

## Gypsies and “Englishness”

### How children’s literature may complement the study of ‘high’ literature. A comparison between English and German texts

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*Nothing is, perhaps, more ridiculous, if not more culpable, than to mock our fellow-creatures, because their religious opinions, or their manners, differ from our own.*

The New Children’s Friend, 1797<sup>2</sup>

#### 1. Introduction

In 2014 Sarah Houghton-Walker published an interesting study about representations of the gypsy in English literature during what she called ‘the Romantic Period’: the period in between 1783-1830. According to her, in

just this short period of time, the gypsies stop being foreign, even though they are still strange. That is, the observer remains excluded from intimate knowledge of the gypsy camp, which regularly features in literature and painting as a hermetically sealed site. But gypsies are no longer straightforwardly ‘other’, because they are accepted as part of English life...

At the beginning of the Romantic period, representations of gypsies change: gypsies remain strange, but are becoming English; they ‘gain a greater aesthetic right to be in that landscape, and become legitimate parts of it’ and during this period they become a relevant issue in constructing English identity<sup>3</sup>. Houghton-Walker also concludes to a ‘dramatically different attitude to gypsies’ in English literature of the Romantic period, compared to German literature<sup>4</sup>. She pays ample attention to the German representations because during the period she is focusing on, these were mainly positive, at least in ‘high’ literature. There even developed the ‘category’ of *Zigeunerromantik* (Gypsy romanticism) which is absent in English romantic literature. Only in the Victorian period in England gypsies became an object of ‘nostalgia and longing’ (2014: 24). Houghton-Walker refers to a

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<sup>2</sup> 6th edition p. 50. See Lawrence Darton: *The Dartons: An Annotated Check-List*, London: The British Library/New Castle, USA: The Oak Knoll Press, 2004: 200 (G699).

<sup>3</sup> Sarah Houghton-Walker: *Representations of the Gypsy in the Romantic Period*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014: 3-4, see also 10, 11, 25, 70.

<sup>4</sup> p. 8-9. Houghton-Walker continuously refers to Grellmann’s *Dissertation on the Gypsies*, the 1787 edition to which she ascribes great influence. This translation was a rendering by Matthew Raper of the first edition, 1783. In 1787 Grellmann published a much more extensive edition of his book about which Raper comments that parts of it are ‘only tending to shew the great superstition of some of the Germans...’. It is doubtful whether writers of children’s books did know or use Grellmann’s study. If so, then perhaps rather the much reduced and accessible 1807 edition. Agnes Strickland’s *Tales from the School-Room* (1835: 113ff.) is the only children’s book I know in which studies about gypsies are explicitly mentioned: she refers to Hoyland and Crabb. For German literature: see e.g. Iulia-Karin Patrut: “Funktionalisierte Grenzfiguren? Schlaglichter auf die “Zigeuner“-Darstellung”, p. 35-55 in Petra Josting u.A. (Herausg.): “Denn sie rauben sehr geschwind jedes böse Gassenkind”. “Zigeuner“-Bilder in Kinder- und Jugendmedien, Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag 2017, in particular p.49 concerning the ‘positive’ representations. This book offers a great variety of studies but contains analyses of only a very few early nineteenth-century children’s *narratives*. The German narratives I discuss below are all absent in this study. Indeed, in this study several pre-1850 sources have been analysed – in particular by Carola Pohlmann (p. 143-173) –, but these are images from *Kindersachbüchern*, not from *Erzählungen* like the ones discussed below.

‘naturalization of gypsies in the minds of writers in England’, while in Germany ‘this appropriation and rendering of them literally familiar seems to have been a desire of the legislature more than the populace’: in Germany communities ‘were reluctant to receive Gypsies into their midst’, as she quotes Gilad Margalit’s *Germany and its Gypsies* (2002; Houghton-Walker 2014: 35).

Although the object of Houghton-Walker’s study is ‘high’ literature and art, her insights are very interesting to keep in mind when studying children’s literature and to follow her in comparing German and English narratives. In the conclusion of her book, she shortly refers to children’s literature when observing that in the twentieth century gypsies are exploited ‘as unthreatening objects of nostalgic contemplation...which allows them...to be the harmless subject of comedy’, to which she adds: ‘Gypsies also begin to appear more frequently in children’s fiction...’. And she poses the open question: ‘Why does the anxiety-inducing, often sublime gypsy become a subject for children’s authors, a safe subject to laugh about, or an object of a more simple nostalgia?’<sup>5</sup>

In this context it may be noteworthy that already in the early nineteenth century gypsies definitely were a frequently recurring theme in children’s narratives, in English as well as in German tales (some of which have been translated into English). Sometimes as a main subject, but often in passing; in short fragments. But this does not mean that those casual remarks were less meaningful: precisely ‘asides’ may help to consolidate stereotypes. In this respect, some children’s texts that appeared during the period discussed by Houghton-Walker, deserve special attention<sup>6</sup>.

In this article I first discuss some early English texts, ranging from 1787 to 1849. Although this period is not quite equivalent to the one Houghton-Walker called ‘the Romantic Period’, the selection proved to be illuminating: in children’s tales characteristics like the ones Houghton-Walker related to “Englishness” only did appear a bit later than in ‘high literature’ and can still be noticed after 1830. There seems to be a shift in time. The early nineteenth-century children’s texts I located proved to endorse in some interesting aspects Houghton-Walker’s argument.

In the concluding section I will pay attention to early German children’s narratives, inspired by Houghton-Walker’s observation of ‘a dramatically different attitude’ and her reference to communal social attitudes which were different in Germany compared to England. Interestingly in these juveniles I found very little *Zigeunerromantik* but rather characteristics which strongly contrast with those typical of “Englishness”. The comparison of the two literary traditions might further illuminate the special character of the English representation of gypsies and betray something about the relation between literary representation and local social ideas.

Most studies about images and prejudices concerning gypsies in children’s narratives focus on one literary tradition. Comparative studies, comprising several national literary traditions are scarce, in particular when it comes to pre-1850 publications, many of which are difficult to get access to because of their sometimes great rarity. Even now, in the time of *full-text* editions offered by institutions like national libraries or Google-books. Although many images at first sight seem more or less ‘the same’ age-old representations, scrutiny of various national literary traditions might bring to light significant differences in ways of representation. These appear not only via translations, which as a rule implied

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<sup>5</sup> p. 245-246. She admits that this subject is ‘beyond the remit of this book’. In some national literary traditions narratives about gypsies grow more and more unfavourably disposed towards gypsies during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. See: Jean Kommers & María Sierra: *Robo de niños o robo de gitanos? Los gitanos en la literatura infantil*. Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla 2016.

<sup>6</sup> See also on this aspect in ‘high’ literature: Houghton-Walker p. 48: ‘Romantic-period gypsies tend to occur only briefly in texts, and, with a few exceptions, tend not to be particularly closely developed as characters. Ironically, because of this, they frequently function in highly meaningful ways.’

‘enculturation’, but may also be traced by analysing original narratives that originated in divergent societies. Houghton-Walker’s study inspired me to this comparative analysis of early English and German children’s texts. It’s true: a limited scope, but it proved nevertheless instructive.

## 1. English representations in children’s texts

### 1. 1. Tales from the late eighteenth century

One of the first narratives that appeared within this period – apart from Darton and Harvey’s exceptional *Little Truths* (1787-1788<sup>7</sup>) that will be discussed below – was *Madge Blarney the Gipsy Girl* (1797), a religious and moralist tract using the literary elements that could be found in chapbooks<sup>8</sup>. According to Shavit, the fairy tale – then considered dangerous – was transformed into a religious power. Acknowledging that fairy tales were very popular, one changed their literary model into an instructive tale by replacing giants and wild beasts by dishonesty, gambling, and alcoholism. *Madge Blarney* is about ‘a poor girl [who] has to fight single-handedly against the wild beasts (the drunken and sinful gypsies – [sic.]); she is eventually saved by religion, which keeps her from falling into sin like her mother....’ Shavit: ‘In this way, the transformed fairy tale of religious tracts was born.’ (Shavit 1986: 171). The opening sentences of the booklet immediately offer an unambiguous image of the gypsies and of the girl’s mother in particular:

A gang of Gypsies had long infested the western part of England, and though every care was taken to seize them, so artfully did they continually shift their quarters that for a series of years they escaped the hands of justice.

Among them was one named Madge Blarney, if possible more daring in wickedness than her companions; for whatever theft or falsehood was on foot she was first assistant and director, and, hardened in iniquity, gloried in the number of crimes she had committed. This wretch, amidst the promiscuous prostitution of such a vagrant sinful life, became mother of two children.<sup>9</sup>

This sketch closely fits Houghton-Walker’s characterization of eighteenth-century representations of gypsies: ‘frightening popular stereotypes of gypsies as inhuman, threatening criminals’, a characterization that she linked with the ‘facility with which the public accepted gypsies as criminal kidnappers’ (2014: 32-33). And, as the following observations may indicate, the image is still far from the Romantic representations of gypsies as part of English life.

Young Mary, who had “a reflective mind”, only knew the name of God from “blasphemy, or the whining cant of the infamous crew around her”. When begging, she one day heard a child saying payers which incited her to question about her origin, to which her mother, “the wicked witch”, laughed. After a visit to a church young Madge’s ideas definitively changed: she refused any longer to participate in criminal acts, whatever the punishments she would receive: “I had rather offend my mother...than God...”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> See Lawrence Darton: *The Dartons. An Annotated Check-list*, 2004: XVIII-XIX.

<sup>8</sup> Zohar Shavit: *Poetics of Children’s Literature*. Athens & London: University of Georgia Press, 1986: 159.

<sup>9</sup> The Madge Blarney story, counting 15 pages, is available full text on ECCO.

<sup>10</sup> In this period children’s tales appear in which children react against their own (bad) parents: see e.g. Sandham’s *The Twin Sisters*, 1805 (Harvey Darton *Children’s Books in England*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 1982: 166.). In 1832 there appeared a French translation by Elisabeth de Bon of this moral tale about parents who were addicted to worldly matters.

After some years she had grown too big to excite charity, for people “would naturally call her a lazy flut, and bid her to go to work”. To this came another problem: “As one vice naturally depends another, Madge’s wicked male companions began to take liberties with her”.

One stormy evening, the gypsies asked permission to sleep in a barn. The farmer, “though he had the utmost dislike to people of their description” was too humane to deny. The gypsies discussed to rob the farmer’s house – against which young Madge strongly pleaded – , but first they wanted to sleep a bit: “like swine, they lay down indiscriminately”.

However, the farmer’s man had overheard the discussion (including the girl’s protest) and could warn in time. The gang was arrested and sentenced to transportation. Young Madge was offered a place at the farmer’s house and her name was changed into Mary. Soon she became “a favourite in the family”.

She remained concerned about the fate of her mother until she heard that Madge Blarney had died during transportation. But soon she grew reconciled to this fate, “as she had too much cause to fear that wickedness was too firmly implanted in her heart ever to be eradicated, and that a longer life would only have been a greater accumulation of sin.”

Mary married the farmer’s man and the closing sentences of the story depict how the gypsy girl in every respect changed into a good Christian.

This development should not be considered as an indication that gypsies could change fundamentally or assimilated, as Houghton-Walker noticed concerning ‘high’ literature in the Romantic period<sup>11</sup>. Young Madge was clearly distinct: she had “a reflective mind”; therefore she was the only one able to escape the fate of *the gypsies*; a formula that can be found in children’s literature until far into the twentieth century<sup>12</sup>.

Several aspects as discussed by Houghton-Walker can be noticed in this booklet, such as that ‘in the early nineteenth century, that gypsies are thieves is taken absolutely for granted, even by those (such as Mitford) who are fundamentally protective in their depictions.’<sup>13</sup> Young Madge “was accustomed to see them [the gypsies] commit small thefts, and use different deceptions to gain money”, as well as the “usual begging” (also implying deceit) as part of their homeless and wandering way of life. When she grew older, she also experienced that people did not feel responsible for “a lazy flut” who should work<sup>14</sup>. Like the eager believers in fortune-telling are portrayed as silly, gullibly people, those who took the poverty of the gypsies to heart also ran the risk of being considered naïve. This is an element in a

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<sup>11</sup> She takes 1783 (the date of the Egyptians Act, 1783) as the beginning of the Romantic period: p. 17: ‘where earlier legislation sought to transport or execute gypsies, eliminating them from England, now they were definitively a problem to be resolved within the nation. Whilst remaining distinct as a group, they had, that is, become assimilated.’; see also Houghton-Walker p. 121,n. 92.

<sup>12</sup> From the perspective of children’s literature about gypsies, this story is exceptional: only very rarely a gypsy (child) is fully accepted in the *gadje*-society. Here, the exceptional character may be an indication that the author ‘used’ gypsies not referring to human beings, but as a metaphor of ‘sin’, a common phenomenon in religious tracts until far into the 20ieth century. The change of name, as expression of identity-change, is a common element in stories in which a person crosses societal borders.

<sup>13</sup> p. 160. By the way: the gypsy girl who in Mitford’s account marries the English gamekeeper, also was exceptional: see Mary Mitford *Our Village: Sketches of Rural Character and Scenery*, Vol. 2, London 1826: 298-311.

<sup>14</sup> Compare Houghton-Walker p. 226 and 228 about contemporary ideas that gypsies did not fit into definitions of the poor and, as people with no settled habitation, were excluded from parish relief. In *Madge Blarney*, only young Madge’s little brother, whom she instructed, notwithstanding her mother’s abhorrence, was “safe in the parish”.

short tale in Priscilla Wakefield's *Juvenile Anecdotes*, in which an 'innocent' girl is willing to help a gypsy woman.

The first edition of Wakefield's *Juvenile Anecdotes* was published in 1795. Was *Madge Blarney* a moral tale in which the vices of the gypsies were presented as self-evident to contrast the 'doomed' and the 'saved', Wakefield's collection of tales explicitly bears the subtitle: *founded on facts*. In the Preface, Wakefield elucidated this: "The objection that I have frequently heard Children raise against the influence of moral tales on their own conduct, that they were not true, but merely fictions..."<sup>15</sup> Although the title page further states that the stories are collected "for the amusement" of children, they certainly aim at learning lessons, as is the case with the 'gypsy'-story.

"The Little Wanderer"<sup>16</sup> contains a story that keeps cropping up in juvenile narratives about gypsies: a child, Laura, noticed that the garden gate was accidentally left open and could not resist the temptation to "venture beyond its bounds". She happened to enter a lane "that was inhabited by a gang of gypsies" where she met with a "female straggler" of the party. This lady is described in a way that may remind of Grellmann: a child on her back and another led by the hand<sup>17</sup>. This is not to suggest that Wakefield was acquainted with his study, but just to notice a stereotypical image of the begging gypsy woman that can be found in various kinds of representations of the time, varying from a painting by Henry Singleton to an illustration in Taylor's *City Scenes: or, a Peep into London for Good Children*<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> Wakefield *Juvenile Anecdotes*, London 1821, 6th edition: p. iii. Harvey Darton (*Children's Books in England*, 3rd. ed. p. 168) refers to 'an illuminating piece of social usage' in *Juvenile Anecdotes*.

<sup>16</sup> Wakefield, 1795 ed. p. 98-101; 1821 ed. p. 77-80.

<sup>17</sup> In his *Historischer Versuch über die Zigeuner*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1783: 86; 2nd. ed., 1787: 114. Raper edition 1787: 44 and the 1807 English edition p. 59.

<sup>18</sup> In 1801 F. Green published two mezzotints after Singleton's gypsy-paintings: "Gipsey's Stealing a Child" and "The Child Restored". This second picture shows the gypsy lady as described here. In Taylor's *City Scenes*, ed. 1809 it is illustration 53. For the Taylors: see below. Because Grellmann's description contains many widely current contemporary stereotypes it may seem that authors used his study, while they are only repeating those images which can be found in Grellmann's work as well as in many other representations. Authors writing about gypsies who had 'informative' pretensions, like Hoyland or Crabb, explicitly referred to "the learned Grellmann" (John Hoyland: *A Historical Survey of the Customs, Habits, & Present State of the Gypsies*, 1816: v; James Crabb: *The Gypsies Advocate*, 1831).



(picture of this edition of Wakefield thanks to Dr John Price, Antiquarian Bookdealer, London)

When noticing a well-dressed, lonely child, the gypsy woman immediately sees her chance to rip off the girl. When Laura asks her why the little gypsy girl is in rags, the woman, referring to her lack of money, proposed that Laura has enough to give her clothes to the poor child. “ “With all my heart,” said the innocent child, pulling off her cap...and placing it on the head of the beggar-girl.” Of course, this was not enough: “The woman was proceeding to strip the child, when she perceived the servants of the family coming hastily in pursuit of her.” The gypsy escaped and Wakefield ends the story with a probing lesson:

Children should not wander beyond the bounds allowed them, especially when their clothes are rich and valuable; as they are liable to meet wretches, like this gypsy, who, for the sake of a little money, would strip and abuse them, or perhaps carry them about as their own children, where their parents could never find them.

And, mindful of her subtitle, she adds: “Many such instances have happened: let the one I have related be a sufficient warning for the future.”

The first volume of *Juvenile Anecdotes* is a collection of more than forty short tales. The first edition was not illustrated. In this context, it may be noteworthy that the 1821 edition contained one illustration: the gypsy-scene, prominently presented as frontispiece<sup>19</sup>. It shows the ‘classic’ picture of the gypsy woman, referred to before, and as in contrast on the left hand the stately home of the richly clothed girl and on the right hand the stereotypical representation of the gypsy camp. It is this representation that we also found in the earliest available edition of Taylor’s *Rural Scenes* (1810), a

<sup>19</sup> This is a feature one can find also in other publications. Thus, for instance the first English translation of Chr. Von Schmid’s *Heinrich von Eichenfels* (Landshut 1817) contains also the gypsy-woman (who is only an instrumental feature) in a frontispiece, while the original German edition is not illustrated (*Little Henry, a German Tale*, translated by M. Lambert, London 1823).

booklet of special interest when considered from Houghton-Walker's perspective: the gypsy as part of the 'traditional' landscape<sup>20</sup>.

Wakefield's story is quite different compared to *Madge Blarney* which may be considered a typical eighteenth-century text, while *The Little Wanderer* contains nineteenth-century elements: leaving the garden (during that century the garden more and more became a reference to Paradise) and naivety (in child-stealing stories related to seduction). At the same time, the gypsy-as-criminal presented as 'fact' rather reminds of eighteenth-century ideas.

## 1.2. The early nineteenth century: illustrated moral and instructive texts

In his classic *Children's Books in England* Harvey Darton paid ample attention to the Taylor family. Its members published booklets that became extremely popular<sup>21</sup>. The *Original Poems for Infant Minds* (1804-1805) Harvey Darton called "The book that awoke the nurseries of England, and those in charge of them". And he adds: 'They were 'original', as no previous poems for the young had been in that you can see the authors, as it were, talking lovingly and naturally to real flesh-and-blood middle-class children...' And indeed, although there are some fragments in which gypsies are mentioned in a stereotypical way, these are completely different from the inhumane characterization in *Madge Blarney*. The *Original Poems* had 'an enormous success' and were edited in 1883 with famous illustrations by Kate Greenaway<sup>22</sup>.

The first volume contains a poem entitled "Old Sarah" by Jane Taylor, and it is worth to render in full<sup>23</sup>:

With haggard eye, and wrinkled face,  
Old Sarah goes, with tott'ring pace,  
From door to door to beg;  
With gipsy hat and tatter'd gown,  
And petticoat of rusty brown,  
And many-colour'd leg.

No blazing fire, no cheerful home,  
She goes forlorn about to roam,  
While winds and tempests blow;  
And ev'ry trav'ler passing by,  
She follows with a doleful cry  
Of poverty and wo.

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<sup>20</sup> Houghton-Walker 2014: e.g. p. 54: gypsies 'at home, but still strange, in the English landscape'; p. 241: gypsies 'occupy a position as a 'traditional' aspect of the landscape'.

<sup>21</sup> The third edition, revised by Brian Alderson, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1982: 181-186.

<sup>22</sup> Harvey Darton 1982: 186; he adds: 'I do not think they have ever been wholly out of print.'

<sup>23</sup> Fifteenth edition, 1815: 85-86.

But see! Her arm no basket bears,  
With laces gay, and wooden wares,  
And garters, blue and red;  
To stroll about and drink her gin,  
She loves far better than to spin,  
Or work to earn her bread.

Old Sarah ev'ry body knows,  
Nor is she pity'd as she goes,  
A melancholy sight;  
For people do not like to give  
Relief to those who idle live,  
And work not when they might.

Mindful of Wakefield's words about the objections against moral tales she heard from children, the popularity of those poems may be well understood: they are 'talking naturally' to paraphrase Harvey Darton. In strong contrast to the 'moral fairy tale' *Madge Blarney*, this picture of the gypsy woman may have sounded very realistic to contemporary ears. It contains the well-known stereotypes, rendering current social attitudes, but moderately, mildly worded. Considered from the perspective of image-formation or the consolidation of stereotypes, this representation might have been very more effective (apart from the fact that the *Poems* enjoyed a very long life). The same may be true for some other references to gypsies in this collection, where gypsies are mentioned almost in passing. The casualness of the phrasing reminds of oral tradition. In "George and the Chimney-Sweeper" by Adelaide O'Keefe, George wants to go out, to show his new clothes. But his parents warned him<sup>24</sup>:

Go run below, George, in the court,  
But go not in the street,  
Lest naughty boys should play some trick,  
Or gipsies you should meet.

In "Pompey's Complaint" by Ann Taylor, the poor old dog Pompey complains feeling forsaken in old age:

I've guarded his dwelling by day and by night,  
Impatient the roost-robbing gipsy to spy;

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<sup>24</sup> *Original Poems*, Vol. 1, fifteenth edition, 1815: 54.



And put the stout rogue and his party to flight,  
With only the look of my terrible eye.<sup>25</sup>

Thinking of Houghton-Walker's study<sup>26</sup>, the references in "Old Sarah" to the 'traditional' tasks (before the industrial revolution these made the gypsy part of the village) and the notion that one does not need to feel responsible for the poverty of the idler, receive special relevance: these aspects support the probability of a contemporary naturalistic impression.

Gypsies also are present in some other works by the Taylors. Of special interest are the already mentioned *City Scenes: or, A Peep into London for Good Children* (1809) and *Rural Scenes: or, A Peep into the Country for Good Children* (1810<sup>27</sup>).

In *City Scenes* there is a vignette "Ladies and Gipsy" accompanied by an illustration of a gypsy woman begging:



**City Scenes: begging. 1810 ed.**

The accompanying text describes the 'classical' scene, referred to above:

"This poor gipsy woman is begging, with a baby hung at her back, and another little child by her side."  
And it continues:

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<sup>25</sup> *Original Poems*, vol. 2, eighteenth edition, 1823: 27.

<sup>26</sup> Houghton-Walker 2014: 222-223 and 228. See also p. 130: gypsies have chosen for a wandering lifestyle and are punished for that.

<sup>27</sup> The earliest editions used here. The 1805 edition of *Rural Scenes* is unavailable to me. For a detailed description of the various editions see the extensive bibliography by Christina Duff Stewart: *The Taylors of Ongar: An Analytical Bio-Bibliography*, 2 volumes, New York & London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1975. Aside: Duff Stewart did not notice the printing error on the title page of the 1810 edition of *Rural Scenes*: it reads 'Daraon' instead of 'Darton' as publisher: Duff Stuart, Vol. 1: 60.

Those kind ladies are giving her some halfpence: let us hope she is not imposing upon them. Many of these poor wandering people are dishonest; but that is no reason why they should all be so.

Interestingly then follows “The Gipsy’s Song”, describing a gypsy camp as settled “on the wide heath”, which deserves full quotation because it suggests an ‘inside view’:

We gipsies live merrily here,  
All on the wide heath we abide,  
And while sleeping under the hedge,  
We covet no dwelling beside:  
Poor beggars forlorn, through the city we stray,  
And return here at night with the spoils of the day.

We gather dry leaves and some sticks,  
With them a warm fire to raise;  
Make a stove of a couple of bricks;  
And blow till we kindle a blaze:  
The traveller quickens his pace as he sees  
The flame and the smoke curling up in the trees.

Then under the hedge in a ring,  
Men, women, and children together,  
We sit, and we merrily sing,  
And regard not the wind and the weather:  
Old Growler keeps watch by the poultry around,  
And barks at the noises that distantly sound.

Except for the line “through the city we stray”, the depiction strongly resembles current descriptions of gypsies living in the rural area. The connection with rural England, as described by Houghton-Walker, is far more dominant in nineteenth century children’s literature than the connection with the (great) city. Maybe that was a reason why in later editions of *City Scenes* the gypsies are removed from the text as well as from the illustrations. This in contrast to *Rural Scenes* in which the gypsy scenes remain in all the editions Duff Stewart collated<sup>28</sup>. The lines: “The traveller quickens his pace as he sees - The flame and the smoke curling up in the trees.” In “The Gipsy’s Song” support Houghton-Walker’s observation of ‘continuing separateness’ of the gypsies, notwithstanding their position as a

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<sup>28</sup> See Duff Stewart 1975, I: 72-92; about *Rural Scenes*: 1975, I: 53-71; see also Vol. 2: 631.

'traditional' aspect of the landscape. Thus, also in this respect, the tales fit current social ideas, making them plausible to contemporary readers. Perhaps a child reading the Taylor's texts would have said (to quote Thomas Miller<sup>29</sup>): "Oh, everybody knows that."

In the English editions of *Rural Scenes* gypsies occur twice: number 73: "Fortune Teller, &c.", and 84: "The Gipsies"<sup>30</sup> In later editions, the illustrations appear sometimes re-drawn and texts revised. According to Duff Stewart, the combination of verse, prose and illustration proved to be very popular. She writes: 'The various editions of *Rural Scenes*, most of which changed to meet the changing times, provide a history of English country life.' (1975, I: 57) With 'the gypsies' as a lasting element, the successive editions might be considered as a nice illustration of Houghton-Walker's thesis about gypsies as an element of the English countryside.

The illustrations below show the depictions of the gypsy camp and those of the fortune teller in respectively the 1810, 1814 and 1845 editions.



#### **Gypsy camp: Rural Scenes, 1810 ed.**

The texts accompanying the illustrations of the gypsy camp only differ in punctuation in the various editions. Central theme is the connection of poverty with idleness:

For they have no cottage to put themselves under,

Because they are idle, and so its no wonder;

....

And a few dirty rags hung in tatters about 'em,

<sup>29</sup> Thomas Miller: *A Tale of Old England*, 1849. 1881 ed. p. 14. For the discussion of this booklet, see below.

<sup>30</sup> 1810 edition; in later re-editions numbers are different The pagination of the 1810 edition contains several errors. See also Duff Stewart 1975, I: 53.

For those who won't work for things, must go without 'em



**Gypsy camp: Rural Scenes, 1814 ed.**

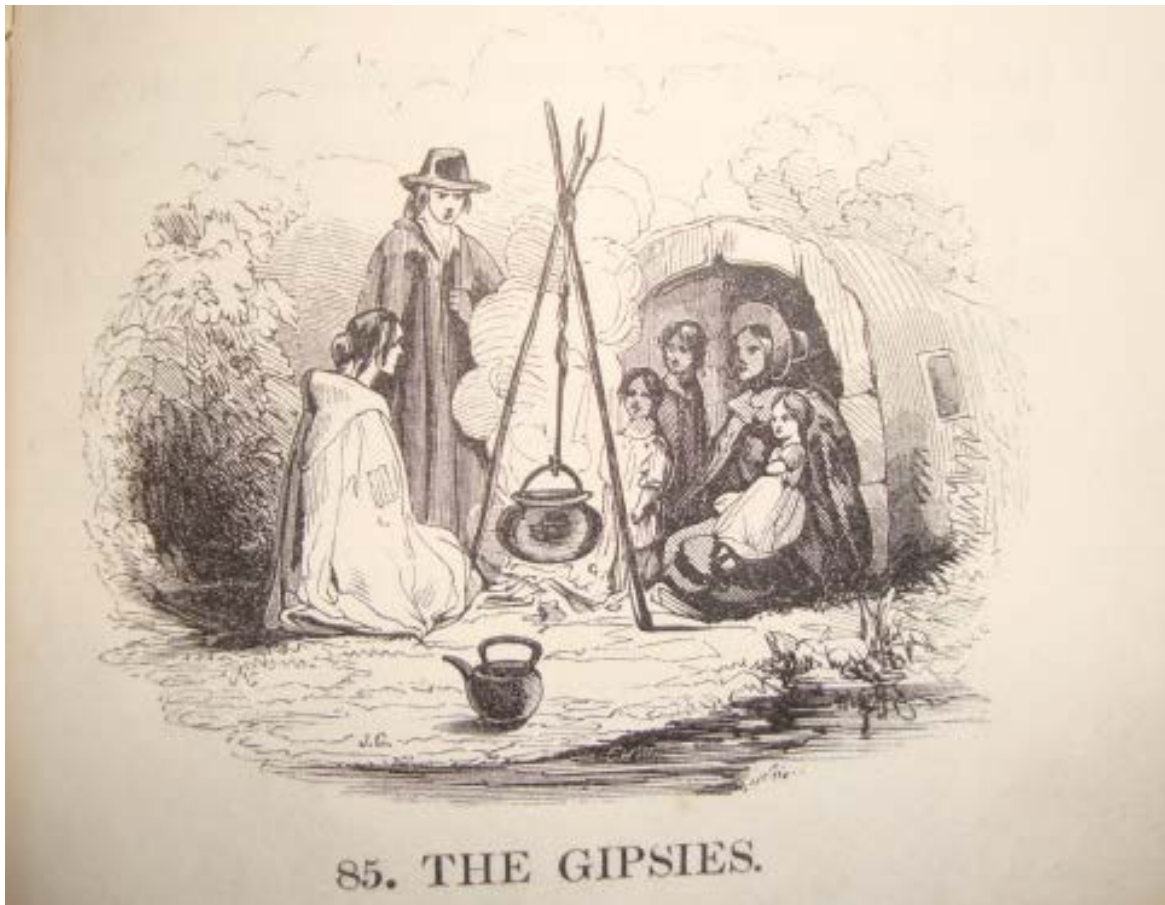
A relatively large part of the poem is about fortune telling, which is also presented as a separate subject. Here the emphasis is on incredibility:

So they tell people's fortunes, and promise them too,  
To be ladies, and lords, and I cannot tell who!  
Fine people, to promise such wonderful matters,  
Who can't keep themselves out of rags and of tatters!  
No, no, - if they had any wit, they'd have guess'd  
That to work for one's living is always the best.

In both *City Scenes* and *Rural Scenes*, idleness as a vice is a central theme, but in *Rural Scenes* it is emphatically connected with gypsies. Rather than representing gypsies as criminals, they are described in terms of 'vices', which might suggest that renouncing these faults could result in integration. Fortune-telling is characterized as cheating, but it is the 'victim' rather than the gypsy who is blamed.

The illustrations of fortune telling are accompanied by prose, telling about "a wicked old woman, and two silly women." "The old woman is wicked for pretending to know what she does not know...She is a gypsy..." But the emphasis in this little tale is on the foolishness of those who believe the predictions. In the end they are severely punished for that. The 1810 edition is somewhat more detailed in this, compared to later editions. This theme of stupidity and punishment in connection with fortune telling by gypsies is a continuously recurrent theme in nineteenth century children's literature. It is most

prominent in a wonderfully illustrated booklet by Agnes Strickland: *Tales of the School-Room* (1835)<sup>31</sup>. In her narrative the theme of fortune-telling is a preamble to the conversion of (some) gypsies to Christianity.



**Gypsy camp: Rural Scenes, 1845 ed.**

By the way: also in German literature this theme can be found in early narratives, as well as in school-books. One of the most enduring publications, *Der Deutsche Kinderfreund, ein Lesebuch für Volksschulen* (parts of which also have been translated, e.g. into Dutch) contains a like story of stupid people who were punished because of their belief in gypsy palm-reading (the 175<sup>th</sup> edition, 1844: 51-52). But also a less widely circulated booklet like J.G. Reinhardt's *Der Mädchenspiegel oder Lesebuch für Töchter in Land- und Stadtschulen* (8<sup>th</sup> edition 1822) rendered the theme, in this case even resulting in the death of the silly victim! But the most famous story, published again and again for over a century, was Christoph von Schmidt's *Wie Heinrich von Eichenfels zur Erkenntnis Gottes kam* (1817) a tale in which the fortune-telling was connected with child-stealing. Although the 'lesson' is the same as in the English books – the punishment of the superstitious –, in the German representations the theme is frequently connected with the expulsion of the gypsy from society. Below I shall return to this aspect.

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<sup>31</sup> I insert here the frontispiece "Gipsy Children", which is described by Harvey Darton as 'extremely delicate and charming': *Children's Books in England*. 3rd. ed. 1982: 209.



Fortune telling: Rural Scenes, 1810 ed.



Fortune telling: Rural Scenes, 1814 ed.



Fortune telling: Rural Scenes 1845 ed.



**“Gipsey Children”: the school girl Harriet discussing with the gypsy children (frontispiece in Agnes Strickland’s missionary tale<sup>32</sup>)**

*Rural Scenes* in particular is an early children’s book in which gypsies are represented in a way that nicely fits Houghton-Walker’s study. That also post-1830 editions continue to present this representation may indicate the conservative aspect of children’s literature, compared to ‘high’ literature. Like *Madge Blarney*, edited in the final decade of the eighteenth century, better would fit in the pre-1783 period, still many years after 1830 there appeared children’s tales that would endorse Houghton-Walker’s arguments concerning the Romantic Period.

In relation to the subject of fortune-telling another Darton & Harvey edition deserves attention: *Little Truths Better than Great Fables*, the first edition of which appeared in two volumes in 1787-1788. On the title page of the second volume (1788) truth is emphasized by a quotation: “Children naturally love

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<sup>32</sup>In contrast to ‘conversion tales’ about gypsies which usually concern only one (or some) individual(s), ‘missionary tales’ as a rule are about the conversion of gypsies in general. Often these tales end in minor key. Compare the use of the concept of missionary tale by Briel, who only refers to Wildermuth’s *Das Braune Lenchen* (1859), which, in my opinion is a typical ‘conversion tale’, bearing all its characteristics (Petra-Gabriele Briel: *Lumpenkind und Traumprinzessin*. Giessen 1989). By the way: since Briel this short story is one of the very few *Erzählungen* mentioned by students, I think of the already mentioned “*Denn sie rauben sehr geschwind...*” edited by Petra Josting a.o. 2017. In this study the narrative is frequently misdated (p. 176, 179, 182). I also think of Klaus-Michael Bogdal’s *Europa erfindet die Zigeuner*, Berlin 2014.



Truth, and when they read a Story, their first Question is, whether it is true?" The booklets contain a discussion of a variety of subjects, ranging from slavery (which is condemned<sup>33</sup>) to shipwreck, but most of the instructive tales are devoted to the countryside. In volume 2 there is a witty tale about fortune-telling. In the various editions it is situated in between different rural subjects. In the early editions there is no illustration to the gypsy-tale. For our purpose the 1807 edition published under the title *Little truths , for the Instruction of Children* is the most interesting. Here the tale, now illustrated, follows after an evocative description of a walk in the countryside. Suddenly a child calls: "Look under that hedge, there is a fire!" (Vol. 2: 21). "It is some gipsies boiling their pot", the instructor explains, offering the stereotypical information:

They travel about, pretending to tell the people their fortunes; they often impose upon weak minds, but I caution you never to listen to their conversation; they are generally of wicked lives, very idle, and too often make more free with their neighbours' goods than they should do...Some young people have been greatly cheated by trusting to their deceitful advice.

After this, the subject of fortune-telling is illustrated by a humoristic tale in which the usual theme (stupid peasants susceptible to deceit) is turned around: now the gypsies are fooled. The story is about a farmer who was on his way, driving an empty cart. Some gypsy women asked whether they were allowed to ride with him, offering the farmer to tell his fortune. To this the man reacts: "Tell my fortune? ... you do not know your own." – "That we do, (said one of them) and we will tell your fortune, only let us ride." The farmer consented and when after some time they reached a pond, he stopped to offer his horses the opportunity to drink. Then he manoeuvred the cart in a way "shooting the Gipsies into the water". And he called out:

"You tell my fortune. I told you, you did not know your own, or you would not have got into my cart:" so drove on to London as fast as he could, leaving the Gipsies to walk out of the pond, which was not very deep, but sufficient to give these pretenders to foreknowledge a good ducking.

To further impress this story on the child's mind, in the 1807 edition it is accompanied by a hilarious illustration depicting the women falling into the water.

Like the poems in the Darton publications discussed above, this story is also characterized by a language that may have sounded very realistic to contemporary ears, underlined by an interesting narrative form: the voice of the child (rendered in italics: questions or remarks a child would have posed) alternates with the voice of the instructor. In relation to fortune-telling most nineteenth-century stories narrate about naïve people who in the end appear to be cheated in a way that really harms them. In contrast to such harsh tales, this one combines amusingness with a lenient view in the end: the ladies could walk out, because the pond "was not very deep." In this story authorial authority seems greatly enhanced by this literary form in combination with the funny representation in word as well as in image<sup>34</sup>. Indeed, the narrative is an eighteenth-century one, but, like the Taylors's this Darton

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<sup>33</sup> Also the idea that black people are of inferior minds explicitly is opposed: "The minds of black persons in general are as capable of improvement as those of the whites." (Vol.2: 14) It is perhaps the first mention of black authors in a children's book (Roger Middleton, antiquarian bookseller, Oxford). For the Quaker background and the stressing of the 'truth', see Lawrence Darton 2004: xviii.

<sup>34</sup> Here I touch on the difficult subject of contemporary interpretation. Although direct testimonies about how children once interpreted the tales (and their representations of gypsies) are almost always lacking, comparative literary analysis might offer indications for what could have been plausible. See more extensively María Sierra & Jean Kommers: *Robo de niños o robo de gitanos?*, Sevilla 2016. This is an important subject: most studies about

and Harvey publication may be considered an example of the 'transition period between the moral and imaginative' writings for children, characterised by 'virtues [like] humour, sympathy, tolerance, freshness and charm.' (Duff Stewart 1975, I: xvi). Lawrence Darton speaks of a 'tone of compassion' and an 'overall gentleness' when discussing William Darton's work. And concerning *Little Truths* he remarked: 'There is a homely feel about this book' that presents anecdotes and cautionary tales in a context of most common, everyday aspects (2004: 63).



Shooting the Gipsies into the water (*Little Truths*, ed. 1807, vol. 2: 22)

### 1.3. The early nineteenth century: literary tales

In 1826 Martha Mary Butt Sherwood – the famous and 'most intense moralist of all'<sup>35</sup>: Mrs Sherwood – published a tale entitled: *The Gipsy Babes*. Contrary to her reputation, this gypsy story which is set

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gypsies in children's books focus on prejudices and expressions of discrimination interpreting these from the viewpoint of the (modern) author. In historical studies such anachronism may be particularly problematic.

<sup>35</sup> F.J. Harvey Darton, op. cit. p. 169. Authors on children's books who could not withstand the temptation of anachronistic interpretation are very negative about her. Gypsies appear in several of her stories: in *Shanty the Blacksmith* (1841), and in her famous *The Fairchild Family*, vol. 2, 1842: 42-52; 114-129. As an exceptional example of how cruel children's literature could be, several authors repeat Harvey Darton's reference to Sherwood's *The Fairchild Family*: the scene in which a father shows his children a hanged man (see e.g. Bettina Hürlimann & Brian Alderson: *Three Centuries of Children's books in Europe*, Oxford U.P. 1967: xiii). But, from a view of our times it is nothing compared to e.g. a tale by Schoppe Weise in which poor children are found crying on the doorstep of their miserable hut, compelled to freeze outside because of a disgusting cadaverous smell,

in the early eighteenth century contains little morality and many expressions of tenderness. Of course, the usual stereotypes (pilfering; rather harmless forms of violence and the old gypsy woman as witch) are occasionally mentioned, but the story is mainly characterised by affectionate expressions concerning the relationship between the protagonist (a stolen child) and his gypsy 'mother' and 'sister'. As we shall see, there is a striking resemblance with Friedrich Jacobs's *Der Fischerknabe* (1802).

Although retreated, the gypsies live in harmony with the community:

...furthest from the view of those persons passing to and fro from any place of the accustomed resort of the country people, was an embowered spot, shaded on one side by a rock and on another by an exceeding thick copse, which was an old and well-known resort of a horde of gypsies, who came there at certain seasons of the year: and, because they had made it a point of gypsy honour never to pilfer those who harboured them, or to fill their kittles from the poultry-yard of the neighbouring farmhouses, they had been left to enjoy their retreat for a length of years in undisturbed security (1875 ed.: 9).

The justice of peace a 'hot and fiery' man, decided one day to drive the gypsies out of the country and as an act of revenge for their oppression, they stole his son. This boy finally tells the story to his grandchildren, who "had ... right to look like gypsies" (6).

After being taken by the gypsies, he got protection from a gypsy lady who "had the remains of a noble and even beautiful person. That she was a thief, a liar, and fortune-teller, I well know; but there was a kindness and generosity in her character..." (19-20). This lady became his 'mother' and from then on the reader follows the tragic vicissitudes of her and her (grand)children, one of whom dies. This scene is written in compassionate terms. The other gypsies just disappear and are only characterised in biblical terms (Job xxiv.8-10, xxx.3-6: 1875 ed.: 22) stressing their wandering nature (see also 62-63). In the end, the lady unites the stolen boy with his parents and could stay on their estate until her death. In this narrative the gypsies are described as living outside rural life, at the same time being part of it<sup>36</sup>, until the brash justice of peace decided to persecute them.

In her *The Fairchild Family*, a work 'teeming with personal force and vitality' (Harvey Darton 1982: 169) gypsies are put on the scene two times in the second volume that was published in 1842. In both cases it concerns stories read by the protagonists from books. The first story is from a booklet found in an old chest which "could not have been much less than a hundred years old" (42). It is a moral story about parents punished for their proud and arrogance: one day their only child was stolen by gypsies. The tale does not contain much about gypsies in general, apart from the reference to their usual activities: begging and pilfering, buying rags and telling fortunes "as gypsies always do" (45). But it is noteworthy that, when the text says that gypsies were suspected and examined, "but nothing could be made of it", Henry, the child who is reading the story exclaims: "Did I not know it?...I knew it from the first that the gypsies had him." (43) This may indicate that in popular view the association of gypsies with child-stealing was obvious. During most of the nineteenth century Sherwood's *The Fairchild Family* was considered as very realistic; it rendered the minutiae of the child's world, of everyday life in 'masterly prose'<sup>37</sup>.

When the parents of the stolen child wanted to inform in some place about the gypsies ("particularly about any gypsies who might be in the habit of haunting that country", p. 48), they noticed that "people

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coming from their dead parents Amalia Schoppe, geb. Weise: *Deugd; De weg tot geluk*, Leyden 1838: 77. I could not locate the original text, presumably it is a translation from the periodical *Iduna*, edited by Schoppe-Weise.

<sup>36</sup> See also Sherwood's *The Fairchild Family*, Vol. 2, 1842: 48.

<sup>37</sup> Harvey Darton 1982: 170; Doreen M. Rosman: *Evangelicals and Culture*, Cambridge: James Clarke & Co. 2012: 85.

there were afraid of the gypsies, and did not like to say anything which might bring them into trouble with them. The gypsies never did much mischief in the way of stealing near their own huts, and were always civil when civilly treated.” (48)

In the end the gypsies, as in the other tales by Sherwood, just disappear, just like Houghton-Walker noticed in ‘high’ literature (2014: 254). When he has finished reading the story, Henry said: “This story is too short...I wish it had been twice as long: I want to hear more of ... the gypsies”. And he and his sister went out playing gypsies... (ibid.) She drops a hint about an enviable aspect of gypsy-life: “Who would not like to live like a gypsy in the wood...?” But it is conditional: “...if all the year round was like that month of May?” (44-45<sup>38</sup>).

In Sherwood’s *Shanty the Blacksmith: A Tale of Other Times* (1826) gypsies also play a role. Also this story is set in the eighteenth century. Here gypsies are portrayed in a darker way, perhaps because of the kind of prose, which is characterized as ‘Gothic’<sup>39</sup>. This booklet also is about a stolen child that also in the end is united in a miraculous way with her parent. Also in this case the stealing of the child is related to a ‘bad’ father. A gypsy-woman took the child with her, until she one day left it at a blacksmith’s place because she feared that a mark on the child’s shoulder could betray her. Later, she and some other gypsies tried to rob a rich person who appeared to be the child’s father (“Gypsies...who, amongst other thieves, always have their eyes on those who are supposed to carry valuables about them” – 1826: 134; also a theme in the second story in *The Fairchild Family*, 1842: 114-129). However, they were caught. The woman then told the father why she left the child at the blacksmith’s because there it would find “a better father than you would make her; for what are you but a wicked Jew, with a heart as hard as the gold you love” (131) The gypsies manage to escape and appear and were never heard of again (137).

To conclude this essay, I will discuss a children’s booklet that almost exemplarily underlines the relevance Houghton-Walker’s wonderful study: Thomas Miller’s *A Tale of Old England*, first published in 1849.

This booklet is of an exceptional literary quality that may make a ‘modern’ reader to doubt whether it is a juvenile. But it definitely is, as is confirmed by the author himself and the series of which it once was a part<sup>40</sup>. There have been re-editions at least until the 1920’s.

The first chapter contains a very evocative description of an “old-fashioned” rural village, portraying scenery as well as its inhabitants, adults as well as children: “I mention these things to show the wide difference between a village and a large town.” About the books people in the village read, Miller wrote that fairy tales

were the chief stock of village literature in my boyish days. Mothers brought home their children books full of marvels, and startling wonders, and impossible falsehoods; and the more

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<sup>38</sup> There is an interesting story in *The Children’s Treasure*, 1 July 1872: 81, with a picture of children playing gypsies (p. 84). “How I wish I could be like a gipsy, and always out of doors...I am sure that I should never get tired of it...” But as soon as the weather changes, the idea changes: “...living in the wood seems to be very great fun for a little while, one soon gets tired of it...” The lesson is that, as the mother remarks: “...boys and girls who live in houses have much more to make them happy than the poor gipsies, even though those boys and girls have to go to school and to learn their lessons.”

<sup>39</sup> See Frederick Burwick (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Romantic Literature*, Oxford: Blackwell 2012: 1251.

<sup>40</sup> Edition 1881: p. 14; 57. The 1849 edition was part of ‘Chamber’s library for young people’. More recent editions were entitled: *John’s Adventures: A Tale of Old England*.

improbable the story, the better they were pleased with it. Such a book as I have written for you would have been thrown aside on account of its truthfulness.<sup>41</sup>

In the second chapter, as evocative as the first – even the sounds are described minutely –, we make acquaintance with the protagonist John, a lively boy, but somewhat spoiled by the “over-indulgent” mother and his always caring sister Mary. One day they got permission to make a summer ramble with old nurse Betty, but under no account they should venture too far into Ackland Wood, “a wild forest”. When they have walked into that wood to find a spot to have lunch, John tried to catch a small rabbit. Soon he was out of sight of the nurse and his sister, who called him in vain. Notwithstanding the help of other people, the boy remained lost without a trace.



When John noticed he has lost his way, he panicked and called for help, which was heard “by a band of gypsies.” A special chapter entitled “The Gypsy Encampment” starts with a description of those people, offering details about their way of living and origin<sup>42</sup>:

I must say a word about these curious people. They go about England in parties, several families together, and live entirely in the open air, or under the tilts of their carts, placed on the ground, with some straw. They do not like to visit towns, but confine their rambles to rural districts, where they pitch their camps at night in by-lanes or within the border of a wood. They make a living partly by mending saucepans and other articles for the country people; but it is

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<sup>41</sup> Citations from 1881 ed., p. 13-14. The contrast between the rural world and the city: see also p. 60. Compare Wakefield!

<sup>42</sup> I render the text in full, also because the booklet is not available full-text on the internet; 1881 ed. p. 43-44. It is also interesting as an example of an ‘ethnography’ (‘manners & customs’) which regularly can be found in narratives in which gypsies play an important part. Citations from this chapter: p. 43-55.

said they also steal from the farmers, and they are universally classed with thieves and vagabonds. Some of their women pretend to tell fortunes. The strange thing about the gipsies is, that nobody can rightly tell where they come from. Some hundreds of years ago, they arrived in England in large numbers, and said they came from Egypt, for which reason they were called Egyptians, or Gipsies. But it is now known that they were not natives of Egypt, and some persons who have inquired into their history believe that they must have come from India. Till this day they speak a jargon of their own, besides English. They never get any education; they cannot be said to have any knowledge of religion; and they are swarthy in personal appearance, as if they descended from an Eastern people. The best thing that can be said of them is, that they are grateful for any kindness, and never injure a benefactor.

Notwithstanding this final remark, which is particularly rare in early children's narratives about gypsies<sup>43</sup>, Miller continues: "It was in the hands of a party of these gipsies that John had the misfortune to fall." He describes in detail the gypsy camp "that formed a wild but beautiful picture." Some men looked "very displeasing, ...and ...you could not help thinking of the robbers and banditti you had heard of, or read about..." When John was thinking of home, "a little barefooted and bareheaded gypsy girl approached", asking him to play with her, to replace her diseased brother. Later in the story this girl, named Jael, became an intermediary, bridging the gap between the two worlds. Follows a sketch of the gypsies' livelihood: begging, stealing, poaching, next to some traditional trades and telling fortunes to "foolish servant-girls who gave them money, and were silly enough to believe":

And the gipsies often laughed when they sat beside the camp fire, to think that the country people should be so simple as to part with their money, and to believe in all the falsehoods which they told to them.

When John went to sleep, the gypsy-girl tried to keep him warm. "As for herself, she was so hardened from being much in the open air, that she felt not the cold." Meanwhile the gypsies discussed what to do with John: to keep him (as a playmate for Jael) or to ask a ransom ("We are too poor...to throw any chance away by which money is to be made. Besides, we did not steal him..."). They decided to ask money, and Miller adds to this: "...that bad as some people might think the gipsies, they always fulfilled the bargain when they had once made it." In the next chapter "The Little Wanderers" an attempt to escape is described (65-77). John is helped by the gypsy-girl and the differences between the two are again detailed. In particular the description of 'hardy gipsy girl' is a recurrent theme in the book as well as John's outward appearance ("as fair as alabaster" – 86), and the contrast between the gipsy's and John's looks made it beyond doubt that, to passers-by, the boy had been stolen (86). The escape failed: just in view of John's village they were caught again – a formula regularly recurrent in stolen-child stories<sup>44</sup>.

When informing John's parents, the gypsies said they would go to the west of England, but the local landlord knew where they really were going: the usual situation of the gypsy camps was well known in the community, like the gypsies were well acquainted with the landlord: "The gipsies knew and

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<sup>43</sup> There are some examples, but these are outnumbered by the ones only giving negative characterizations. See above: Taylor's *City Scenes*: the text "Ladies and Gipsy": "Many...are dishonest; but that is no reason why they should all be so"; see also Sherwood's *The Gipsy Babes*, 1826.

<sup>44</sup> It resembles the 'intermediate period': the greater the social distance between the world from which the stolen child originates, the longer the period between the 'theft' and the return into the society of origin. A nice example is Charlotte Adams: *The Stolen Child*, 1838.

dreaded him, and were very respectful in their manners if they stopped at his house for refreshment.” (84-85)

To escape the magistrate, the gypsies quickly broke up the encampment.

If you have never seen a tribe of gypsies removing from one part of the country to another, you can scarcely have a notion of the wild and picturesque appearance of such a procession; consisting, as it does, of carts, shaggy ponies, dogs, donkeys with panniers, men, women, and very often a number of children.

Here Miller offers a very detailed description of the gypsies-on-the-move (88 ff.). Of special interest is the connection Miller makes between the proverbial hardness of the gypsies and the cruel treatment of their animals – which is also a recurrent theme in children’s books:

As for the donkeys, they were, like the whole of their race, patterns of patience and meek endurance under all suffering; inured to harsh words, hard blows, and harder fare; and none, we believe, but cruel and unfeeling gypsies, who have no religion, but may, with few exceptions, be numbered amongst heathens, would ever persecute so useful and inoffensive an animal as an ass, especially when they recall the entry of Jesus Christ into Jerusalem.

The gypsies retreated to “what had once been an old English forest”:

As these ancient coverts abounded with game, and were not strictly guarded by keepers, they had for many years been the resort of gypsies, especially when they sought shelter from justice, or were flying from the pursuit of the law. There were also dark rumours abroad, of officers who had ventured into those silent and pathless thickets, and had never again returned...Here the gypsies were encamped...

The pursuers met in the woods, “and sheltering themselves behind one of those impenetrable barriers we have before described, obtained a good view of the gypsies, who were seated around the camp fire at supper.” Thus watching the camp from the outside, they decided to wait until the morning, “as some of the gypsies would by that time have quitted the camp, to pick up, by plunder or otherwise, whatever chance might throw in their way...” Meanwhile the pursuers were discussing incidents of small thefts by the gypsies, like stealing poultry, and one of them remarked:

But I do not mind these things so much...for they must, and will live, and are such expert plunderers, that it is difficult to detect them. But when they come to stealing children, as in this case, and to fix a price upon them, it is high time the country rose up to put down such infamous practices.

In the end, the pursuers got John, but the gypsies denied any wrong-doing; on the contrary they stressed all the good they had done to a boy who one day walked into their camp: “And this is the return you would make for my kindness...said the false old gipsy woman” (111). And Jael’s mother said:

You know how useless it is to attempt to punish any one of the tribe...that every gipsy throughout the broad lands of England will revenge any injury offered to our race.

The landlord and his men agreed that it was a waste of time to try to bring the tribe before a justice and John even admitted that he “shouldn’t care much to live amongst the gypsies”, provided together with his family. There is a happy ending for all: little Jael and her parents “who hoped to break off this wild comfortless way of living in tents” could rent some “humble cottage” – and live by traditional means (117) - near John’s place. The other gypsies just disappeared “and have never been seen either in the neighbourhood of Repton or the moorland wood since that time.” Jael went to school and later became a governess:

For she had no equal in the country at drawing and teaching music; and few, unless they had been acquainted with her early history, would have recognised in that beautiful and black-haired brunette the once barefooted and ragged Jael the gipsy girl.

She completely integrated in the village community; John went to the university and “it is rumoured that Jael will become his wife” (128).

From the description it is clear that gypsy bands were part of this rural area, but at the same time strange – that is why Miller at times extensively amplifies and clarifies, notwithstanding he is well aware that a village boy, reading his book, would say: “Oh, everybody knows that.” (14) The various reactions Houghton-Walker describes throughout her book can be noticed in Miller’s tale: attraction and repulsion; fascination and fear. The gypsies persistently go away before becoming familiar; they travel lonely ways, avoiding the common highways<sup>45</sup>. The villagers only see them ‘from the outside’ and in the person of John the reader gets some ‘inside view’; a formula often recurring in ‘stolen child’-stories. This view from the inside is here complemented by the author. Concerning this additional information in the author’s voice, an observation by Houghton-Walker is particularly interesting: gypsies are like museums or cabinets of curiosities, eliciting wonder. Miller’s ‘ethnographic’ excursions make one think of information-labels in museums: there is not one consistent description, but he offers information piecemeal, depending on the various sceneries. It is like a visitor in a museum who walks from one object to another. At the same time, because gypsies are ‘impossible to label’, according to Houghton-Walker, they ‘resist the cataloguing that characterizes such [museum] collections’. Therefore descriptions are in terms of generalisations and ‘often include an element of unknowability within them’<sup>46</sup>. Regarding this aspect, Miller refers to the mystery of their origin and argues that if one lacks personal experience with the wandering gypsies “you can scarcely have a notion of the wild and picturesque appearance” They keep their route “a secret”, and the sites where they encamped were surrounded by “dark rumours” (43, 88, 90, and 97).

Concerning the aspect of Englishness, the title of the book and the evocative opening chapters are telling: Miller shows the unadulterated rural village reflecting ages of English history and landscape: “you could hardly tell whether the roads had been altered to suit the shape of the fields, or the fields fenced in to fit the windings of the lanes.” ([1]) The gypsies are part of this (“Old Sarah ev’ry body knows”) and at the same time offer – by way of continuous contrasting – the author the opportunity to teach the little reader the (English-Christian) identity. Descriptions of “The Rectory” (Chapter II) and “The Old Wood” (Chapter IV) serve this aspect, together with some *intermezzi* about religion. And when John is more courageous than the gypsy girl, that was because he felt inspired by old English ballad lore (95-96).

During the Romantic Period as described by Houghton-Walker, several children’s narratives referring to gypsies have been published. There are, of course, differences with ‘high’ literature. But Houghton-Walker’s study in various respects proved useful also for an analysis of this juvenile literature. And, what is more: early nineteenth-century juvenile literature seems to confirm her major thesis. Particular

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<sup>45</sup> Miller p. 90 about how the gypsies stayed apart from the rural – and in particular from the urban – society.

<sup>46</sup> Houghton-Walker 2014: 206-207.



interesting proved her idea that the gypsy exists both within and outside of conventional English society. Considering the selection discussed in this section, children's literature seems to be more conservative. Characteristics Houghton-Walker links with the Romantic Period appear somewhat later in juveniles and can be noticed decades after 1830. A tale like *Madge Blarney* still belongs to the pre-Romantic Period and Miller's book, published in 1849, clearly shows the characteristics which, according to Houghton-Walker, were typical of the Romantic Period. A reason for the differences between 'high' and juvenile literature may be that socio-historical conditions<sup>47</sup> had a minor influence on ways authors of children's stories represented gypsies because the narrative scope of these stories was far more limited compared to that of adult literature, rather stimulating the development of stereotypical representations.

## 2. A comparison: early nineteenth-century gypsy-tales in Germany

As noted in the introduction, at the start of her study Houghton-Walker noticed 'a dramatically different attitude to gypsies in English works', compared to German literary representations. Concerning the romantic period as she defined it, 'we do not find an equivalent of the *Zigeunerromantik* in English texts from the period.' (2014: 9) Also here it may be interesting to pay attention to children's literature. 'Romantic' images of gypsies, stressing enviable – but stereotypical – qualities like freedom and *Wanderlust* or a quality like special musicality, appear only late in most of the children's narratives, and the German case is no exception<sup>48</sup>. In contrast to the situation in England as described by Houghton-Walker (gypsies becoming 'both indigenous and exotic', becoming 'assimilated', becoming – strange – 'aspects of the *English* landscape, and of *English* life, in short: becoming *English*' – 2014: 10, 17 and 23), most German children's literature of the period is much more unfavourably disposed towards gypsies. It is also far from 'romantic': often gypsies are criminalized and described as outcasts. To give an impression of the difference between German and English juveniles of the early nineteenth century, I here offer a short description of some early nineteenth century German narratives. In another essay I will discuss these more extensively, also paying attention to translations. To study the contrast between English and German representations as suggested by Houghton-Walker, I will confine the following discussions to those passages which might elucidate this aspect.

In 1802 Friedrich Jacobs published a book narrating the vicissitudes of two children and their father: *Allwin und Theodor. Ein Lesebuch für Kinder*<sup>49</sup>. The (mostly instructive) stories are about a great variety of subjects and in two chapters gypsies play a role. Jacobs explicitly criticised current pedagogic ideas and stated that:

to form children to be men, to snatch them from intellectual indolence...we ought to speak to them in a manly tone, strive to vivify their imagination, rouse the activity of their mind naturally spontaneous; and while, under serene and pleasing forms, we exhibit to them the picture of nature and man... (1804: vi)

The first story, "The Fisherboy", is about a child seduced by gypsies and 'adopted' by them. In the end – of course – the boy is miraculously re-united with his parents, but in the meantime he was educated over a period of years as a gypsy, learning to beg, sing and make music. The gypsies treated him well:

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<sup>47</sup> See fort his aspect: Houghton-Walker 2014: 9.

<sup>48</sup> See Jean Kommers & María Sierra: *Robo de niños...* See also above about Sherwood 1842: 44-45. Unconditional 'romantic' representations only appear in Dutch literature, for instance, after about 1970.

<sup>49</sup> Of this edition there were translations in Dutch, English and French. Later, in 1805, there appeared a second (augmented) edition, in three volumes. The third volume also contained a 'gypsy-story'. For the introduction and the first story, we use the English edition (*Allwin and Theodore. For the Perusal of Children*, Hamburg [sic.] 1804) for the second story, we use the German text: the 1807 and 1847 editions, the latter edited by K.G. Jacob. The Dutch edition contained an title-engraving depicting the scene of the gypsies seducing the child. The original first edition also contained a title-engraving, but I could not find a copy to check whether this also renders that scene.

“[they] loved me better than any other boy.” (1804: 150<sup>50</sup>). One day, soldiers came to seize the gypsies and in the consternation, the boy succeeded to hide in the forest where they were camping and after the soldiers left with their captives, he fled his hiding-place to be finally adopted by an old man where the protagonists Allwin and Theodor met him. In this early narrative by the humanist Jacobs<sup>51</sup> the description of gypsy-life is almost ‘romantic’: encamping round a fire, singing, dancing and indulging in “every kind of mirth.” (1804: 150). Although they sustained themselves by begging and fortune-telling, they stayed away from the rural society. This aspect appears even stronger in the second tale which is enacted in the midst of a vast forest, in which the protagonists lost their way. They had to pass the night in the gypsy-camp where they were received very hospitably. Camp-life is described in terms of freedom and happiness, far from all the worries of society (the 1842 edition – *Schriften für die Jugend; Allwin und Theodor* – contains a picture of this scene in between p. 272 and 273). Allwin’s and Theodor’s father even had to think of “a Spanish poet who was very well acquainted with their way of thinking and who depicted gypsy-life as not much worse as life in the Golden times.” (1807, III: 129-130). But this free and happy life was separated from the rural society. When the protagonists continued their way the following day, they left the gypsies behind in their world.

...finally the hills hid the noisy valley, it grew all silent and they continued their way in loneliness; all sorts of reflections concerning this strange society occurred to them...It all seemed a dream. “The most important cause of this strange appearance”, the father said, explaining the obscure way of life of this nomadic people in the midst of Europe, “is the tendency to idleness. Idleness is the highest good of these people, and the uneducated man, when grown up with this tendency, sustains all defects, all distress and all danger related to such an existence, rather than accepting the laws and order of an orderly society.”

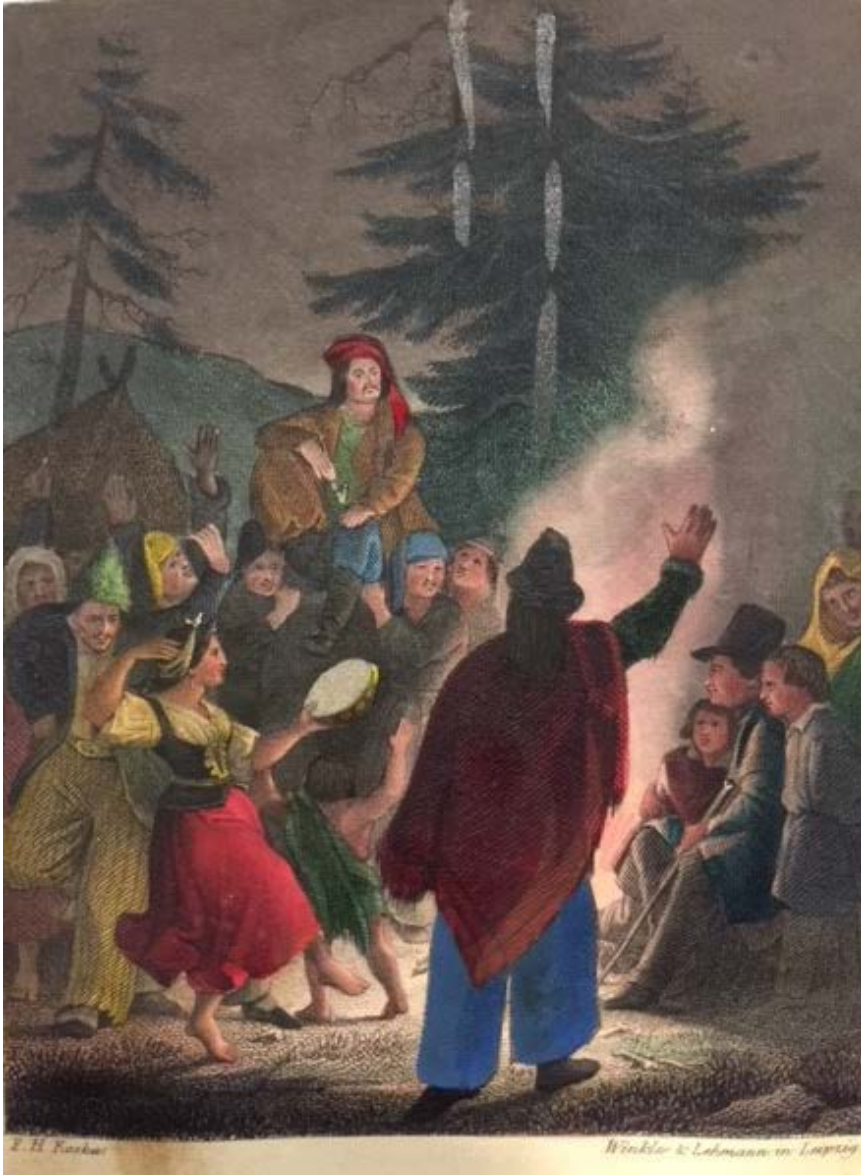
Jacobs’s narratives are definitely an exception in early nineteenth century children’s narratives. Gypsies are described as ‘others’, but they are worthy people. When in the first story a woman threatened to beat the boy when he kept crying for his parents, another woman immediately interfered and protected him. And the description of the “free and happy” camp life even seems to become nostalgic to the travellers, when they continued their way “in loneliness”.

To the whole collection of stories in the 1847 edition only two narratives have been illustrated, one of them this second gypsy story. The picture renders a romantic impression of the camp: the father and his children watching a vivid scene of a musical performance. In this way, the gypsies figure prominently in the book.

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<sup>50</sup> According to the *Bibliographie Zigeunerfiguren, Sinti und Roma in der deutschsprachigen KJL, Projektgruppe “Zigeunerbilder” der AG Jugendliteratur und Medien* this tale has been omitted in the 1883 edition because, according to the *Bibliographie* one did not want to confirm the unjust prejudice about child-stealing. See the website: [KinderundJugendmedien.de](http://KinderundJugendmedien.de) See also an edition of *Onkel Knolle. Ein Bilderbuch mit lustigen Reimen* with a foreword by Günter Wallraff and afterword by Kurt Holl; Köln 1991. With thanks to Ute Wolters, Berlin.

<sup>51</sup> See for a contemporary review: *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, Band 4, Num. 290: 103.



**Allwin und Theodor (1847 ed.: opposite p. 256)**

Quite different is the tone in a narrative by Pastor Müller, *Das nützlichste Buch für kleine Kinder* [The most useful book for little children, 1819]. In this tale the contrast with Houghton-Walker's characterization of English literature from the period immediately becomes clear. And also with the notion of *Zigeunerromantik*. The booklet contains a nice hand-coloured engraving depicting a gypsy family in an Egyptian landscape (thus neglecting Grellmann's argument). A child, looking at the picture asks her father:

“Who are those multi-coloured dressed people...?” “Those are gypsies”, the father replied... “Gypsies” Amalie, the youngest daughter, repeated, “What kind of people are these? I have never seen Gypsies as yet.” The father: “I believe that, for in this country we do not tolerate this scum.”

After this he specifies characteristics of the gypsies: the current stereotypes and their ways of living like fortune telling (bringing misfortune to many superstitious people). Young gypsy girls try to gain their “wretched existence” by all sorts of artful dances, accompanied by music. They have an indescribable passion for brandy. The children never go to school and learn nothing about religion. Besides they are stimulated to idleness, to theft and all kinds of cheating. For the gypsies are extremely

cunning and thievish, at the same time so cowardly that they only steal there where they can do that without risk.

The children thank their father for this instructive information and they decided to grow up as good and sensible people “so that they will not become in any respect like those horrible gypsies.”<sup>52</sup>



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<sup>52</sup> Heinrich August Müller, the 4th edition, 1844: 152-154. This tale is part of a section called “Little histories to educate mind and heart” (p. 115 ff.). Interesting is a recommendation of the booklet in *Staats und gelehrte Zeitung des hamburgischen unpartheiischen Correspondenten*, 7 December 1829, advising that the booklet “should be learned by heart”. In the English narratives also the appreciation of gin is mentioned but by far not as emphasized as here. It may be noteworthy that in Darton’s *Little Truths* (1807, Vol. 2: 43-44) an old story is told about a poor man who falls asleep on a cock of hay that was washed away by a flood and when he awaked he appeared to be in Wandsford. The original tale (*Drunken Barnabee*, 1638) was about a drunken man, but in the children’s story this aspect of drunkenness is left out (Information thanks to Haycock Hotel, Wandsford). This in contrast to German tales of the period in which gypsies are regularly associated with drunkenness.

**The gypsy-family from Müller: clearly can be seen palms and even a pyramid (1844 ed.: opposite p. 152)**

This far-from-romantic image dominates German juvenile tales about gypsies during the first half of the nineteenth century. Even in the fairy tale *Die Elfen* (1811, 1812) by one of the 'founding fathers' of the romantic movement, Ludwig Tieck, the characterisation of the gypsies is not at all romantic.

The story starts with a father and mother talking about the beautiful green and peaceful landscape and happy village they live in. They could hire a plot of land from a local nobleman. And on their way to this plot they discuss the contrast of this nice place with a forest on the other side of the stream<sup>53</sup>. The description definitely places the gypsies outside the village community.

The mother:

...whenever you cross the stream...you are as it were, in another world, all is so dreary and withered...

The father:

All but that fir-ground...do but look back to it, how dark and dismal that solitary spot is lying in the gay scene; the dingy fir-trees with smoky huts behind them, the ruined stalls, the brook flowing past with a sluggish melancholy.

The mother:

...if you but approach that spot, you grow disconsolate and sad you know not why. What sort of people can they be that live there, and keep themselves so separate from the rest of us, as if they had an evil conscience?

A young farmer then replies:

A miserable crew...gypsies, seemingly, that steal and cheat in other quarters, and have their hoard and hiding place there. I wonder only that his lordship suffers them.

To which the mother reacts "with an accent of pity":

Who knows...but perhaps they may be poor people, wishing, out of shame, to conceal their poverty; for, after all, no one can say aught ill of them; the only thing is, that they do not go to church, and no one knows how they live, for the little garden, which indeed seems altogether waste, cannot possibly support them; and fields they have none.

And the father said:

God knows...what trade they follow, no mortal comes to them; for the place they live in is as if bewitched and excommunicated, so that even our wildest fellows will not venture into it. (1846: 5)

When the daughter accidentally reached the place it appeared to be a fairy-world, full of wonders. She should tell no one of her acquaintance there and when one day she by accident betrays what she knows, the world collapses.

Although the narrative is mainly a romantic fairy-tale, the passage about the gypsy place clearly indicates a gap between this place and the village community.

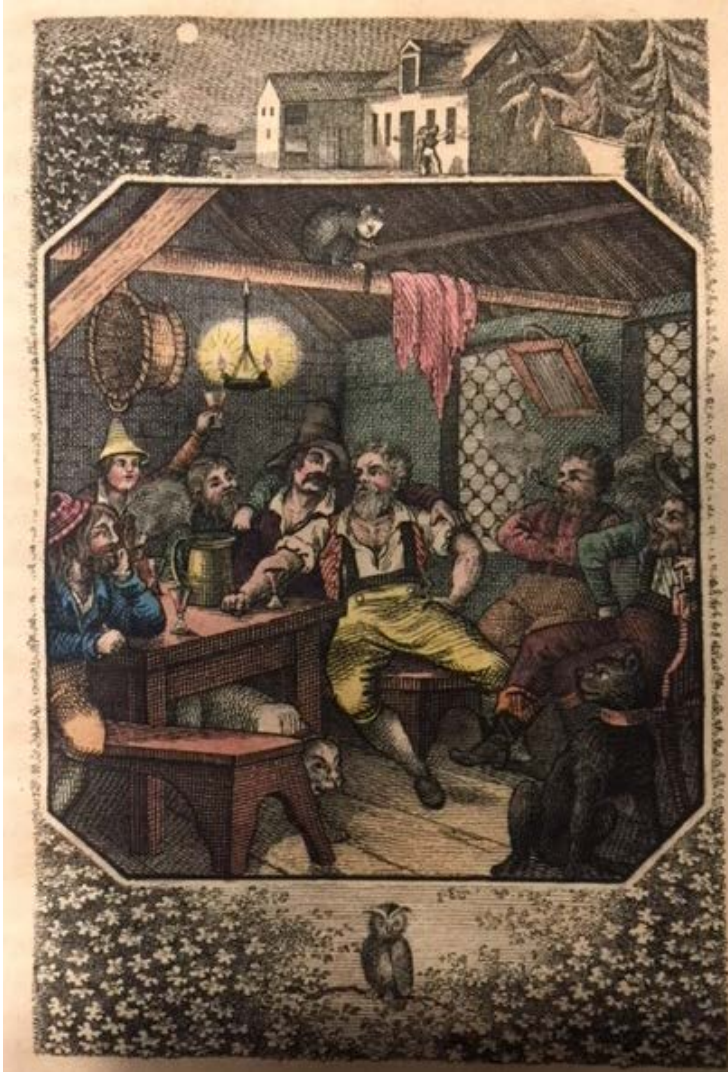
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<sup>53</sup> In 1922 there appeared a beautifully illustrated edition illustrated by Elsa Eisgruber, printed in *Sütterlin-schrift*. Here I use the English translation by Thomas Carlyle, New York, Harper & Brothers, 1846, which is available full-text on Google-Books.

In these stories, the gypsies are not only outsiders, but also outcasts. In Müller's story they are not tolerated, and the farmer in Tieck's fairy-tale wonders that the nobleman tolerates them. This notion of outsider/outcast is even more evident in an extensive tale by Amalia Schoppe-Weise, by then a popular author in Germany. *Die beiden kleinen Seiltänzer* [The two Little Rope-dancers, 1835] starts with an evocative description of children going to the year-market. This aspect, together with the assertion that the story is a "wahrhafte Geschichte" [a true history] makes it credible at the start. The Jews are marginalized, the gypsies expelled:

The little town is overflowing with people, not only visitors, but also all kinds of traders who, after being provided with lodging, went to the large market place to build their stalls. "Only the poor Jews were not allowed to build stalls", they could only offer their trade-ware from the margin of the market. Besides they only could find lodging in barns and stables. And they were lucky in this, because a band of rope dancers everywhere was rejected and often with really crude words like "Who would like to receive you swindlers?", or: "You people steal like the ravens. Get out of here!" Such reply these people got everywhere where they tried, so that in the end they had to pass the night outside the village (1835: 3-4 , 8).

Like Thomas Miller's narrative, this book also contains information about gypsy-life, but here only in negative terms. Chapter 2 bears the title "Zigeuner-Wirtschaft" [Gypsy-household; Wirtschaft also may signify 'shambles'], describing social relations and customs in terms of violence; bad behaviour is praised and the people look ugly (except the two children who in the end appeared to be stolen). In all respects gypsy-life is opposite to civilised manners (1835: 13-19).



**Gypsies among criminals in a common alehouse (Seiltänzer 1835: opposite p. 86)**

According to Klaus-Ulrich Pech<sup>54</sup>, gypsies (he refers to “Zigeunerinnen” – gypsy women) were used as “effektvollen Versatzstücken” [effective décor], evoking a certain tension. He refers to Von Schmid, who, however, only used the figure of the gypsy woman as an ‘instrument’ to get the protagonist in *Heinrich von Eichenfels* (1817) from the castle into the dark cave. The gypsy-woman is only a ‘credibility-device’<sup>55</sup> and she is presented as living among robbers, outside society. Except for some stereotypical characteristics, Von Schmid does not say much about the woman. In the case of Schoppe-Weise’s *Seiltänzer* the gypsies are far more than just a *décor*, they are presented throughout the story as representatives of evil.

In an earlier book by Schoppe-Weise, *Die Pflegemutter und ihre Pflögetöchter* (1829) the *Zigeunerin* at first glance performs the same ‘function’ as in Von Schmid’s tale mentioned above: she is also living with a gang of robbers in a cave, outside society, and also serves to ‘learn a lesson’. In Von Schmid’s tale the lesson was a religious one – Heinrich could, after escaping the dark cave fully appreciate the wonders of God’s creation – in Schoppe-Weise’s it is purely didactic. Adeline, a girl of noble birth, should get out of her bad habits: haughtiness and stubbornness. Seduced by the gypsy-woman and

<sup>54</sup> ‘Vom Biedermeier zum Realismus’ in: *Geschichte der deutschen Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*, edited by Reiner Wild, 2nd. ed., 2002: 145.

<sup>55</sup> See also David Blamires: “Christoph von Schmid’s Religious Tales...”, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 1994: 76 (3): 69-82.

maltreated by robbers in a cave, she learned to appreciate the ‘humble’ people who saved her. But, in contrast to Von Schmid’s, in this tale the gypsy-woman is described much more in detail – in very negative terms. The original edition also contains a picture of the scene in which the woman seduces the girl, which adds to her prominence in the story. She and her son (who was “defiled with blood”) are related to severe crimes (1829: 134). And whereas the robbers in Von Schmid’s tale are only *threatening* to “torture to death” Heinrich in case they would be in danger to be caught, in this tale the gypsy woman really wanted to kill the child to revenge the punishment of her son (“zu Tode zu quälen” – tormenting to death, 1829: 100; see also 130, 134). In this book the gypsy-woman is described as a representative of “a kind of people....[who] are expelled from the country under the guard of soldiers”. It is as such, as outcasts, that Adeline knew gypsies from her life in town (1829: 83).





**The gypsy-woman seducing the girl (Schoppe-Weise 1829; opposite p. 86)**

In Karl Blumauer's *Der Kinderkreis* (1832) gypsies are characterized by referring to fortune-telling (to cheat the superstitious and the ignorant), theft and robbery. The stories are explicitly motivated as educational lessons. When the gypsies see a handsome young boy, a thought arises "as horrible as their appearance"<sup>56</sup>: to steal the boy, who was taught to earn money by making music. And although these (East-European) gypsies practice traditional trades, like mending kettles or horse trading (activities characterized by cheat and tricks), they remain outside village life and live in the woods.

Corbinian Lohmayer (*Das Zigeunerkind*, 1836) turned the usual story upside down: in this tale it is a peasant who happens to find a gypsy boy who lost his way when the gypsies had to fly for villagers pursuing them because they had stolen a calf. By chance, the peasant completely understood the gypsy language so that the boy could tell about gypsy life in his own words<sup>57</sup>. The use of 'gypsy' words might have contributed to the authorial authority. In this book gypsies are also criminalised.

<sup>56</sup> The Dutch translation, p. 127. The gypsy father is a "brown and sly" man; the mother a "grumbling and dirty old woman".

<sup>57</sup> The French translation *L'Enfant du bohémien*, about 1840, contains a separate chapter "Vie des Bohémiens": p. 16-23.

The peasant and his wife decided to adopt the boy, notwithstanding that the man knew that the gypsies would mourn because of the loss of their son: indeed, gypsies have a “Affenliebe zu ihren Kindern” [monkey-love for their children, 7]. But in case they would return the boy to the “riffraff”, he would be lost in body and soul by “the bad example of the sinful people”, who would accustom him to cheating, theft and idleness (9). Those gypsies participated in a band of brutal robbers, who did not shy away from killing people (illustrated by a frontispiece of the robbers who were about to kill the boy). Later on, when the boy (now christened Christian) stayed at the house of the customs officer, still some people mockingly called him “gypsy child” (144). By sheer accident he met his ‘gypsy mother’ who is described in pejorative terms. She gives some clues, proving that the boy was stolen from a noble family. Therefore she is saved, but the other gypsies just disappear: they are jailed (145ff.). In this story gypsies are outcasts, a threat of society and when possible expelled from the country.

In Carl Glocke’s *Der Zigeunerknabe* (1839<sup>58</sup>) there is an elucidation (“Verständigung”) about gypsies, following a scene in which children are playing. The children live in

a dark forest, far from any human residence, among people who have been expelled from civil society, or, rather who never were worthy the affection of their fellow men. There is no one amongst you [=the readers] who did not yet hear about the gypsies, those wild, rough class of people growing up without education, without manners. No one amongst you does not know that this debauchery scum wanders around without a native country in places where one allows such drifting (1873: 212).

According to Glocke they could wander through Hungary because this country is “less developed” compared to Germany (213). But even in Hungary “there are more than enough gypsies” (231). In this story the gypsies are described in terms of the usual stereotypes, like laziness, theft, violence and child stealing (in this case two children). Elucidations like “You should know, my little reader, that the gypsies are a lazy, good-for-nothing people, who only rarely undertake something, as a rule only when hunger or distress forces them to activity” (214), underline their vices. The description of acts of violence against the stolen children reminds of Schoppe-Weise’s *Seiltänzer*. The gypsies are definitely *persona non grata*, and when, for instance, one day they want to enter a city to perform their circus acts, they at first are turned down and only admitted on the condition that they would leave the city before nightfall (235). When performing acrobatic and comic acts in a village, the spectators “like always saw themselves deceived and chased the scum from their village”, often by force (217).

### 3. Conclusion

In this chapter we discussed some children’s narratives which appeared during the romantic period as characterized by Houghton-Walker. Although the developments in English children’s tales did not exactly run parallel to those Houghton-Walker noticed in ‘high’ literature – presumably because current political enactments did not as much influence the writers of juveniles – the main characteristics she describes concerning gypsies and “Englishness” can also be traced in English children’s literature from the early nineteenth century: gypsies are part of rural society, although they are different. The current stereotypes – laziness, cheating, theft – are usually rendered in mild wordings. This in strong contrast with most German tales which appeared during the same period. Only Friedrich Jacobs’s *Allwin und Theodor* (1802-07) proved an exception. In his second tale “Die Abenteurer” he approached the atmosphere of a gypsy camp much like it was described by Thomas Miller (1849). And the loneliness Allwin and Theodor felt when they left the camp did think of John’s

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<sup>58</sup> Here I used the second edition, 1873, full text on Hathi Trust.

feeling that he “shouldn’t care much to live amongst the gypsies”. In both cases they seemed to leave behind a valuable experience.

The fact that the early nineteenth century English children’s stories – in particular those elegant Darton editions – seemed to support main aspects of Houghton-Walker’s thesis about “Englishness” might indicate an idea about gypsies that strongly differs from the German representation. In German children’s narratives there also appeared to be a strong difference between the *Zigeunerromantik* to which Houghton-Walker refers: here the children’s literature seemed to deviate essentially from tendencies in ‘high’ literature. Maybe that in both cases the children’s literature most faithfully renders the common, popular ideas about gypsies. If that idea would be correct English “romantic” notions about gypsies seemed to be more homogeneous than German ideas during that period. The comparative study of children’s literature also in this respect joins Houghton-Walker’s observations as noted in the introduction. She concludes to a ‘naturalization of gypsies in the minds of writers in England’, while in Germany ‘this appropriation and rendering of them literally familiar seems to have been a desire of the legislature more than the populace’: in Germany communities ‘were reluctant to receive Gypsies into their midst’ (Houghton-Walker 2014: 35). Thus, children’s literature, rather than ‘high’ literature seems to reflect communal ideas which may differ significantly from official, political strategies or opinions. Therefore children’s literature may be a relevant source to complement a study of ‘high’ literature and art.

One of the reasons why in studies about gypsies in literature – in particular concerning the early period – research of old children’s narratives is scarce, may be the difficulty to get access to this literature. As Duff Stewart noted, many books which were popular at their time, are now extremely rare because they ‘were literally read to tatters’ (1975, I: xvi). With great difficulty I succeeded in acquiring copies of books that are even not available full-text on sites like Google books or of the various sites of libraries which possess a copy. Of the 1807 edition of Darton’s *Little Truths* containing the deliciously humorous illustration depicting the ‘shooting’ of the gypsy ladies into the water, no complete copy seems to exist in any public library!

Another problem confronting the researcher is that many children’s books containing interesting narratives about gypsies do not betray that in their titles. So, for instance the *Bibliographie Zigeunerfiguren, Sinti und Roma in der deutschsprachigen KJL* offered on the website *Kinder- und Jugendmedien.de* mentions only a few early nineteenth century narratives. The additional titles referred to in this essay, resulted from years of intensive searching not only the internet, but also visiting many book fairs and antiquarian bookshops.