decades, New York's law has served as cause for police to arrest diverse people who sell equally diverse services of prediction, while the qualification that law enforcement officers should make arrests for fortune telling conducted with serious intention rather than for entertainment purposes has meant that the law's enforcement has been somewhat erratic, leaving plenty of opportunity to targeting Roma disproportionately (George-Parkin 2014).

At best such laws reinforced an ignorance and blindness to socioeconomic inequalities facing many ethnic groups, and at worst they contributed to erasure and epistemic violence against Roma's historic need to adapt to discriminatory land-ownership laws. The situation parallels that in England, whose historical legal discursive fields are also the point of origin for much of what has been enacted into law in the United States. This includes the paradox that, in the collapsing since the 1990s of legal distinctions between "Gypsies" and so-called "New Age Travelers" and the similar prosecution of both for nomadism, the positionality of "gypsy does and does not exist; is and is not an ethnic category; is, in short, a moment of pure *differance*[4] in law. The practical consequence [for those deemed "gypsies" by late-twentieth-century English legal acts] is protection from racial discrimination for a race that does not exist, on the one hand, and the passage of laws which would clearly be racist if the race did exist, on the other" (Sandland 1996: 396). Romani existence, however, is very much a racialized reality, and not least in the U.S., where, as the *Romani Realities* report states, "by far the majority [of study participants] had experienced anti-Romani sentiments" and "both valued and hid their Romani identity" – findings that "add yet more evidence of the pervasiveness of racism

[3] Evidence of this law being applied in the late 1960s can be found, for instance, in this criminal jury instruction: https://www.nycourts.gov/judges/cji/2-PenalLaw/165/165-35.pdf (accessed September 10th, 2024.).

[4] Here, Sandland invokes Jacques Derrida's notion (1968) that the meaning of a term such as "Gypsy" arises only through its differentiation from other terms, which results in meaning ever being deferred as the term accrues around it ever expanding chains of signifiers (in this case, New Age Travelers, Roma, nomads, etc.).

in the United States" (Matache et al. 2020: 4). This comes despite the near consensus among respondents "that most Americans know little or nothing about the Romani Americans," and that many non-Roma nonetheless perpetuate "prevailing stereotypes of Romani people as criminals, liars, and thieves" (ibid.), whether or not they associate these with Roma, with a particular racialized profile, or with the label "Gypsy."

Drawing upon Gayatri Spivak's oft-cited formulation (1988), a number of scholars in fields such as anthropology (Petraki 2020), communications, and social development studies (Cortés Gomez 2020) have begun to address "epistemic violence" encountered by Roma at the hands of societies and even of social science research in various parts of Europe. The concept is apt in the American context, too, especially given the striking gap between non-recognition of Roma (and their South Asian background and struggles with racialized discrimination in the U.S.) and the attention otherwise granted to race and racism in the public sphere.[5] Historical legal reforms and police interventions such as Wakeley-Smith describes, which displaced "Gypsy" and "Traveller" communities in the United States and simultaneously served to deny their racialized targeting, attacked these groups' foundational knowledge of how authorities have persecuted them and of the role of racial profiling in determining who has the right to travel through a territory for seasonal, migratory labor and commerce. These actions violate Romani epistemologies by denying the bases of empirical justification through experience, ones that Roma have otherwise known to be true in the U.S.

Piskor's concern with the preservation not just of citational practices that clarify the sources, but also of entire case studies that highlight Romani testimonies and the leveraging of these experiences, speaks to the importance of epistemic justice, which has also been under threat in various parts of Europe. As Petraki summarizes, political sociologists such as Nidhi Trehan (2009: 63–64) have shown:

> that the statistics, reports, and various forms of literature on policy regarding Roma, most of them produced by academic, governmental, and nongovernmental organizations external to Romani communities, tend to cause asymmetries of knowledge-power (Foucault 1973, 2008) to (re-)emerge and (re-)consolidate. Also, this increases the chances for the perpetuation of epistemic violence, thus having profound implications on the autonomy and future of the "Roma rights" movement. (Petraki 2020: 84)

Such potential asymmetries have rightfully remained a central concern for a Romani activist such as Steve Piskor, who has sought minority status and minority rights for Roma within the paradoxical legal and cultural landscape of twenty-first-century America.

Yet recent work by scholars such as Slavicist Vitaly Chernetsky (2023) suggests that we might also fruitfully distinguish epistemic violence from other forms of epistemic

[5] The ways in which U.S. media and public figures refer, for example, to anti-Black and anti-Latinx racism is frequently exculpatory, dismissive, and/or offensive, but nonetheless contributes to a practice of attending to the topic in the public sphere, something that rarely happens in response to anti-Romani or anti-Gypsy statements in the country.

injustice. Pinpointing the nature of epistemic injustice is warranted not in order to excuse injustices that do not have the force of violent attack behind them, but rather to call out broader patterns of complicity. For instance, scholarship may participate in "marginalizing," "ignoring," and "dismissing" the "voices" of colonized and otherwise oppressed peoples, and, while perhaps not rendered with the intention of perpetrating violence upon the physical welfare and epistemological reputation of that group, nonetheless "recycl[e] uncritically absorbed stereotypes and ideological talking points," many of which originated in "imperialist" projects that *have* deliberately perpetrated such violence (ibid.).[6] As Chernetsky argues, such epistemic injustice, even in instances when it has not (yet) undergirded violence, forecloses the possibility of establishing the truth of one's existence, even as physical violence (whether threatened or actually realized) would seem to confirm a people's existence in the eyes of those who wish to remove them from a society or territory in acts of genocide and ethnic cleansing, including through forced assimilation (ibid.).

Yet, while Chernetsky shows how such epistemic challenges may position the marginalized to construct knowledge not only *differently from* the dominating population but also *more than* them, in that they learn the epistemologies of both groups in ways that are rarely necessary for those in the privileged, dominant position (ibid.), such an outcome is not guaranteed. Jason Stanley argues that these asymmetric situations afford "at the very least a *presumed* epistemic authority" (2015: 255) in the matter to those who enjoy practical authority (and power), while those deprived of practical authority over legal structures have a more difficult time establishing their own truths, whether to themselves or to more positively privileged groups. For Piskor, one way in which this manifests is in the difficulty of convincing Romani Americans to identify as Roma (or as Gypsies) in the U.S. census, which provides no such options and, under the dominant racial epistemology, asks Roma to accept a designation as "White" due to their European immigrant origins. Piskor has been working hard for many years to convince Roma across the Midwestern United States to mark down "other" and then write in "Gypsy" or "Roma," which is in keeping with the experience of historic and continuing racial marking in the country (interview, November 29th, 2017). Yet selecting "other" requires embracing a positionality whose racialized distinction is not only exotic but self-evidently exceptional within U.S. demographic practices. It furthermore goes in the face of the apparent (implicit) invitation to assimilation and recognizability presented by the possibility of claiming Whiteness via a European background. This possibility is a strong motivation for self-identifying as European/White and an epistemic impediment to recognizing and publicly identifying the racial barriers that many Roma nonetheless face in the U.S.

[6] Chernetsky has in mind the epistemic injustice to Ukrainians of U.S. and Western European scholars, and the epistemic violence of Russian imperialism as renewed during its full-scale invasion of Ukraine since 2022, but the distinction also can bring to light a range of detrimental affects brought by intellectual, legal, and public sector authorities.

The Visibility and Invisibility of Race in the Presentation of Romani Music

To ascertain music's complicated role in epistemic authority over who Roma are in the United States, consider "Lost Traveller," a November 2011 episode of the popular American television series *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*. Like many Anglophone series, this show casts White, non-Romani actors to play Romani characters of Central and East European origin, despite otherwise maintaining a sort of racializing authenticity in casting East European actors to play East European characters.[7] The episode features Mark Margolis, who famously played Mexican cartel leader Hector Salamanca in the hit series *Breaking Bad*, but who was of White European (including European Jewish) ancestry. Margolis plays a "Rom-Baro" working for a "Gypsy King," whose painted portrait renders him with brown skin, opposite the fair-skinned Margolis. Margolis explained: "The Rom is the Gypsy, the Baro is the head man [. . .] the representative of the Gypsy King here in this community, the Gypsy King being in Hungary" (in WolfFilmsLawandOrder 2012). The role has clear ties to the actual Romani leaders targeted in New York's legal reforms a century earlier (Wakeley-Smith 2022). Yet Margolis's vocal delivery harkens to perceptions of "Gypsies" as ethnically rather than racially marked:[8] "there's so many different accents, depending on which country [. . .] they just wanted something slight or not at all, so I went with a little bit of an Italian melody – melody being different than an accent" (Margolis, in WolfFilmsLawandOrder 2012). His streams of consistently paced syllables feature minimal separation and pitch change before his phrases' downward cadences, not unlike in operatic recitative, and reminiscent of portrayals of Italian-Americans. The idea of musicality distinguishing "ethnic" Americans (Italians, Roma/Gypsies, etc.) from other White Americans aligns with the idea of the "Gypsy," or "traveller" (as the episode's title has it), as only different culturally. Although the Hungarian Gypsy King's portrait alludes to Roma's racial marking in Europe, the episode contradicts what many Hungarian/Slovak Roma-Gypsies know about the U.S.: that both skin color and Romani musical heritage surface as evidence of difference with real consequence for Romani families, while musical heritage functions not to mark a form of willfully selected ethnic differentiation still included within Whiteness but, in the hands of White Americans, as a reinforcement and ready explanation of perceived racial difference.

These difficulties were encoded into the nature of Gypsy laws in America, which neither recognized Roma's original targeting by this discrimination nor acknowledged

[7] For instance, in 1999, in the series' pilot episode, "Payback," which focuses on women whom an ethnic Serb war criminal had sexually assaulted, Gordana Roshovic, who is of South Slavic background, was cast as Anya Rugova, the primary survivor of the assault.

[8] By "ethnically rather than racially marked," I refer to the ways in which American society has, since the late twentieth century, treated many European immigrants and their descendants as culturally inferior but ultimately assimilable into the category of whiteness, and the idea that "Gypsy" could refer to a chosen lifestyle, rather than to an externally imposed racialized designation, allows it to signify within American discourses on ethnic difference (see MacMillen 2019, 2020).

their disadvantage at avoiding discrimination because of the difficulty of assimilating into the dominant White society. Thus, one of the challenges for Piskor's project is educating politicians and society about the Roma's history, their diverse communities across Europe, and waves of immigration and settlement in North America, in order to change the epistemic landscape. Confronting this landscape is fraught, for it inconsistently aligns Gypsy laws with Roma as a target of what Hannah Arendt (1944) called "race-thinking," a broad ideological process that consolidated notions of races as distinct in the eighteenth century and that, since the nineteenth, has frequently justified not merely identifying races but also the sorts of prejudicial thinking and actions that today constitute racism. For some projects, Piskor does use "Gypsy," a term that is at least somewhat familiar to Americans, and seeks to change people's understanding of the word. Many American Roma reject the word Gypsy as a derogatory name, but this is not as common among Roma of Hungary and Slovakia in the midwestern United States where I work. Many csardas musicians from Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and Detroit use "Roma" to specify a subgroup of the South Asian-originating people they collectively term Gypsies (including Roma-Gypsies but also Sinti, Manouche, and Gitanos and Gitanas).

In cities like Cleveland and Pittsburgh, Romani-Americans who are from or are descended from communities in what are now the independent countries of Hungary and Slovakia have associated closely with Hungarians. Hungarians also faced discrimination in the U.S., sometimes in racialized form, as in the epithet "Hunky," which was often applied indiscriminately to immigrants from Austria-Hungary after immigrating to the U.S. in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, and which has held on as both a stigmatized, racialized external categorization and a point of commonality in diaspora music scenes of the neighboring states of Pennsylvania and Ohio (MacMillen 2019: 91–107). Thus, it has sometimes been anti-Hungarian prejudice rather than anti-Roma or anti-Gypsy sentiments that Roma-Gypsy residents have tried to escape by hiding their national backgrounds. After WWII, however, Hungarians rose to greater social prominence in the U.S., as ideas of race shifted and Hungarians and those living among them (including some Roma of mixed or of lighter-skinned heritage) became included in conceptions of Whiteness. Cleveland, Ohio, emerged as a center for Hungarian-American organizing, particularly with the annual Night in Budapest gala drawing powerful local Hungarian-American politicians as well as nationally known Hungarian-American and Hungarian-Jewish celebrities such as Zsa Zsa Gabor, Ilona Massey, and Bill Dana. While these public figures sometimes performed for the galas, it was Romani csardas bands that most consistently provided the entertainment, playing complex arrangements on violin, cimbalom, and double bass of a wide range of Romani and Hungarian repertoire, as such bands have long done in Hungary and other parts of Central Europe (Piskor 2012: 100–114).

Steve Piskor's father was active in such groups, and some musicians whom I knew from earlier fieldwork, which I had conducted on related stringband practices among Serbian- and Croatian-American *tambura* musicians in the area, had played in these bands as well. To a certain extent, Romani, Hungarian, and South Slavic musicians, all

of whom shared family histories of emigration from Austria-Hungary to industrial American cities, had stayed active in the Romani csardas tradition even beyond the decline that the city of Cleveland suffered in the 1970s. Cleveland had a strong industrial economy in the first half of the twentieth century, but, as Daniel Rosensweig writes, "after World War II, when the steel industry began to fade, increases in poverty, middle-class flight to suburbia, rapid construction of highways, and the erosion of the privately financed safety net brought about the erosion of the downtown infrastructure" (2005:24). Subsequent, successful efforts to attract new corporations without a stable middle- and upper-class tax base "seemed to contribute to a descending spiral of poverty and misery hidden in the shadows of urban renewal," while "the oil crisis in the early 1970s [. . .] brought about a further erosion of the town's manufacturing base" (ibid.).

The Hungarian and Slovak enclaves in Cleveland's Buckeye Neighborhood were initially resilient to these changes, especially following the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956, when "an even larger influx of immigrants occurred" and "Hungarian-run businesses and Hungarian churches again became integral to helping newcomers find employment" (Sabol 2011: 8). In 1957, Hungarian-American leaders started the "Night in Budapest" gala "to commemorate the Hungarian Freedom Fighters who defied Russian tanks in their homeland in 1956" ("Night in Budapest" n.d.) and the event grew over the 1960s and early 1970s into a large annual party. During these decades, however, "the increasing inflow of African Americans led to a textbook example of urban flight in the area, and residents, for a variety of reasons, left for new suburban developments" (Sabol 2011: 8). While one of the victims of this decline in the urban centralization of Romani and Hungarian communities was the gala, with its concerted impetus for the organization of csardas performance, many Roma musicians stayed active, even as they, like their patrons, increasingly had to disperse to Cleveland's suburbs and even well beyond them.

One of the aims of our collaborative oral history project was therefore to gather stories of the communities as they had existed in the postwar period and of the changes that had happened since the 1970s. Steve Piskor, in his rigorously researched 2012 book *Gypsy Violins*, which pulls deeply from Midwestern periodicals and other archives, had presented much of the history of Roma-Gypsy musicians in the Midwestern United States up until the 1970s. Piskor supported the goal of adding to this research with, as he put it, a "Roma studies project" that would record the stories that he, as well as others of his generation born in the post-World War II years, could relate to us. This was in part because he felt that emphasizing Roma-Gypsy violinists' importance in the Midwest and its socialite scenes was one effective way to make politicians more responsive to Roma's societal role in the United States and in Europe, where Piskor also works to support Romani politicians.

Ethnic Agency in the Oral History Archive and in the George Batyi Collection

A number of Cleveland-area Romani sources that we brought into the project attested to music's importance in fighting against inequality and establishing Roma's place within local milieus as a means of attaining a more just society. Piskor's book about music in the first half of the 20th century demonstrates Roma-Gypsy musicians' importance in Hungarian political and social circles in the Midwest, and in an interview that one of my Oberlin College classes conducted with him, Piskor describes how he markets his book to challenge images of "violin players" in films, which can be sympathetic but also "romanticize" them and "fantasize" a connection to the hurtful myth of "Gypsies [as] baby stealers" (interview, November 29th, 2017). For another interviewee, pianist Jacquelynn Gaines, music was a sphere where Romani traditions could live on, even when people had to hide their Romani identity and felt ashamed of being called Gypsies or associated with the Hungarian immigrant community. Gaines's grandmother, who married a Roma man, "would have told you that she was Bohemian, and she was very aggressively not Hungarian, not a Hunky. . . not a Gypsy. . . whatever reputation or stereotype she thought my grandfather and his family would have" (interview, October 27th, 2017). Yet, "My dad's second cousin. . . has all of the language, and some of the songs. . . we've been meeting fairly regularly to try to collect some of that" (ibid.). Kathy Abromeit, who was then Public Service Librarian at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music and supported our project's housing there, similarly recounted how her Romani heritage was hidden from her family by her grandparents.[9] Now, however, they were reconnecting through "one daughter who studied. . . in a Gypsy music class, a Romani music class" (Abromeit, interview, April 20th, 2017) that I taught at Oberlin and that was involved in hosting Roma csardas musicians there for the first time in 2013. One of those csardas players, George Batyi, and William "Billy Rose" Slepsky (interview, October 30th, 2017), a band mate who accompanied him on his return to Oberlin in 2017, use music to *distance* themselves from stereotypes: "our type of Gypsies" are not "fortune-telling Gypsies" (ibid.) or "the kind of Gypsy" who "had covered wagons" (Batyi, interview, October 30th, 2017) they explained, citing how music distinguishes them both from the Lovari subgroup of Roma involved in horse-trading and card reading, and also from stereotypical fantasies of Gypsies in American media. Discrimination based on stereotypes and laws against nomadism persists but is less pronounced, and musicians have found paid opportunities to play in restaurants with Hungarian, Croatian, and Serbian-American clientele, often combining csardas instruments like the violin and cimbalom with Croatian and Serbian tamburitza chordophone traditions that were popular in enclaves of South Slavs immigrants from the southern reaches of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Yet it has also been important for such musicians to demonstrate that playing this music is an active choice that they have made, alongside specializing in other repertoires, to keep their traditions going. Demonstrating the diversity of their musicianship

[9] Abromeit has since become Head of the Oberlin Conservatory of Music Library.

and the complexity of their ethnic and racial positioning in the U.S. is a way of refusing to be pigeonholed through yet another fantasy of "Gypsy" lifestyles, in this case one involving virtuosic csardas performance. For decades, Batyi and Rose also played Latin American music in restaurants, and Roma's involvement in such traditions in the U.S. dates back at least to the 1950s (Piskor 2012: 179–184). As their interviews for our project attest, Batyi and Rose love salsa and mariachi, and people not from Central or Eastern Europe commonly assume that Roma musicians are Mexican-American or Puerto Rican due again to assumptions about skin color and to lack of familiarity with Romani ethnicity, history, and names (see MacMillen 2020). At least two important points emerge from this additional musical history: the performance of virtuosic, violin-centric csardas repertoire need prove no more fixed or limiting an association for Roma musicians than other stereotypical societal roles, for while such individuals may never have dealt in horses or fortune-telling, those traditions in which they *have* specialized they also have moved fluidly into and out of for some time; and, as the interviews on this online archive show, if musicians cannot control being marginalized from dominant white societies, they *do* find agency in choosing whether to present themselves specifically as Roma. For those who choose to play or to listen to Romani repertoire, acting publicly as Roma brings up questions of sincerity, which they navigate affectively as much as discursively: it's a matter of whether one *believes* that one can be proud of being Roma or Roma-Gypsy, but also of whether one *feels* Romani music deeply (see MacMillen 2020).

This does not mean that non-Romani audiences focus on and respect how the musicians feel. Indeed, it is common for listeners to objectify and exoticize fast, virtuosic playing as an essential characteristic of "authentic," "Gypsy" performance. Batyi remarks that, for some people, "I think it's just the exotic songs and [. . .] the way you play" that they like, but "I get enjoyment from it because I've been playing it all my life" (interview, October 30th, 2017). He likes it when he sees people connect, especially with slower songs, and learn some of the words and pick up Romani style in an appreciative, non-exoticising way. With his South Slavic bandmates, this takes intimate musical communication, leading by way of example in shaping melodic phrases and pushing other soloists into every more characteristically csardas modes of playing during alternating (and sometimes call-and-response) improvisatory sections, rather than the distanced, objectifying, technical approach that characterizes the harmonic and scales-based instruction of Croatian and Serbian tambura practice. As Batyi puts it, non-Roma musicians from the neighborhoods of Austro-Hungarian origin with whom he works, most of them Serbs and Croats who partner with him for mixed csardas and tambura projects, say that "George is the best teacher that anybody could have because he teaches you without you knowing that he's teaching you" (Batyi, interview, October 30th, 2017); this speaks to his wish that Romani style should not remain exotic to South Slavic performance but rather be accessible, and not by learning some prescribed set of authentic markers or techniques, but by absorbing elements of interpretation and feeling.

At the same time, Roma activists and musicians are pushing for recognition of the ways in which European and Euro-American societies have absorbed or appropriated

Romani music for centuries. Batyi does see Romani or Gypsy style as distinct from other ways of playing, and the adoption of Romani style and Romani compositions into works by composers such as Johannes Brahms and Ferenc Liszt suggests a need to address such music's relationship to a performance practice that has often been exoticized. Part of that exoticization has to do with the unwillingness in certain societies to absorb or integrate Roma fully as citizens. As Julie Brown (2000) has argued, the popularity of "Gypsy" music as a basis for Hungarian compositional practice did not stop twentieth-century composers and folk music collectors such as Béla Bartók from denying Roma and their music a role in defining the character of the Hungarian nation, it rather motivated this reactionary stance. Thus, recognition of the historical presence of Romani musicianship in European and European-diaspora societies must account for the dialectical nuances of appropriation and influence, of attraction and anxiety, in the institutionalization of performance and compositional practice beyond the ensembles and organizations that Roma themselves have led.

Instituting a New Archive

Another side of our project grew out of my relationship with Batyi and our ongoing discussions of how to integrate Roma musicians and music into my own institution. In Fall 2013 I invited him to put together a group of musicians to perform at Oberlin College & Conservatory, where I was teaching a class on Romani musics, and while there he told me that he had a collection of what he called Gypsy music, consisting of printed books of notation as well as CDs, 33 1/3 and 78 RPM records, and cassette tapes, all representing Romani music traditions from areas of Europe such as Russia and the Balkans but especially strong in those from Hungarian-speaking parts of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire. He had, he said, a lot of material and would very much like to see it go to an institution of higher learning where musicians would appreciate and use his collection. I stayed in touch with Batyi over the next few years and eventually shepherded the acquisition of his collection into the holdings of the Oberlin Conservatory Library. In addition to featuring interviews with Batyi and other musicians, the web-based collaborative project *A Storied People* involves this music collection. The website went public-facing in 2019 as the result not only of this donation from George Batyi and the work of Romani activist and historian Steve Piskor and their collaboration with me, an ethnomusicologist at Oberlin College & Conservatory, but also as a result of the work of staff at the Oberlin Libraries, and students in three Oberlin seminars, and the work is ongoing as two young members of George Batyi's extended community and I pursue further integrations of the oral history and music collections. In the remainder of this article, I consider how the acquisition of the collection both contributed to and demanded the growth of a collaborative relationship between institution and community. I'll begin with the collaborations demanded by the acquisition process itself.

A colleague in the Conservatory Library suggested that, in order to convince the Special Collections Librarian of the value of the George Batyi Collection, I might put

together a list of the faculty members who would be interested in using such materials in their research and teaching. Doing so helped to convince the Librarians with whom I met that the collection materials would not simply sit on the shelf and take up space. One way in which United States libraries measure such collections is in linear feet, referring to the length of library shelving required to hold them, and the Batyi Collection takes up only a few linear feet and so did not require a large investment in terms of storage space, but I was still told that without such a list of faculty from diverse departments across the College and Conservatory I likely would not have been able to convince the Library to accept the donation. Work and care for the collection began well before it arrived on campus, and consisted in large part of securing others to share the future work of engaging the collection with the world outside of the few linear feet of storage that it was ultimately allotted.

Simply ensuring that there are people on campus who know about the collection and are interested in pulling it to peruse or to show to their students, however, does not guarantee its meaningful engagement, and I knew from our conversations that George Batyi wanted the collection to find use and for the recordings and sheet music to be heard and performed. The collection had some coherence as an archive of sorts of the repertoire that he had played and recorded, but the aim was not simply to preserve the materials as some kind of whole or complete collection, which is anyway an elusive ideal that does not hold up against the real history of the materials that come in and out of a musician's possession over the years (and in fact, Batyi had not given us his entire collection). What seemed needed was a way of making the collection and its individual materials accessible and useful that would disrupt two common means by which such library collections circulate into use: as whole archives pulled for the sake of researching an individual or other topic closely related to the expanse of the materials, or as individual items pulled because someone is searching for a recording or the notation for a specific piece of music. In other words, an important goal of the overall project was to keep the collection's history and interrelations prominent when one accesses the materials, yet not to rely solely and simply on the trope of the collection or archive to demonstrate the materials' coherence. This is where the oral history project and digital platforms would come in, and would bring their own challenges for balancing individual and intersecting narratives.

Disruption and Rupture in the Archive

Disruption has become an increasingly common way of conceptualizing the expansion of library and archival collections, particularly in those situated in institutional contexts that perpetuate cultural and/or racialized supremacy, such as the white supremacy that has dominated European settler colonial countries like the United States. There is disruptive potential in admitting a collection of Romani music to the library of a Conservatory dominated by the works of European and Euro-American composers and recording artists, where Romani music has typically been encountered as source material

mediated by composers such as Liszt, Bartok, and Brahms. But disruptive potential is easily neutralized in the obscurity of storage. As Ana Longoni suggests about the alternative Latin American archival project Red Conceptualismos del Sur, which seeks to disrupt exploitative processes of consumption and circulation that reinscribe the power of the global North or West, "To unblock [the objects'] interrupted critical power, there is a need to confront their immaterial memory; therefore, it is essential to recover the sensitive register of the experience and the attachments that arise as a direct form of intervention in neglect. This also entails rehabilitating the disruptive force from the cultural context containing the conditions of possibility" (2016: 29). The sensitive registers of these recordings' and published notations' past activation and performance in contexts such as Night in Budapest, as well as the disruptive force of Roma musicians and also of Hungarian milieus in Cleveland, where both Roma and Hungarians have faced discrimination, deserved to be archived as well.

As Michelle Caswell writes: "We need more radical archival interventions on the past – and the future – to build liberatory archival imaginaries" (Caswell 2017: 234; citing Caswell 2014). Caswell has in mind not only decolonization in general but also specifically countries like the United States, where "white supremacy is a structural problem [that] is not a matter of individual choice, [where] racist structures exist and [. . .] white people benefit from these structures despite their individual choices and attitudes" (2017: 224). This is especially the case in the political context of antagonisms against people of color and of non-Christian faith that became increasingly emboldened in the United States since the time of her research and writing in 2017. Oral history has offered a way of expanding the collection and archive beyond an accompaniment to the music of the past and the way that it has historically been taught and performed, and into a disruptive intervention, one that can take advantage of the labor and interest promised by colleagues at Oberlin who, when the collection's accession was under discussion, added their names to the register of those who would use it.

Rather than allowing the collection simply to sit for future use in research and teaching, we connected it through two integrated online platforms: Omeka, an archival web-publishing platform that facilitates collection management and presentation by providing beginner-friendly metadata-entry procedures with clear and standardized fields, which a partner at the library, digital initiatives librarian Megan Mitchell, made accessible through Oberlin College's institutional account; and the Oral History Metadata Synchronizer, or OHMS, developed by the University of Kentucky's Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, for which I received training and access through a grant from the Great Lakes Colleges Association Oral History in the Liberal Arts. We uploaded our oral histories of the experiences and music-making of Roma in or connected to the Cleveland area, processing them through OHMS into streamable and keyword-linked local oral histories relating to the traditions, performers, and compositions represented in the collection. The online resource that resulted from this collaboration serves to make the music collection as well as the oral histories more meaningful and more accessible both on and off campus by connecting them via links. This took the input of

several of our Roma interlocutors, including George Batyi and Steve Piskor, and of several people from the library, as well as my own labor and the labor of three classes of students, who received course credit as well as the opportunity to learn and practice a number of valuable fieldwork, archival, and digital processing skills closely aligned with the aims of the courses. They recorded and edited the interviews; processed them into topical segments; and input metadata for each segment, including keywords, subject headings, short transcript excerpts, and synopses. For the George Batyi collection, they photographed and catalogued the collection items, entered metadata, and researched and commented upon them to provide contextual information beyond what is available for most general library collection items. Through the integrated online platform, one can now augment one's understanding of items in the Batyi collection by listening to George Batyi or another performer talk about personal experience performing the music, and one can augment the experience of listening to one of these oral histories by exploring the Batyi Collection.

I have found it productive to conceptualize the project as rupturing the collection, suturing its material resources to new musical performances and storytelling before it has a chance to reify into an institutionally contained unit. Batyi's collection speaks to more than just his personal experience, and when I have invited him to perform on campus over the years he has always asked to bring more musicians, typically spanning from across the Pittsburgh-Cleveland-Detroit-Chicago nexus where Roma have continuously been dispersed since the economic downturns of the 1970s. If disruption has become a critical practice in addressing colonial and racist structures in archives, rupture and reconnection seem important to stave off the coalescing of collections into new structures holding up great individuals above the communities into which they are in fact integrated. Rupture as an archival practice also resonates with and responds to the forms of rupture that many of these musicians have faced as they have had to relocate. As Gal Kirn writes, "upheaval [. . .] disturbs the coordinates of the possible, practicing and pointing to a specific "surplus" in the situation," and this demands a new engagement "of how to commemorate rupture, this surplus" (2020: 58). On the side of the project *A Storied People*, this new engagement is now taking the form of the further interlinking of objects and oral history segments through live links (active links that enable navigation from highlighted keywords or other text) and through mapping features that we are developing with Megan Mitchell, the Digital Initiatives Librarian.

It has also taken the form of new input from the broader community in which Batyi is active, as a Romani-American woman, Ms. Bajus, and Ms. Maha, another young Pittsburgh resident with a strong interest in Romani history in Europe and North America, have joined our team, and both have a strong commitment to working to make Romani music and presence more palpable and better understood in the United States. The two of them were students at a private high school near Yale University, where I now teach, and we began working together when Ms. Maha wrote to introduce herself and ask about getting involved in one of my research projects in order to learn about the field of ethnomusicology during the summer before her senior year of high school. I agreed but suggested that we also find a way to make such opportunities for mentorship and

musical learning available to those who are closer to Mr. Batyi's circles, either in terms of ethnic background or with respect to placement within similar geographic, socio-economic, and institutional milieus,[10] and she suggested bringing in Ms. Bajus, a student of Kalderash Romani background who had just graduated from the same high school and who expressed interest in the themes of gender and sexuality covered in some of the interviews. Their contributions to the database made the online links between various oral histories and diverse collections materials far more specific and robust. Collaboration has thus taken the form of collective but also distributed and specialized efforts, not to erase or repair the rupture of Cleveland's former musical networks and Romani-Hungarian communities, but to recognize and represent them in their rupture yet also in their interrelation.

New and Future Sutures

Rupturing and interrelating the collections and even the specific oral histories – for one is invited when listening to click on links and learn about other stories and music related to the topic of that particular interview segment – begins to parallel the excerptive processes of studying against which Mr. Piskor warned. Indeed, other scholarship into which I have incorporated insights from the interviews (see MacMillen 2020), and even the present article, take advantage of and reproduce the excerptive navigation between media that this website facilitates. What we have attempted with the site, then, is neither to create, nor to prevent, a more thematic study that cuts across case studies, but rather to facilitate topical exploration and cross-referencing in tandem with deeper listening to specific stories. Roma-led models in Europe, such as *RomArchive*, while themselves still working to expand their archival and critical content, suggest the importance of balancing deep coverage of particular case studies with lateral analysis of how particular individuals, concepts, genres, and media interrelate. Involving a range of voices not just as expert speakers interviewed in our oral history database, but also as analysts deciding upon which names, locations, genres, music recordings, etc. to link – and determining when and how to do so – has been critical to making the site conducive to navigating epistemes of history and culture that hold up the experiences of the Romani voices represented in this archive. Many of the oral histories that we present are themselves analytical of the musical and historical relations between themselves and other musicians whom they cite, and the links help to amplify those connections.

Steve Piskor's note of appraisal, which we sought before signing off on the site's basic architecture and data as ready for public use and dissemination, and in which he told us that "it came out very good," gave us meaningful feedback on the project, but it also reinforces an investment of trust that those of us running the site should see as an

[10] I.e. our goal was to build out the team with members who would bring something to the project, and who would themselves find the work of interest, by dint of having important elements in common with Mr. Batyi, beyond a history of living in Pittsburgh (before becoming part of the majority non-Roma communities of elite academic institutions out of state).

obligation to continue to maintain and improve it for decades into the future. There have been some limitations to its success, on which I hope to improve. Now that I teach at another institution in another part of the country, I am no longer introducing Oberlin students to these collections, and there is more that we need to do to encourage current Oberlin faculty to utilize the website and the library's holdings so that they really do continue to affect the ways in which members of the Conservatory and broader institution listen to and understand Roma's contributions to American society and to European music traditions. My students at Yale and elsewhere benefit from the oral histories recorded at Oberlin and draw connections both topically and methodologically with other oral history projects in which we are currently engaged, and this continuing engagement of the interviews, the musical media of the George Batyi Collection, and the website are important sources of feedback for the archive's maintenance and its linkages' continuing development.

There have been few Roma women active in csardas music, in the U.S. and in general, but the site does represent a small number of women who engage their heritage on the Romani sides of their families as they actively research and perform other musical styles, such as Black Gospel music and nineteenth-century European piano repertoire (Abromeit, interview, April 20th, 2017; Gaines, interview, October 27th, 2017). Within their own fields at Oberlin College (where they were my colleagues on the administrative staff), both Kathy Abromeit and Jacquelynn Gaines have also promoted the preservation of Romani traditions, and our collaborations demonstrate the importance of the established and continuing linkages that I have called suturings. Both contributed to this archive's linking of materials and stories through relations that they have built around it, pursuing connections to Romani heritages that were suppressed in previous generations, when their families responded to pressure to assimilate within White American society: One of them, a librarian, facilitated pre-acquisition conversations with other library staff, and also had a daughter at Oberlin College who participated in the first course-based collaboration with George Batyi, while the other staff member enrolled in a later course that conducted the first recorded interviews, and she participated in interviewing the librarian. Our new research team, which includes two young female musicians and scholars from Batyi's Pittsburgh and broader (Hungarian) Romani-American milieus – Ms. Bajus and Ms. Maha – is extending such interpersonal relations into the digital realm of data-based connections that will further disrupt and reconfigure flows of archival navigation.

Moving forward, it will be also important for researchers to document the performance practices of a more diverse spectrum of musicians within Hungarian/Slovak Roma-Gypsy communities. As George Batyi (interview, October 30th, 2017) testified, at the time that we recorded his interview, this included the granddaughters of others in his generation (of his siblings, cousins, etc.), who were some of the most promising new proponents of the style. As they reach adulthood and take possession of their practices and of the knowledge of their relations, history, and ethnic/racial situation within American society, it will be critical for projects such as this to afford new opportunities

for musicians to add their voices to the archive and to the process by which it is continually ruptured and reconnected around the relations that are meaningful to those whom it represents. If, as Chernetsky (2023) has argued, the pursuit of epistemic justice for marginalized East European peoples and their diasporas should draw its inspiration and theoretical guidance from intersectional scholarship, then an archive that seeks to rupture the dominant epistemes of race that Roma musicians confront must also challenge other, intersecting epistemic imbalances. While the continuing rupturing and reconnecting of this archive currently engages themes of gender and sexuality, through the intersections enabled by building additional curatorial and data-based (live-linked) relations, the challenge that we have embraced in accepting responsibility for these collections is to continue the process. Future work on the intersections and epistemic impingements of Roma musicians' experiences with class, age, and other spheres of American demographics will be necessary to keep the archive continually ruptured, yet actively suturable.

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