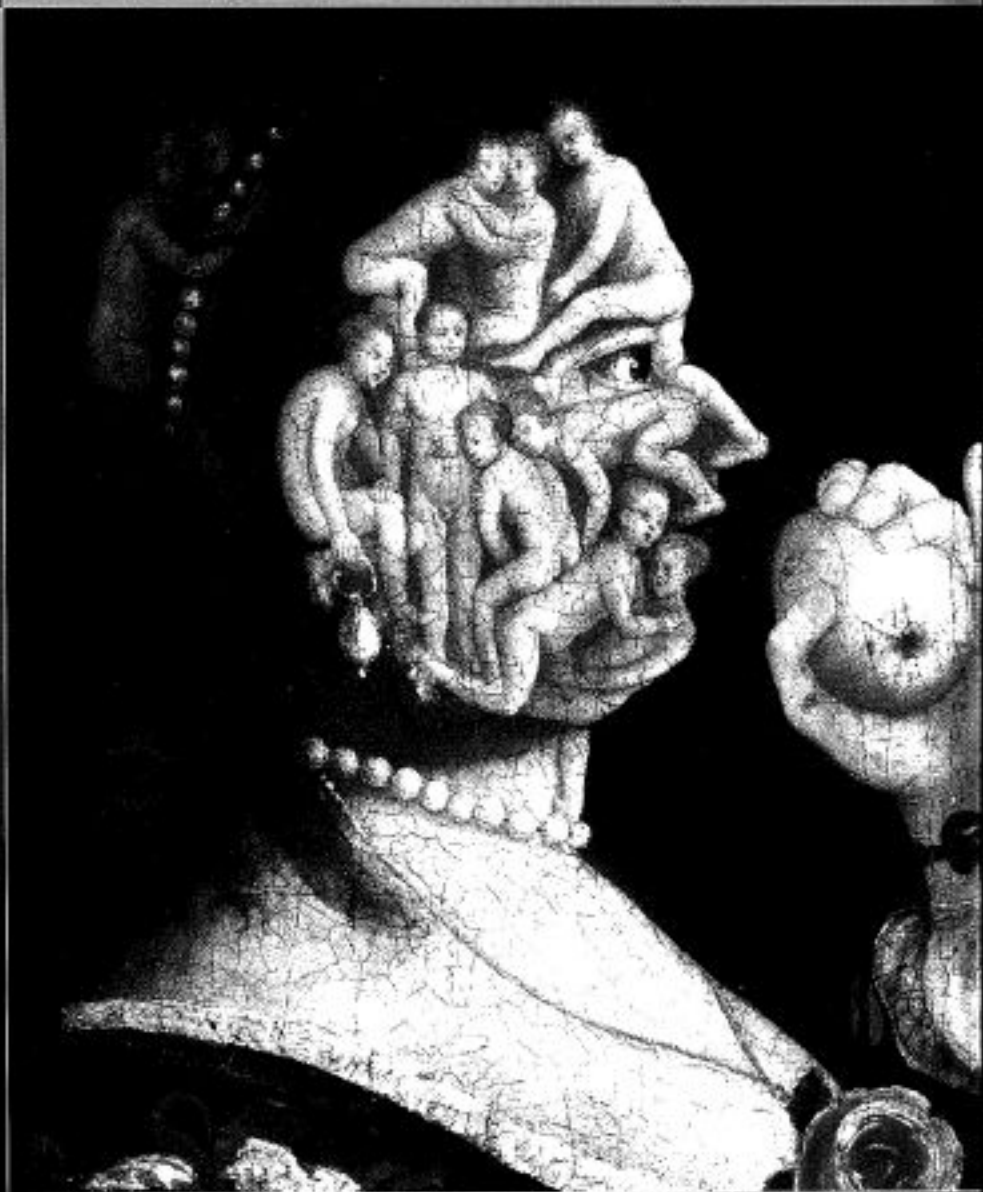


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European Kinship in the Age of Biotechnology



Edited by

Jeanette Edwards and Carles Salazar

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CHAPTER 6

CORPO-REAL IDENTITIES: PERSPECTIVES FROM A GYPSY COMMUNITY

Nathalie Manrique

– You have to imagine, then, that there are two ruling powers, and that one of them is set over the intellectual world, the other over the visible ... May I suppose that you have this distinction of the visible and intelligible fixed in your mind?

– I have. (Plato 1991: 250)

For a very long time, philosophers have been debating whether there is not one but two routes to reach truth: the empirical and the abstract. According to Bachelard (1993: 239 [1938]), ‘we have to accept a real break between sensible knowledge and scientific knowledge’ (my translation). For Bachelard, two categories of knowledge shape our understanding of the world. He called the first ‘empirical knowledge’ (*connaissance empirique*) and the second ‘scientific knowledge’ (*connaissance scientifique*). The understanding of truth, then, can take two different directions: on the one hand, ‘rational interpretation [which] comes from the immediate observation of raw facts’ (Héritier 1996: 150, my translation), ‘facts of life’ (Franklin 1997; Carsten 2001) or ‘facts of nature’ (Strathern 1992a) and, on the other hand, truth that emerges from abstraction. While ‘empirical facts’, according to Bachelard, are based on everyday life experiences, ‘scientific facts’ are built on scientific reality; that is, on a logical construction of the relationship between different observable facts by means of controlled experiments. The latter facts are immersed in a scientific language; a sort of metalanguage which, borrowing from Lévi-Strauss on myth, ‘makes full use of discourse, but does so by situating its own significant oppositions at a higher level of complexity than that required by language operating for profane ends’

(1977: 66). Even if we do not conclude that scientific facts are similar to mythological narrative, as the former are based on experimental criteria which can be questioned and the latter need only faith to be considered true, these two discourses act at the same level. These metalanguages, by means of their systems of classification, place the symbolic order of humans and things at a level that can be separated from empirical facts and local representations of the world. That is why only specialists are supposed to know the rules or the 'significant oppositions' on which such knowledge is founded, in contrast with the 'facts of life', which can be verified by ordinary people.

This time-honoured philosophical discussion has interesting repercussions for the anthropology of kinship. Bodily identity is represented in Western societies through a merger of these two perceptions of truth, which are thus rendered indistinguishable: facts of life and scientific or mythological facts are merged in Western understandings of how an individual transmits identity to another and how the degree of proximity between two people is estimated.

Tools to Define Kinship: Blood and Genes

In Western societies, blood and genes are two concepts that symbolise kin relatedness and, consequently, corporeal identity. Indeed, to be related as kin is, above all, to share the 'same' (according to local and scientific representations of sameness) blood and/or genes. Moreover, blood and genes are the concepts on which Western notions of the reality of the ties between people are constructed.

However, the nature of these two concepts differs. Whereas blood is a bodily substance that everyone can see (a small cut on a finger can demonstrate its existence), genes are invisible for the majority of people.¹ Furthermore, blood, like breath, is indisputably a metaphor of life: to lose all one's blood means to die.² The genome, as it cannot be lost and is not directly observable, appears, then, to be less related to the working and living body. At first sight, knowledge of blood appears more obviously related to the 'facts of life' or the 'facts of nature' and to something more readily verifiable than genetics.³ Genes appear to be more of an abstract construction created by experts initiated into certain ways of knowing and who attempt to understand the truth of biological transmission through particular tools. Indeed, since the beginning of the twentieth century, genes have become increasingly the essential instrument with which to provide irrefutable evidence of biological facts (see for example Franklin 2001: 306; Legrand 2004: 182–83).

But what are the procedures for transmitting blood or genetic identity? While the genetic material of each person is present in his or her gametes and male and female gametes only need to meet to make fertilisation possible, blood is not transmitted directly from the male to the female body. Blood is not, as such, a factor in conception. There are societies,

however, where blood identity is thought to be inherited from parents and where 'relatedness by blood' is significant. In these cases, the seed, more often than not the sperm, is semantically linked to blood.⁴ Such a representation of biological transmission is closely related to local representations of the wider social world, which includes values and perceptions of how identity is transmitted. To put it in a nutshell, we can say that non-expert understandings of the world play on two levels. First, they are based on what are considered to be 'raw facts', which everybody should be able to observe (and here truth is based on what is thought to be shared experiences of life). Secondly, these empirical facts are immersed in local values, which are generally different from scientific values. The latter come about as a result of experimentation carried out by specialists and appear to be closer to the 'rational' truth than to 'empirical facts', which in turn become 'irrational' (according to Bachelard's definition of rationality). In the context of transmitting identity, public understandings of blood and genes are enmeshed in this dichotomy but they spill over from one category to another. Indeed, as we have seen, blood is observably a bodily substance and its obvious link to life gives it a vital attribute which readily comes to symbolise the transmission of life. Genes appear to be further away than blood from the 'facts of life', even though they 'naturally' transmit identity, which makes the idea of genetic inheritance a less obvious social construction than the transmission of blood.

The way in which identity is transmitted is intrinsically related to both empirical or biological facts and the local metalanguage. This enables some people, dealing with empirical and/or scientific criteria, to construct their own truth based on their representation of scientific knowledge combined with local ideas.⁵ According to Dorflès (1975: 198–99), '[w]e have to accept, in the final analysis, the hypothesis that there is diversity in man's state of consciousness, perception, ideation and imagination, depending on the period and the cultures in which he is situated' (my translation). This diversity also exists within the same period and within the same culture as well as in the same individual, depending on the socio-psychological context in which he or she is situated (Elster 1977). It is no wonder, then, that representations of proximity between kin are also diverse.

Let me introduce a debate that took place in Spain during my fieldwork.⁶ A couple claimed the right to challenge what Hermida and Pereiro (1997) call the 'most ancestral taboo of humanity' by living together in the name of love despite the fact that they were brother and sister.⁷ They said that they found out they were siblings after they had fallen in love, and then they were unable to live apart from one another. When the woman became pregnant, they were both afraid she would give birth to an 'abnormal' child. Therefore, they decided to have genetic tests carried out on the embryo. Doctors diagnosed the fetus as 'normal' and the couple decided to keep the child and not to have an abortion. Furthermore, from then onwards they stopped hiding their relationship

and decided to live like a 'real family' and to have their relationship publicly recognised by claiming a civil marriage: it was as if for them the genetic tests were the proof that, despite the vigorous public debate their situation had provoked and which continues today (a film is now being made of their lives (see Ortiz 2005)), the relationship was not after all so bad. Moreover, it could not be considered bad for it was based on love: 'We fell in love and for us it was the most important thing' (Fourmont 2003, my translation). Indeed, they pointed out that they would not have fallen in love if they had known they were siblings, thus drawing on the commonly shared idea in Western societies that the idea of incest repels (Westermarck 1901; Roscoe 1994). Their first child, who at the time of the report was a young teenage girl and who had a younger brother, also responded to the notion of incest in a Westermarckian manner: 'That could not happen to us. It is completely different because my brother and I have been brought up together. It could happen if, as was the case with our parents, we had not been brought up together' (Fourmont 2003, my translation). Genetic tests showed that people can practise incest and still claim social legitimacy: the couple were above all parents of a 'normal' child. Unexpectedly, the juxtaposition of several facts considered to be true because they belong to 'the facts of nature' (to feel revolted by incest and that incest produces malformations) turns genetics into proof that the common understanding of incest is false and that sexual relations between siblings can be considered 'normal'. It can also demonstrate that genetic propinquity is not enough to define closeness. Public understanding of science, by giving an empirical interpretation of scientific facts (the birth of a 'genetically normal' child), becomes a tool used against scientific assertions concerning kinship closeness. In this way, to be associated with truth, genetics has to be verified empirically and vice versa. People can then clearly create their own frameworks for understanding how identity is transmitted.

Gypsy Corpo-real Identity

To develop the points introduced above, I move to a Gypsy community in Morote and San Juan, Spain. Morote (which has nearly 9,000 inhabitants, of whom approximately 800 are Gypsies) and San Juan (which has nearly 4,600 inhabitants, including approximately 450 Gypsies) are located in the south of Spain, near Granada. In the past, Gypsies from these small towns practised trades mainly connected with horses, donkeys and mules. Today, this particular population, like the majority of Spanish Gypsies, is sedentary even if their economic activity as farm labourers obliges them to travel frequently.

I once asked Felicita, a fifty-five-year-old Gypsy woman, about the influence of the father's and the mother's contribution to creating a child. She was taken aback by my question and answered: 'You must know that the two parents both contribute to making the child. The proof lies in the

fact that you can analyse blood to find out who is the father and the mother of any child. You also know that the doctors can say who the parents are.' For Felicita, something that can be found in the blood makes the relationship between a child and his or her parents indisputable. This 'something' reveals genealogical ties and the transmission of identity. For her, the proof of this is that doctors, people who have this kind of knowledge, can find such links by analysing blood. And I, as a 'teacher', so as a 'quasi-scientist', should know that.⁸ Here, the discourse of blood, like genetics, works as a metalanguage.

Local representations of procreation involving the blending of men's and women's blood (semen and menses) in the female belly are congruent with Felicita's perceptions. She appears to raise the evidence of paternity and maternity based on blood to the same level as genetic knowledge. In this sense, Gypsy representations of how identity is transmitted are not contrary to representations of genetic inheritance. Sometimes, in the imprecision of the concept of kinship in Western societies (ties can be constructed on a variety of things such as blood, breeding and shared names), the use of blood metaphors can have unexpected consequences. For the Gypsies of Morote and San Juan, the similarity or difference carried in the blood is the essential marker that defines how close one person is to another. But the metaphor of blood, like some idioms of flesh (see Porqueres i Gené and Wilgaux, this volume), can also be used in a way which implies that bodily identity is not only linked to one's genealogy but also to one's affinity. Indeed, even if blood ties are essential in defining identity in the Gypsy community, to be a mother is not only to be related through blood to one's offspring but also to be both a wife (that is, as we shall see, to be 'blood-fed' by legitimate sexual relations) and able to feed a child (hence the importance of the role of nurturing and breeding to complete 'consanguine' ties).⁹ Blood is the vehicle of filial and affinal closeness. This similarity does not mean that a wife and a husband become biologically identical (of the same blood) or that they create kinship ties with each other and become genetically the same. I note here, as both Edwards (2000) and Bestard (this volume) have, that blood sameness like biological sameness, is not always synonymous with genetic sameness: the notion of blood carries more symbolic significance than that of genes. In the Gypsy case, it is not only related to filiation but also to affinity: to transmit blood is to nurture someone else during sexual intercourse, and to create filial and affinal ties. Sexual acts are thought to be not only about procreation but also about nurturing relations.

A study of Gypsy ways of representing the transmission of blood reveals a tension between empirical knowledge, which demonstrates the identical role of men and women in conception (in their contribution of blood), and mythological knowledge, which, by highlighting male supremacy in procreation, appears to be intrinsically tied to ideology. The idea of male dominance in procreation emerges in how masculinity is seen to be dynamic and femininity inert. The perception of dynamism and

inertia is also embedded in the act of giving, where the giver is thought to act on the receiver's body (as in sexual relations, where a man acts on the woman's body by giving his procreative substance).

Inertia and Dynamism

For the Gypsies of Morote and San Juan, dynamism is highly valued and is strongly emphasised. It is foundational to Gypsy social hierarchy. Although men are supposed to be 'naturally' active (as seen by the outpouring of semen) and women less active, it is not rare to hear women expressing pride in the effort they put into carrying out certain activities. Indeed, activity in general is strongly valued. Thus, good workers are admired by all and are regarded as being worthy of confidence and meriting interest.

During a conversation between neighbours, Rubén, a small eleven-year-old boy who wished to present a positive image of his maternal grandfather, insisted on his incredible capacity for work in spite of having had one of his legs amputated. Alicia, an eighteen-year-old girl, fulminated against her friend Piedad who was disconcerted. It turned out that Piedad's brother, a Gypsy from Asturias (in the north of Spain), had written a letter to Alicia in which he declared his passion for her and described how he wanted to find a well-paying job in order to prevent her from working. She protested: 'Who does he think he is? I want to work. I will not remain idle while he's working.'

The perception of female dynamism is not necessarily shared by all Spanish Gypsies. In San Juan and Morote, women are required to demonstrate their activity, while men are often defined by their active character and are not required to justify what they are (see Lagunas Arias (2000) for the case of Gypsies from Catalonia). This male quality confers on them an active role in procreation. Felicita explained: 'The father makes the child and the mother places herself so that he will do this to her'. The sexual act is considered above all the dynamic relation, with the man acting on the woman's body. An energetic copulatory movement is considered to be of primary importance for procreation. Thus, jokingly, one woman told me that one of her *consuegras* (her son's mother-in-law), at the time fifty-five years old and thus certainly menopausal, 'became pregnant because she made love very vigorously'. This joke shows the importance of vigorous movement, which in this case made pregnancy possible without the menses even though, according to Gypsy understandings, the menses are essential for conception. Gypsy women point out that this is the reason children look more like their father than their mother.

Nevertheless, and somewhat paradoxically, men attribute a particular generative-reproductive force to women. They say that newborn children resemble their mothers more than their fathers. Thus, men generally allege that the child of a Gypsy father and a non-Gypsy mother will

resemble a *Payo* (a non-Gypsy) and that a child of a *Payo* father and a Gypsy mother will resemble a Gypsy.¹⁰ Yet men consider themselves to have an active influence on the physical appearance of their offspring. Indeed, according to them, the greater the intensity of the 'blows (*golpes*)' a man makes in the vagina, the greater the extent to which the child will resemble him. To make love like *Payos*, for example, that is, with less intensity, will produce taller children with light skin who look like *Payos*. The vigorousness of male sexual activity modifies the 'natural' properties of resemblance of the female substance. This gender distinction is based on the greater or lesser importance given to the active role of each of them in conception and not on the fact that they are referring to men or women, even if men generally consider that women make a more significant contribution to procreation since it is they who give birth.¹¹ Josefo, an eighty-year-old man, after having told me that children look like their mothers, explained that, after all, in a 'crossed' marriage, the children always resemble Gypsy since the Gypsy blood is stronger (more active) than the *Payo*.

Women, in contrast, mainly stress the active power of male fertilisation. For them, a child more closely resembles the individual who has provided most of the work at the time of conception (despite the fact that semen and menses contribute to the fetal matter). This discourse, only superficially contradictory, that is, in the form used to express the distinction but not in its consequences, is often ignored by the opposite sex. Thus, without intending to, on three occasions I caused conflict between a married couple when, after arriving at the point of asking the woman about conception, the husband, hearing his wife's answer, picked a quarrel with her by maintaining the opposite. Similarly, women do not envisage that they contribute more than their husband to the appearance of their child.

The different views on how appearance is transmitted, linked to who is the more dynamic partner in procreation, reveal the fact that empirical knowledge differs according to context (in this case according to the gender of the speaker), but that context does not influence mythological facts: dynamism determines which individual has the dominant role in procreation.

Fruitful Bleedings

For the Gypsies of Morote and San Juan, identity, mainly transmitted through dynamism in sexual intercourse, is carried in the blood. In order to procreate, sperm and menstrual blood have to coalesce inside the belly of a woman who has periods. Indeed, for Gypsies, sexual intercourse between a man and a woman during her menses is essential for a 'normal' conception, even if women recount stories of parthenogenesis. Joaquina, for example, told me that to procreate: 'It must be during your menstruation.' Then, at that moment, through the influence of the sperm,

the menses coagulate to create the fetus, which Gypsies consider to be like an already-formed child in miniature.

In fact, the male principle, which is considered to be like a divine principle (comparable to the descriptions by Delaney (1991) and Fortier (2001) in two Muslim societies), is seen as providing life. After talking about the agency of her husband's semen in the coagulation process, Esperanza added that subsequently 'God coagulates it all (*todo lo cuaja el Señor*)'. Similarly, when speaking about the creation of the first Gypsy, a man during our conversation suddenly used the terms 'the Gypsy (*el Gitano*)' referring to God, thereby making an analogy between Gypsy men and God. He presented the parallel between the seminal fluid and the divine principle spontaneously, thus conferring a supernatural character to the male substance. One of the properties of semen, then, is to give life and the menses need to be fertilised for procreation to occur.

After conception takes place, the semen becomes the vehicle of life, which spreads gradually through the woman's belly. Antonio said: 'The more you put in, the more it [the fetus] becomes alive.' Esperanza, his wife, clarified: 'The husband has to do it [to give life] little by little until he has finished, like a machine.' In fact, it appears that the fetus becomes alive immediately, once coagulation has occurred, but that life has to develop progressively thanks to the dynamic and repeated introduction of semen into the maternal body – Gypsies speak about 'work' in this context. For Gypsies, procreation is spontaneous but life, like everything else in the world, needs progressive growth through feeding, that is, through work. Josefa explained that the fetus is completely alive when it is four or five months old, when it starts to move around in the belly, and that this is the result of the father's 'work' on the mother's body.

The vital contribution also takes place at the time of non-procreative sexual relations but then it is like feeding, providing nourishment for the female body and not the fetus. Semen is seen as a vital reproductive substance, which by means of mechanistic movement fertilises and nourishes the woman's body during her period of fertility, which is when sexual relations are truly legitimate. Thus, women make fun of women who perform what they call their 'marital duty': they say that their weight increases and their buttocks get chubby. It is interesting here to draw a parallel with Gypsy representations of health, youth and beauty, which are expressed in the same terms. When a woman becomes pregnant, women say 'she has her belly full', but this expression is also used to refer to a woman who has just had sexual intercourse. In fact, women who are said to grow bigger after sex are those who cannot give birth (infertile women) or who cannot bear any more children (following the menopause). Unused semen is thought to be stored in women's bodies, making them grow bigger and rejuvenating them. 'She has become so young! (*que nueva se ha puesto*).' In addition, women recognise men who have frequent sexual intercourse by their thinness. The male vital substance is a limited quantity, for which men have to compensate by consuming certain foods that are known to increase the quantity of blood,

The Seed of Wind

Semen is conceptualised as a gas or breath. Indeed, according to the Gypsies of San Juan and Morote, it comes from the lungs (whereas menses originate in the woman's belly). This relation between air and seminal fluid appears all the more clearly in Gypsy vocabulary where the word *ril* is used to designate bodily wind and the verb *rilar*, which is the verbal form of the same root, to refer to sexual relations. The movements of the fetus (the fruit of the sexual act) are also thought to be similar to those of a bloated belly. Most Gypsies only talk about 'that (eso)' in a whisper or use the word *sangre* (blood) to designate the seminal fluid. Some prefer the term *leche* (milk), which is used by the local non-Gypsy population. One woman designated it by the words *gasoleo* and *gasolina* (petrol), perhaps because of the derivation from 'gas'. But they do not usually adopt a specific term to designate the man's seed, even if its gaseous quality emerges clearly in their discourses (and they do not use the conventional Spanish term, as they do for menses).

In addition, Gypsy men in San Juan and Morote say with a smile that, according to Gypsies in the past, their earliest ancestors emerged from a kick that God gave to a *cajonera* (horse shit) and, as he did this, God broke wind.¹² The association between the gaseous principle and fertilisation is explicit here. Caterina Pasqualino (1998) found a parallel between semen and the breath of Flamenco singers, who are usually men. It is said that their breath has the capacity of fertilisation by descending into women's entrails.

Furthermore, as semen (the men's 'blood') is perceived as nutriment, Gypsies seek to increase their blood by swallowing foods that have the ability to control the quantity of gas present in their body. On the one hand, they enjoy certain foods which they consider to have the capacity to inflate the belly (such as chickpeas, potatoes and rotting meat). On the other hand, they use certain carminative plants (such as fennel, basil and mint) by which they can control gas excesses and avoid gas expulsions and thus are able to retain their semen – the vital nutriment – inside the body.¹³ This particular perception of semen, and similarly with the menses, is linked to the local hierarchy between men and women in Gypsy society (see also Delaney 1991).

Wasted Blood?

Women's blood also takes part in procreation through menses. Menses, however, do not nourish the bodies of men. Semen and menstrual blood are nevertheless likened in a natural way and both are referred to by the same words *sangre* and *reglas* (menses): in the case of semen, an analogy is made with the bleeding of women. The perception of the coalescence of two bloods is founded on the empirical observation of two types of outpourings: the male (semen) and the female (menses).

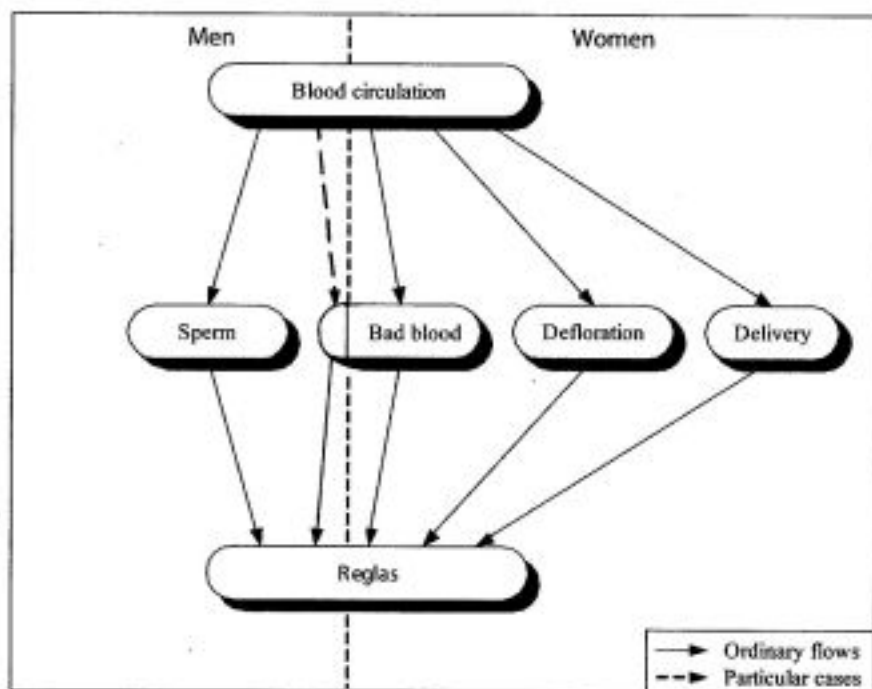


Figure 6.1. Blood flows

Only menses, however, produce 'bad blood (*sangre mala*)' (Fig. 6.1.), which is a residue of the women's circulatory blood. Indeed, contrary to men, women require a periodic purification. The arrow for the *sangre mala* resulting from the circulatory blood of men refers only to haemophiliacs, who purge incest or other transgressions of their parents by bleeding, and this is sanctioned by God.

It is not thought that men, who have no menses, are able to renew their blood, which, in any event, does not need renewing. In spite of the perception of menstrual blood as bodily waste, it is the symbol of women's fertility and for that reason the menarche is an important stage in the lives of Gypsy women. The first appearance of a girl's period is a matter of joy within the close family and provokes the observation, 'She is now a woman (*Ya es una mujer*).' The menarche puts her in the category of marriageable girls, which in this community is considered to be a very positive status (except by the girls' mothers, who always consider their daughter to be too young to leave home).¹⁴

It is perceived that women can only conceive at the time of their menses and this consequently gives this kind of blood a fertilising quality. It puts it on a similar level to semen. Indeed, fertilisation only takes place at the time of a double humoral flow. Semen and menstrual blood are perceived as two seeds (contrary to Aristotle (1979)) that need movement to coalesce. Moreover, the pregnant woman does not need to be purged any more. Her residual blood mixes with her husband's semen and benefits from its positive generative value. A pregnant woman does not

produce 'bad blood' any longer because she is making the child. At this point, the blood flow is given a bodily explanation that is compatible with its function in reproduction (it is 'bad blood' only when it does not achieve its task of procreation (and see Douglas 1970: 53)).

Other forms of women's blood are also perceived as essential flows directly related to the different stages of reproduction. Hence blood coming from defloration and the blood released during childbirth have a bodily function associated with the cycle of procreation and for this reason are also not 'bad bloods'. The blood of menopausal women no longer flows from their bodies, so they can no longer procreate and sexual intercourse is therefore considered to be no longer essential. Nevertheless, menopausal and post-menopausal women are often accused of not being able to control their overflow of desire, as if they become more masculine at this stage of their life. One of the most common insults is to declare for all to hear that a particular older woman has put on weight, which suggests that she continues to 'sleep' with her husband.

Several men with whom I spoke proudly revealed that they took part in the birth of all their children, sometimes by cutting the umbilical cord. The blood of childbirth does not appear to repel Gypsy men in any way. The blood of childbirth is 'in its place' in Gypsy constructions of appropriate procreation. The fact that women's periods are considered to be 'bad blood' confirms the intrinsic association between being a woman, a wife and a genitrix and, consequently, women's place as the receptacle of both substance and movement, which places them in a lower position in the symbolic order. The hierarchical scale based on the predominance of each blood in procreation is also used to classify different degrees of proximity in terms of identity and to differentiate between Gypsy and non-Gypsy populations.

Blood Propinquity

As the fertile substances of men and women are of the same nature and origin, their mixing in the belly cannot be independent from Gypsy representations of identical and different bodies.¹⁵ In fact, independent from the transmission of resemblance, Gypsies consider that the bonds of proximity depend on the degree to which the same blood is shared (Gay y Blasco 1999). Bloods need to be neither very close nor too distant in order to coagulate well. Thus a marriage between a Gypsy and a *Payo*, with either the man or the woman a Gypsy, would result in a child who is 'different'. In this connection, Esperanza told me that, when older Gypsies talked about a boisterous child who was 'mixed' (*mezclado*), or 'crossed' (*cruzado*), they said: 'Don't you see that he has the tail of a *Payo* (*no ve que tiene rabo de Payo*)?' Josefo also told me that the mixture of different bloods is not beneficial and gave the example of the mule, which is a product of a mare and a donkey and is generally sterile. The mixture of blood which provides life can only take place 'normally' between Gypsies. Mari Luz explained

that the difference between a Gypsy and a *Payo* 'is carried in the blood (*se lleva en la sangre*)'. Difference in ethnicity is based on a greater difference between blood and consequently on a greater distance from close kin. Marriages between 'blood' relations make it possible to preserve one's Gypsy identity, and being of the same blood is to belong to the same genealogical network, which extends as far as first cousins.

However, unions that are too close are to be avoided. Tionila, a Gypsy woman who is about sixty years old, told me: 'Blood cannot be formed because it is already made.' This means that sexual relations create similarity in blood which can then coagulate. If this similarity pre-exists, that is, if two bloods are already the same, they cannot coagulate. Only when sexual partners are not of identical blood can they procreate. Female blood is transformed so that it becomes more similar to the male blood but it is not identical,¹⁶ otherwise sexual relations would be incestuous – neither blood that is too different nor blood that is too identical can result in a 'good' coagulation.

To summarise, the transmission of identity rests to a greater or lesser degree in sharing the same blood. This is the principle of 'truthfulness' in defining Gypsy relatedness and is revealed in marriage prohibitions, incest and mixed marriages.

Fertilisation and Procreation: the Blending of Empirical and Mythological Facts

Even if the male contribution to procreation is enhanced by men's physical role in sexual intercourse, the contribution of the woman is not completely ignored. Women commonly say that at the time menstruation occurs sexual desire is stimulated. They consider this to be proof that they are more fertile during menstruation.¹⁷ As I have argued, sexual desire is generally considered to be a male attribute (see Gay y Blasco 1999; Lagunas Arias 2000). Indeed the very feminine property of menstruation (menses represents the passage from childhood to womanhood) allocates to women a more active status than their 'normal' passive status. Women can procreate during menstruation and, since male qualities are essentially active, women are considered to be fertile when they have desire, that is, when they are active like men.

In considering Gypsy attachment to empirical knowledge, I put forward the hypothesis that when women's blood becomes most manifestly active (during menstruation) they are entering into their active 'male' phase. As menses come from the circulatory blood made from both father's and mother's genetic substance, and as periods are seen, like semen, to be an outpouring of blood, it is as if the menstrual flow has the capacity to activate the blood (semen) of the woman's father and her maternal grandfather. This explains why women can conceive only during menstruation and it also explains why Joséfo can maintain that the offspring of a Gypsy woman and a *Payo* is a Gypsy child. The male, active property of the Gypsy woman's

blood during her menstruation is, according to Joseíto, stronger than the *Payo* blood. Procreation is therefore empirically and ideologically predominantly a masculine affair – the consequence of the mixing of two active/masculine bloods – even if it is through the woman's body.

This kind of fertility can be so powerful that women think that in some special circumstances they can become pregnant without the contribution of men. 'Sexlessness' (not having sexual relations) and fertilisation (coagulation) thus become two concepts that can coincide. Indeed, a certain form of parthenogenesis is possible where it is not semen that produces the coagulation of the menses in the belly of a woman (married or single). I was told stories by Gypsy women who had heard about other Gypsy women who had become pregnant without sexual intercourse (Manrique 2004). They described how one Gypsy woman in San Juan who was having her period got a fright when a snake passed between her legs as she walked to work in the tall grass. She said that people who were near her at that moment might have laughed and said to her that now she had her 'belly full (*la panza llena*)', in other words, that she was pregnant. The sight of a snake and the dread it conveyed could have coagulated the menses and produced a 'creepy-crawly (*un bicho*)' instead of a fetus inside the woman's stomach. Likewise, if a menstruating woman while kneading bread or dough moves her belly towards the edge of the table in a movement similar to that of sexual intercourse it could also result in conception. A woman can become 'full' with a *bicho* from such things. Note that it is not children who are born from parthenogenesis, but *bichos* which will be born lifeless or die in a short time. Indeed, through dynamism but without the contribution of the vital male substance which only men can provide, these conceptions can simulate fertilisation but cannot create a child. This singular kind of fertilisation highlights the important capacity of women to conceive but not to procreate. To procreate women need a masculine contribution, which has to be external to their body. Gypsy understandings of conception demonstrate, on the one hand, the possibility that women can be fertilised independently (they do not need a man to coagulate their blood) and, on the other hand, that women need real sexual intercourse to procreate (to give life to a child and not to a *bicho*). To be real mothers as opposed to only 'genetrixes' women need marriage (see Cadoret 2000). While women can fertilise (or be fertilised), they cannot create filiation: they cannot procreate by themselves. Here, then, the 'genetrix' is distinguished from the mother: she can conceive but she cannot have children.

The process of fertilisation does not necessarily give a woman the rights or duties to nurture a child; only legitimate sexual relations can do that. A discontinuity emerges between each of these roles in procreation. The dualism of fertilisation and procreation is fragmented, and the male part of women's menstrual blood is not strong enough to procreate – it does not carry life and human properties like 'pure' semen. Only marriage can allow a woman to acquire her reproductive integrity – to be a mother and to nurture a child. Men, in contrast, can reproduce without women, or so it is told in the myth in which the first Gypsy is the fruit of a man. Men possess

an integrated procreative quality – they fertilise and procreate through the same movement and, for them, there is no disjuncture between fertilisation and procreation. As Degnen (this volume) writes, '[b]oth "food" and "body" already hold, carry and reproduce meaning about society and culture as well as significant roles in the symbolic world that humans use to demarcate social difference and similarity in everyday social life'. The Gypsy case, where marriage and procreation for a woman mean that she is nourished by a man, makes the roles of men and women in the transmission of identity (and of kinship) clear.

Since women, like men, possess generative matter they can also acquire masculine qualities. The use of the same word, *reglas*, for menses and semen demonstrates that we cannot conclude that there is a biological distinction between men and women but rather there is a discriminatory social representation of the place each occupies in social organisation and in the means to procreate (Héritier 1996). As Demény (this volume) demonstrates: 'Differentiations of social identities are also connected with the exercise of power.'

Despite the empirical knowledge about two kinds of outpourings that are the basis for the transmission of identity, it is ideological knowledge that underlines men's role in the perpetuation of human beings. Thus rules of marriage are founded on an empirical vision of two blood transmissions, whereas social organisation and the ideological classification of the world (dynamism and inertia; to nourish and to be nourished) on which it depends are androcentric. But, as we have seen, there is no contradiction between empirical knowledge and ideology: the two outpourings of blood can be considered to be masculine.

Gypsy representations of how identity is transmitted are meaningful in the process of how social positions (for example, a hierarchy between men and women) and boundaries between close and less close people (to be inside or outside kinship, for example) are constructed. For Gypsies of Morote and San Juan, kinship sameness is based on corpo-real truth, that is, on the sharing of a particular bodily element (blood), which, like genes in the case of the couple of siblings that we have considered before, is considered to be a verifiable fact, by either empirical or scientific tools.

Notes

I am very grateful to Patrick Bolland for his revision of my English in a previous version of this chapter and to Jeanette Edwards, Carles Salazar, Enric Porqueres i Gené and Auksole Čepaitienė for their very fruitful comments.

1. As Janet Carsten (2001: 37) explains, the English word 'substance' is polysemic: 'Substance ... can denote a separate thing (that is, a person or body part); a vital part or essence of that thing or person; and also corporeal matter more generally, the tissue or fluid of which bodies are embodied.' The ambiguity of this term will allow me to play on two of the different senses of the notion of blood in the

- context of Gypsy representations of the body – as both ‘vital part’ and ‘corporeal matter’.
2. In some societies, such as the Gypsies of Morote and San Juan, the circulation of blood and breath are symbolically equivalent.
 3. In the case of assisted conception, Marre and Bestard (this volume) point out that resemblance can be used by ordinary people as a tool to verify genetic truth.
 4. This is generally the case in European societies, such as Lithuania (Čepaitienė, this volume), Norway (Melhuus and Howell, this volume), England (Edwards 2000) and Spanish Gypsies (Manrique 2004). This also seems to be the case in North America (Schneider 1968; Ragoné 1999) and in central Africa (Héritier 1996).
 5. Compare how motherhood is represented by the foster-mothers studied by Demény (this volume).
 6. I stayed for two years in Morote, between 1996 and 1998, and almost four months in San Juan, in 2000.
 7. See also Xanthakou (2000) and Zonabend (2000) for ways in which incest between siblings is represented in Greece and in the north of France.
 8. I explained to them that I was studying their culture, and, as I was too old to be a pupil, they chose to consider me as a teacher: *la maestra* became one of my nicknames.
 9. This is similar to Godelier's (1982) analysis of Baruya's representation of sexuality even if, for the Gypsies, seminal nourishment does not imply fellatio.
 10. I choose to use the Gypsy term to qualify non-Gypsy people and the non-Gypsy term to designate Gypsies. As Poutignat and Streiff-Fenart (1995) explain, the ‘ethnic’ term is always used to designate people who are different from oneself. This is the case in these two towns where Gypsies and non-Gypsies have no terms of their own to qualify themselves.
 11. See Edwards (2004) for the perceived ‘naturalness of gestation and birth’ in England.
 12. At first I thought that this story was a joke, but several Gypsy men told me the same story. Back in Paris, I read in Courthiade (2004) that very similar stories are told amongst Carpathian Gypsy groups.
 13. They also use cardoon and poppy buds (the milk secretions of the first have the property of coagulating milk). We also know that in Europe the manufacture of cheese was associated with the conception of a child (Aristotle 1979; Belmont 1988). The relationship between poppy buds and blood is made through their shared colour.
 14. See also Gamella (1996) for his general study of Andalusian Gypsies.
 15. See in particular Françoise Héritier (1994).
 16. Indeed, it is probable that Gypsies consider that a woman's blood becomes progressively the same as her husband's. That could explain why only the eldest child has these particular relationships with his/her maternal family and why a widow can transmit the surname of her husband's family: usually after the death of the man who carries the surname, it is forbidden for relatives to use the surname.
 17. This perception of conception, fundamentally linked to menstrual flow, is quite uncommon, and all the more so in the discourse of Gypsy populations where, according to many anthropological studies, men reject female blood – that is, where women are required to avoid men when they are menstruating or have just given birth (see, for example, Williams 1981; and Okely 1983 on English Traveller Gypsies).

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European Kinship in the Age of Biotechnology

Edited by JEANETTE EDWARDS and CARLES SALAZAR

Interest in the study of kinship, a key area of anthropological enquiry, has recently re-emerged. Dubbed 'the new kinship', this interest was stimulated by the 'new genetics' and revived interest in kinship and family patterns. This volume investigates the impact of biotechnology on contemporary understandings of kinship, of family and 'belonging' in a variety of European settings and reveals similarities and differences in how kinship is conceived. What constitutes kinship for different publics? How significant are biogenetic links? What does family resemblance tell us? Why is genetically modified food an issue? Are 'genes' and 'blood' interchangeable? It has been argued that the recent prominence of genetic science and genetic technologies has resulted in a 'geneticization' of social life; the ethnographic examples presented here do show shifts occurring in notions of 'nature' and of what is 'natural'. But, they also illustrate the complexity of contemporary kinship thinking in Europe and the continued interconnectedness of biological and sociological understandings of relatedness and the relationship between nature and nurture.

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