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Editorial

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Editorial

ELENA MARUSHIAKOVA AND COLIN CLARK

Founded in 1888, the Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society was published in four series up to 1982. In 2000, the journal became *Romani Studies*. During the years of its existence the journal has seen a number of changes and challenges, including improving its day-to-day operational management and increasing the academic quality of published papers. The year of 2020 was crucial for the journal as its procedures and policies were updated in collaboration with our publisher, Liverpool University Press. In addition, the peer review system and workflow were refined and the guidelines for contributors were updated. Such routine updates and improvements to the operation of the journal are part of a regular process, of course, but the beginning of 2021 has witnessed other significant transformations in the journal, including reviewing its underlying purpose, mission, and vision.

It is here we need to say a few brief words about the fundamental changes that have occurred in our broad research field over the last quarter of a century. These academic, societal, and industry shifts have made these changes necessary. The changes are indeed vast and substantial, so their description could not be exhaustively presented in a concise editorial such as this, but we will still try to highlight and summarize the most important aspects to consider.

One of the main developments is the sheer growth of academic research and publications in our main field of research. On the whole, for more than 130 years of Gypsy Lore Society history, there has been no other time period where we have witnessed such increased public interest in Roma issues. During the last few decades, such issues continue to be at the forefront of public awareness, especially with new challenges facing Europe and in connection with the COVID-19-crisis. Indeed, the time of Romani studies being a relatively small scholarly community is now over and it is a

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challenging enterprise to keep up with the research being undertaken and all the papers now being published.

The second transformation that has occurred in recent years is the significant extension of academic disciplines that direct their research interest to communities that have been united under the general label “Gypsies” in the past. For a long time, these studies have been limited mainly to the classical triad of “history, language, and traditions” (with some exceptions). As things stand today, it is difficult to fully present all of the disciplines, sub-disciplines, and interdisciplinary fields in which researchers work as neatly falling under the banner of “Romani studies.”

For these connected reasons, another major challenge faced by researchers today is how to achieve coherence and a common language between these diverse disciplines. The presence of a common community or population of study is not sufficient for the automatic achievement of this goal if there is an absence of contrasting and comparing the results obtained with the methods of the various disciplines. Indeed, a central concern of Romani studies is to enable researchers representing different disciplines and methodological approaches to present and discuss their research results. What is needed, however, is further discussions and an exchange of knowledge to achieve some degree of mutual understanding. This is why we envisage introducing a new rubric in the journal, namely space for “discussion articles” and also “review articles” where such exchanges can take place. One of the important changes introduced in 2020 is the inclusion of guest-edited thematic or “special issues” of the journal, that allow for in-depth, multi-sided, and multi-disciplinary exploration of a topic via a range of different authors and papers. We also intend to revive, subject to high quality papers being submitted, the ethnographical, anthropological, and humanities study of tradition, customs, and folklore. The long-term aim is to achieve a higher degree of intellectual cohesion and coherence in our field of studies.

We are also acutely aware that *Romani Studies* no longer stands alone. The time has now long passed where one journal can hope to cover all areas of research in a growing field of study. We warmly welcome the creation of new journals in our shared field of research and hope to cooperate moving forwards. Equally, it is important for each journal to have its own profile, identity, and coverage. *Romani Studies* intends to continue with its main focus the many different communities which, regardless of their origins and self-appellations in various languages, in the past have been referred to in English as “Gypsies.” These communities include the descendants of migrants from the Indian subcontinent which have been considered as falling into three large subdivisions, Dom, Lom, and Rom. The field has also included communities of other origins which practice, or in the past have practiced, a

specific type of service or commercial nomadism. We remain committed to accepting high-quality articles in a wide diversity of disciplines, schools, and strands, but a condition for publication is that at the core of the research the above-mentioned communities are present. The goal is a comprehensive and interdisciplinary knowledge of individual communities. Another important issue is the community–society distinction: all these communities are not only ethnically and culturally distinct but are at the same time an integral part of the societies in which they live. Researchers usually focus on one of these two dimensions – studying the community itself or studying the attitude of society towards it – but, in our journal, we intend to maintain a harmonious balance between these two basic approaches in the selection of articles for publication.

In closing, we understand that academic knowledge in general, and particularly in the field of Romani studies, is one whole and it should not be distinguished and divided by any criteria. Ultimately, our journal mission is to explore and accurately reflect the world as it really is. We remain open to papers in *Romani Studies* adopting a wide variety of theories, concepts, and methodological approaches in their work.

Elena Marushiakova and Colin Clark
New editors-in-chief