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# The culture of crime
## Examining representations of Irish Travelers in *Traveller* and *The Riches*

PETER KABACHNIK

Irish Travelers are frequently equated with crime. This culture-of-crime stereotype is reproduced through media culture. In this article I will analyze the 1997 film *Traveller* and the first season of the 2007 television series *The Riches* to see how the criminal stigma is repeatedly (re)ascribed to Irish Travelers. I identify two cultural discourses in *Traveller*. First, the "culture as practice" discourse grants admission to a cultural group based on what one does. Second, the "culture as nature" discourse views cultural belonging in a biologically deterministic fashion. These two discourses overlap, and Irish Traveler culture is still depicted as a culture of crime. *The Riches* reproduces this stereotype, as the only way Irish Travelers can lead a "normal" life is too steal a buffer's identity. Both of these examples lead to questioning whether invisibility or visibility solely as criminals is preferable.

*Keywords*: Irish Travelers, crime, criminality, culture, film, television, representation, media culture

"Some call us Gypsies, others call us thieves, most though don't even know we exist."
Opening credit voiceover, *The Riches* (2007)

One of the dominant images of Irish Travelers is of a culture of crime (Lucassen, Willems, and Cottaar 1998; Crowley 2005; Drummond 2006; Hayes 2006). In the United States, Irish Travelers are "a group", we are told, "best known around the country for their scams" (McShan 2007) and police in North Carolina refer to certain crimes as the "Irish Traveler scam" (Salisbury Post, 2008). This is further made evident through the many specialized police units and "Gypsy crime" detectives found throughout the United States that are dedicated solely to deal with Gypsy and Traveler crime.[1] These specialists gather annually for

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1. For more examples of this, see the "FraudTech" website, with sections entitled "Gypsy Crime Forum", "Irish Travelers", and "Gypsy Criminal Groups": http://www.fraudtech.bizland.com/travelers.htm and http://www.fraudtech.bizland.com/Gypsy%20Forum.htm. This site is managed by the co-author of a book on crime and the Gypsy mafia (Marlock and Dowling 1994). See also: Wlky.com http://www.wlky.com/crimetracking/8651563/detail.html; and McIlvain 2002 http://www.troubleshooterjudd.com/consumer/consumer_irish_scammers.html.

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what is euphemistically called the National Association of Bunco[2] Investigators[3] (for an article with brief interviews with several participants of this conference, see Becerra 2006). In October 2007 they hosted a Transient Criminal Activity Conference[4] in Seattle, Washington, which has sessions entitled "Introduction to the Rom" and "The Travelers". This focus on criminality is not limited to the US, as the GARDA—the Irish national police service—collected data on the "criminal tendencies" of Irish Travelers (Crowley 2005: 135).

The criminal stereotypes ascribed to Irish Travelers are constructed and reproduced in newspapers, literature, film, and television (see also Morris 2000; Drummond 2006). These are aspects of what Kellner (1995) refers to as media culture. Media culture provides "the materials out of which people forge their very identities", influencing how we see others, and provides myths, values, and normative models for behavior (Kellner 1995: 1). Since most people get their information about Irish Travelers from television, film, radio, and newspapers instead of direct interaction, it is important to examine such influential disseminators of stereotypes. Furthermore, as Sibley (1995) argues, representations inform practices, and these myths and stereotypes can lead to moral panics, discrimination, exclusion, and even violence against the denigrated group. Indeed, a vast array of attention has focused on the racism and discrimination that Irish Travelers face in contemporary society, and the critical role that representation plays in the othering of Irish Travelers (Helleiner 2000; Fanning 2002; Hayes 2006; McVeigh 2008). By examining the reproduction of stereotypes of Irish Travelers in American media culture, I hope to identify another arena of problematic representations that contributes to discrimination against Irish Travelers. While much of the writing on Irish Travelers examines the European context, I focus my attention on the role of representation in American popular culture, as Burke (2007) identifies a shortfall of research of this type. Crime is not the only stereotype found in representations of Irish Travelers, as associations of poverty, nomadism, and marginality are typical as well, along with romanticized depictions of life on the road. While nomadism is a particularly rampant association of Irish Travelers (Hayes 2006), this is intimately bound up with discussions of criminality. Nomadism and crime become enmeshed, as nomadism is seen to facilitate criminality, and criminal practices necessitate Irish Travelers to be nomadic.

In this article, I will examine the role of American film and television in the perpetuation of the criminal stereotype of Irish Travelers in the United States by critically analyzing the 1997 film *Traveller* and the entire first season of the 2007 television series *The Riches*. This film and television series were selected

2. *Bunco* is a synonym for "confidence game".
3. Their website is found at http://www.nabihq.org/en-us/.
4. See http://www.nabihq.org/pdf/seattle2007.pdf for their conference program.

because they offer cases of representations of Irish Travelers in the US, as well as Irish Travelers being the central protagonists in both. While the form and style of *Traveller* and *The Riches* are a worthy area of exploration, I will focus my analysis on narrative and plot devices. It is interesting to note that despite an estimated Irish Traveler population in the US of only 12,000 (Kenrick 2004), they are an unusually visible presence in American media culture (Burke 2007), stemming in part from their exoticized and mysterious stereotypical associations. Irish Travelers are, as a group, typecast, consistently reduced to criminality, playing the consummate con artists (for another example, see "Graansha", an episode of *Law and Order: Criminal Intent* first aired in 2003).

Minority representation within media culture has been consistently shown to be problematic, with limited opportunities for minority representation, as well as offering a proliferation of stereotypes (MacDonald 1992; Dates and Barlow 1993; Gray 2004; Center for Integration and Improvement of Journalism 1994; NAACP 2008). The perpetuation of the Irish Traveler as criminal stereotype continues the more general trend typical in the US for minority groups to be represented as criminals in media culture, particularly in reality-based crime shows, fiction-based crime dramas, and news coverage of crimes, as has been well documented (Oliver 2003; Larson 2005; Monk-Turner *et al.* 2007). For Irish Travelers, as well as Roma/Gypsies[5]—a group that Irish Travelers are often confused with[6]—it has been clearly demonstrated how crucial media representations are in the reproduction of stereotypes and myths (Sibley 1995; Hancock 1997; Hancock 1999b; Morris 2000; Vanderbeck 2003; Morris 2006).[7] Lucassen *et al.* (1998) discuss the role of harmful forms of categorization that stigmatize Roma/Gypsies and Travelers with stereotypical images. Indeed, as the stereotypes of dirt, crime, and disorder proliferate, it becomes easier for the dominant groups to scapegoat those rendered inferior (Acton 1974; Hancock 1999b). These same conclusions can be applied to film and television, with the way that Irish Travelers are represented in a simplistic and pejorative manner.

The portrayal of Irish Travelers as a threatening "other" stems, in part, from the fact that there are very few representations of Irish Traveler culture created by Irish Travelers.[8] *Traveller* and *The Riches* provide a rare opportunity for Irish

5. While many Roma find the term Gypsy offensive, British Gypsies prefer to self-ascribe as Gypsy, not Roma. I therefore will keep the label that they choose to use.
6. Conflating the two groups usually derives from their actual or perceived nomadism. While they do share similar forms of representation and exclusion, the Roma have separate historical migration and settlement patterns as well as cultural and linguistic practices that are different from Irish Travelers.
7. A common stereotype of Roma/Gypsies that is found in film and television is as vengeful casters of curses (e.g. a subplot found in the popular *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel* television series and the 1996 film adaptation of Stephen King's novel *Thinner*).
8. See Lanters (2005) for a discussion of Irish Traveler autobiographies as one of the few examples of Irish Traveler self-representation.

Travelers to be visible, but as I will illustrate, this attention is pernicious, as it reproduces the stereotypes of criminality that are all too common in representations of Irish Travelers. The voices and experiences of Irish Travelers are once again ignored, as the characters are written to speak and act in the image of what buffers[9] think Irish Travelers should be like.

This invisibility is evident in popular and political discourses that contend with the history and identity of Irish Travelers. Claiming that they are outcasts pushed because of poverty to nomadism at the time of the potato famine, many do not see Irish Travelers as a distinct ethnic group. This "ethnicity denial" is prevalent not only historically, but in contemporary policies and attitudes (McVeigh 2008). Irish Travelers are deemed social dropouts, involved in a culture of crime, and a "social problem" in need of assimilation, sedentarization, and monitoring. This is one of the dominant ways that the state has dealt with traveling groups, both in Ireland (Helleiner 2000; Fanning 2002; Hayes 2006; McVeigh 2008), the United Kingdom (Clark and Greenfields 2006), and elsewhere in Europe (Lucassen *et al.* 1998). It is precisely through the emphasis on the culture of crime, often in conjunction with marginality and poverty, that Irish Traveler identity and rights are de-ethnicized. Irish Traveler issues then get represented euphemistically as a "social problem", serving to legitimize assimilationist discourse and policy. While the criminal stereotype of Irish Traveler culture continues to pervade the popular imagination, most academic and many policy representations have shifted from simplifying and racist discourses to more sensitive and nuanced understandings of their ways of life (Fanning 2002: 153–4).

A much more complex appreciation of Irish Traveler ways of life has been captured in many studies (Bhreatnach 2006; Clark and Greenfields 2006), and Irish Travelers have been recently legally recognized as an ethnicity worthy of protection from discrimination and racism in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. These developments bolster the claims of Irish Travelers, who see themselves as having their own histories, identities, and ways of life that differ from the majority population. Evidence suggests that Irish Travelers had a distinct identity separate from the majority sedentary Irish for centuries, marked by particular traditions and practices, including nomadism, and their own language, known as Cant, Gammon, or Shelta. Furthermore, Irish Travelers are categorized by others, and self-identify as, Irish Travelers; this is a key component of ethnic identity in social constructionist models of ethnic identity formation (Jenkins 1997).

9. "Buffer" is the term used by Irish Travelers to refer to non-Irish Travelers.

## Blood or Practices? Representations of Culture in *Traveller*

The 1997 film *Traveller*, directed by Jack N. Green, is set in the countryside of North Carolina, offering a glimpse into Irish Traveler culture. This world is a secret world, with a "boss" of the clan, arranged marriages, and a mysterious language. According to the film's writer, "never had the full story of their strange and secretive culture been told." Pat O'Hara (played by Mark Walhberg), attending his father's funeral, returns to his father's Irish Traveler camp. His father had been ostracized for running off with a non-Traveler woman, and the leader of the clan, Boss Jack Costello, shuns Pat. Bokky (played by Bill Paxton) feels sorry for Pat and steps in before he is vanquished, and takes responsibility for him. Bokky takes Pat under his wing, teaching him how to be a con man. After a few blown cons, including one where they are shot at, Pat picks up the art of ripping people off and the money starts rolling in.

However, Bokky feels guilty for tricking Jean, a waitress and single parent, out of five hundred dollars as well as getting her fired. He returns the money to her and a relationship develops. As Pat becomes more entrenched in the Irish Traveler way of life, Bokky seems to be following the path of Pat's father, and leaving it. However, their partner, Double D, has a moneymaking scheme, and enlists the aid of Pat and Bokky. Bokky had initially declined, but then decided to do one last scam in order to pay for Jeans's daughter's ear operation. They successfully dupe another group of con men, who happen to be Turkish Roma, and make off with a lot of money. Bokky gives Jean the money for her daughters operation. However, the Roma track them down, kill Double D, and are about to rape Jean and her daughter and kill Bokky and Pat, when Boss Jack arrives in time to rescue them all and kill the Roma.

In addition to the sensationalistic plot, there is an overt racial discourse in the film, centering specifically on whether Pat is a "real" Irish Traveler. Two different perspectives are articulated around the idea of, what I shall call, "culture as practice" on the one hand, and "culture as nature" on the other. "Culture as practice" refers to the idea that an individual is seen as a member of a cultural group not only by the fact of self-identification and categorization by others, but also by what one does. One has to act in a specific manner, performing the appropriate practices. "Culture as nature" is biologically deterministic and focuses on racial purity and notions of authenticity as the means through which one is granted insider status to a particular cultural group. In the film, however, these two discourses become intertwined.

First, the "culture as practice" discourse is proffered by Boss Jack, as he sees the group in terms of needing to abide by the rules and be judged by the way one practices the Irish Traveler way of life. He tells Pat after the funeral that

his father "turned his back on his people" and this alone is enough to exclude him. This therefore disqualifies Pat from Irish Traveler culture. The essentialist racial discourse of the "culture as nature" perspective is utilized by Pat when he responds by saying that he cannot be turned away if he "wanted in", and declared "I got a right by birth" and "it comes down to blood".

Bokky initially held Boss Jack's perspective, telling his grandmother that "outsiders got no place here." She helps to instill into him the racialist narrative, telling him that Pat's father "was born a Traveler and buried a Traveler" and that "the boy's got blood and blood don't lie." Later, during the confrontation, Bokky intervenes by granting Pat insider status, stating that he "don't smell like one of them to me" and offers to take him under his wing. Here, with this notion of needing to teach Pat the way of life, we have an implicit recognition that blood is *not* enough to become an Irish Traveler, despite the rhetoric to the contrary. The discourses get intertwined, as blood is prerequisite, but, as in the case of Pat's father, not enough to avoid being shunned if one does not practice the way of life properly. This is exactly what Bokky exemplifies by showing Pat the ropes, teaching him how to rip people off, and learning how to "be a part of this thing", which, as Boss Jack says, "is more than a job." Later in the film when Bokky starts spending most of his time with Jean, Pat compares Bokky to his father and announces that "maybe I belong more than you." Now the racialist discourse fades and the "culture as practice" narrative comes to the fore, with Pat feeling more a part of the group and judging Bokky to be changing because of his actions, his specific practices, not due to blood. This reveals the disconnect between what is often stated and what is done. Even when a racialized discourse is vocalized as the reason for a particular cultural practice or how to consider whether someone is a member of a group, there can be a divergence in the way things are actually carried out.

Though this analysis shows a more complicated representation of how culture operates, by practices and not by biological determinism, the fact that the film represents Irish Traveler culture as a culture of crime demands that the film be thoroughly critiqued. Furthermore, the complexities of the "culture as practice" idea turns out to be unintended after examining the statements of the film's writer, revealing his self-expressed perceptions of Irish Traveler culture and his motivations for writing the script.

Jim McGlynn, who wrote the film, states:

My hope was that "Traveller", the story I created from what I discovered, would take people into a world of outwardly "normal" people for whom ingrained criminality wasn't a choice but a birthright.

Despite the obvious logical misstep (how can something ingrained be a choice?), this statement can be read as an attempt to forgive Irish Travelers,

since their need for grifting is beyond their control. Thus, any ambiguity of the intentions of the screenwriter is removed. While viewers can certainly draw a conclusion that differs from the writer's motivation, this overt racial discourse self-consciously perpetuates the negative image of Irish Travelers as they feign normality and live (naturally) as criminals. The production notes found on the DVD include this statement by film critic Michael Tunison: the film is about "an insulated, little-known subculture . . . infamous for living off petty scams and thievery." McGlynn offers further comments that construct Irish Travelers as parasites who feed off of innocent buffers:

They are a tribe of con men who live by perpetuating fraudulent schemes on the unsuspecting populace. Travelers migrate from place to place in search of people to swindle. They only marry other persons within their community and view the rest of the world as prey.

Thus, Irish Traveler culture is constructed as an insular, criminal group that is diametrically opposed to, and exploitive of, everyone else. Although this film did receive generally favourable reviews, it was not able to influence a wide audience due to the film's poor box-office showing. The same level of influence cannot be said of the television show that I will discuss next, *The Riches*.

### Criminal visibility vs. invisibility

*The Riches* is a television show broadcast on the cable channel FX in the United States, initially garnering solid ratings and consistently receiving overwhelmingly positive reviews.[10] The second season has been completed and is being shown in Australia, Canada, and Britain.[11] The premise is simple. Wayne and Dahlia Malloy and their three children, a family of Irish Travelers in the US, get into a dispute with their extended family and drive off in their recreational vehicle (RV), using mobility as a form of conflict avoidance. Later, another RV chases them and causes an oncoming car to drive off the road, killing the couple inside, Doug and Cherein Rich. At the crash site the Malloys find the keys to the Louisiana home that the Riches were about to move into. Needing a place to stay for the night, they go to the house and end up taking on the identity of the couple. To complicate matters further, Dahlia has just been released on parole from prison; the Malloy clan wants to retrieve the money that Wayne stole from the bedside of the respected elders safe; and an unwanted marriage

10. The pilot episode was shown twice on its debut night, March 12, 2007, and averaged a combined 5.15 million viewers (ZAP2it.com 2007). The show debuted in the eighth spot of the Nielsen basic cable ratings. The show received Emmy and Golden Globe nominations as well.
11. The second season was composed of only seven of the planned 13 episodes due to the writer's strike. The show was not renewed for a third season. Eddie Izzard has discussed the possibility of continuing the story in a film.

has been arranged for the pretty, headstrong, independent daughter, Di Di.

There will be some Irish Travelers who may be pleased with the portrayal of their culture. Famous actors, Eddie Izzard and Minnie Driver (who has been nominated for an Emmy for her role), are playing prominent roles as Irish Travelers. Popular culture can be seductive, and Wayne and Dahlia are very interesting and charismatic, so there is a need to openly and critically challenge the representations captured in the lead roles. As one glowing review notes, "it's hard not to root for them" (Gilbert 2007). And indeed we must root for them, the unusual heroes of this series. However, the Malloys are constantly contrasted against hypocritical and greedy buffer characters, such as a corrupt police officer, an unscrupulous, lecherous, and greedy real estate developer, and a pill-popping housewife, making their own indiscretions more palatable.

The Malloys are complex, likeable, funny, attractive people who regularly exploit buffers. The latter might be seen as especially enjoyable, a vicarious form of revenge for all the hardships and discrimination that Irish Travelers have faced, and continue to do so. It is reminiscent of the Irish Traveler characters in *Snatch* (2000). In that film, stereotypes reduced Irish Travelers to dirty caravan dwelling, thick accented, dim, brutal bare-knuckle boxers. Despite this, many Irish Travelers celebrated the Mickey O'Neil character (played by Brad Pitt) as a hero, as he was strong, attractive, an excellent fighter, possessed a strong concern for the welfare of his family, and, perhaps most importantly, he is victorious in the end, defeating the English, avenging his mother's death, and making off with a lot of money.

As for how Irish Travelers contend with the virulent stereotypes, geographer David Nemeth relates a relevant point regarding another nomadic minority group, the Roma/Gypsies:

More traditional Gypsy power-brokers . . . may prefer being portrayed by the media as hustlers, even predators, than as the pathetic prey of Nazis and other racists.   (cited in Hancock 1999a)

As the quote reveals, many will prefer the criminal stereotype over the romantic or victimized image as they would rather be associated with some sort of power, albeit stigmatized and illegal, which commands respect and/or allows one to be left alone due to the fear such stereotypes elicit. This also allows Irish Travelers to avoid, what Fanon describes in the postcolonial context, the psychological internalization of inferiority (Fanon 1967). However, the internalization of the criminal stereotype and the performance of stereotypical roles for outsiders functions as a process that reinforces those very stereotypes in the popular imagination and fulfills the expectations of the non-Irish Travelers.

Instead of being completely overlooked, Irish Traveler culture is the focal point of the series. Some may dismiss the criticism of the plethora of stereo-

types, wishing instead to highlight the more positive elements, feeling that any in-depth exploration is better than wholly negative representations, or, indeed, as is usually the case, no representation whatsoever. This is an important point, as Irish Travelers are the less visible "other" in the Gypsy and Traveler formulation. Many Roma/Gypsies would wish the dominant romantic and criminal stereotypes that were reproduced in the past few centuries in film, television, literature, art, and academia (such as has been found in this journal) were replaced with more sensitive and complex understandings.[12] Nonetheless, there is a wealth of material that focuses on the Roma/Gypsy way of life, a fascination that dates back to beginnings of the Gypsy Lore Society. Furthermore, Irish Travelers are rarely portrayed positively in media culture, and the romantic stereotype that Roma/Gypsies elicit is noticeably absent, leaving the criminal stereotype as one of the primary associations of Irish Travelers.

*The Riches* does nothing to dispel the focus on crime. Criminality is not just associated with the Irish Traveler way of life; it is equated with it. The Malloys do not choose to be con artists; it is automatically programmed into them. They live "off the grid", conducting various scams, crimes, and impersonations, exploiting the naiveté of buffers at every opportunity. We must ask ourselves the question: Is visibility as criminals better than complete invisibility?

If Irish Traveler culture remains invisible, criminal stereotypes can certainly still proliferate. However, when the dominant representations fulfil the expectations that Irish Travelers are criminals, then visibility proves harmful and reinforces the simplified image. Elements of media culture, whether newspaper articles, radio programs, television shows, or films, can then serve to legitimate the stereotypes and further entrench them in the popular imagination, making it that much harder to demystify and deconstruct the "Irish Traveler culture = crime" formula. Visibility as criminals is akin to complete invisibility, as Irish Traveler culture is never actually represented. This issue resonates with the quotation from the opening credits that I cite at the beginning of the paper: "some call us Gypsies, others call us thieves, most though don't even know we exist." Irish Travelers are either taken to be Gypsies (misrecognized), thieves (criminal visibility), or are completely unknown (invisibility).

The first episode, while—perhaps—evoking positive connotations of the ingenuity and improvisational skills of Wayne and his pickpocketing children, nonetheless focuses on the family crashing a High School reunion in order to empty every last person's wallet or purse. Wayne takes on Jimmy O'Shea's identity and plays the role with such charisma and sincerity that his old schoolmates cannot detect that he is not the same individual they spent four years of high school with. Performances like this become the theme of the series, as

12. For more detail on the criminal and romantic stereotypes of Gypsies and how they are promulgated, see Sibley (1995) and Lucassen *et al.* (1998).
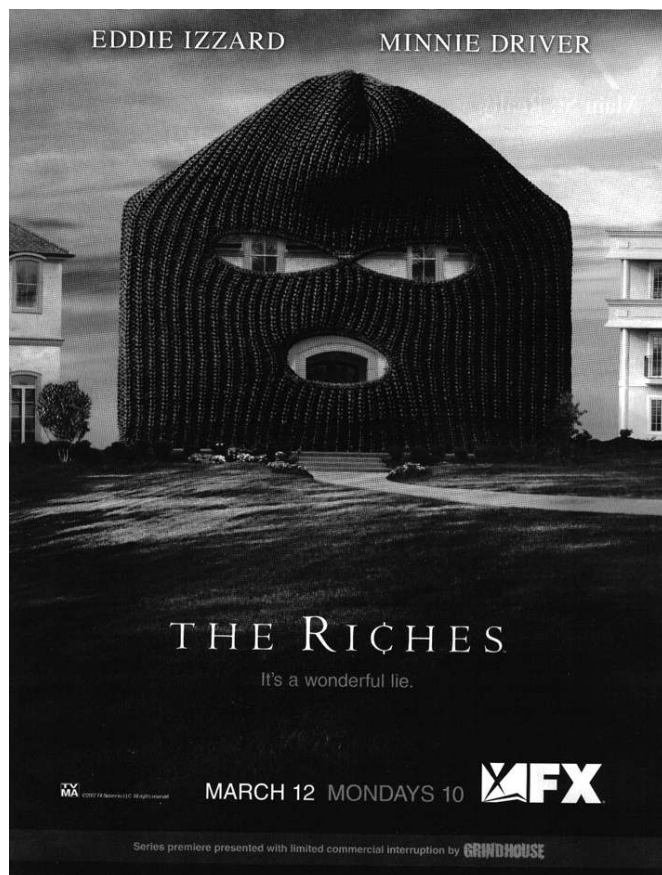
FIGURE 1.  Advertisement for *The Riches*

the family must shapeshift into the new roles that they have assumed. In the first season's 13 episodes, they take on various identities, including playing the role of a Catholic priest and his "family", a ruthless lawyer, a Jewish family, and a dental hygienist, to name but a few. They fool others in order to get what they need, whether it is new social security numbers, permission for the children to be accepted into a prestigious private school, or simply to pass as buffers.

Recently, while looking through a magazine, I came across an advertisement for the show (see Figure 1).[13] It depicts a beautiful suburban home encased in a ski mask, the prototypical disguise of the criminal. As the caption suggests, the Molloys live a "wonderful lie", not a wonderful life. Even the original name for the show explicitly makes clear the association we are supposed to have with Irish Travelers: "Low Life". Thus, their culture is a culture of criminality.

13. The show's official web page depicts a similar image. http://www.fxnetworks.com/shows/originals/theriches/.

The official website of the show explains that for Travelers "life is all about the money—other people's money—and steering clear of the law."

The "About the Show" section of the show's website also tells us that buffer is the term for "ordinary, law-abiding folk". "Buffer" does not just mean non-Irish Traveler but is defined as a non-criminal. Buffers serve as the "other" to help define Irish Traveler identity, which in this case is a criminal identity. This is exemplified when Wayne is hired as a legal advisor for a cut-throat real-estate company. He tells Dahlia that he is working on an eminent domain case, which he explains is "how you steal people's property because you want to." Dahlia responds, "That's what you're doing here? If that's what you're doing, then what we'd ever stop being Travelers for?"

The "Irish Traveler culture = crime" formula is explicitly evident in this dialogue. According to her logic, if they want to really be buffers then they should not be criminals, since that is what Irish Travelers are supposed to be. But they are caught in a paradox as the only way they were able to become buffers in the first place was to steal the Riches's identity.

As if there should be no need for subtlety, Wayne calls their way of life a "culture of nothing." The show not only reinforces the idea that to become sedentary is to cease being an Irish Traveler, but to become law-abiding also negates the Irish Traveler identity. Irish Traveler nomadism is seen as a necessary functional adaptation to further enable a life of crime. For Irish Travelers to be able to shed this negative association they would have to renounce their nomadism. Furthermore, to lose one's Irish Traveler identity, one not only need to stop being nomadic, but, as these two examples of media culture reveal, one needs also to stop being a criminal. These nefarious representations further reproduce the longstanding deterministic associations of Irish Traveler culture with crime.

### Stealing the American Dream

*The Riches* does do a nice, and oftentimes humorous, job at critiquing the superficial veneer of the suburban gated communities that are so common in the US, revealing the attempts of many people to spatially isolate and remove themselves from the larger community and the prominent, yet all too often overlooked in television, class divisions found in American society. However, the satire would have been more effective had it not built its foundation on the blatant and simplistic marriage between Irish Traveler culture and criminality.

To explore crime, the how and why of it, would be fascinating if done in a nuanced manner. Those who commit crimes, as well as those who languish in prison, are all too often dismissed and represented as caricatures. The dominant ways that crime is represented is typified in the sensationalistic coverage

on television and in newspapers, or else in films about the mob or heroic bank robbers. Both *Traveller* and *The Riches* fetishize crime. Ignored are issues such as to what circumstances drive people to commit crime, their motivations, the moral struggles, the decision to actually do it, how they justify their actions, and so on. Instead, what we find offered in the place of this avenue of exploration is racial determinism. Irish Travelers commit crime because they are Irish Travelers, and this supposedly removes any further line of inquiry.

While the impetus for deciding to focus a television series, or any element of media culture, on Irish Travelers should be welcomed, *The Riches* does not assist in deconstructing stereotypes nor does it accurately portray the nuances of a culture that most people are either entirely ignorant of (in the US), or simply attain their biased knowledge from the daily tabloid press (Ireland and the UK). It is particularly troubling that the show appears in the wake of two recent films, *Southpaw: The Francis Barrett Story* (1999) and *Pavee Lackeen* (2005), which capture the reality of Irish Traveler ways of life much more accurately and poignantly (if still not altogether unproblematically). Most revealing about *The Riches* is the decision to base the show on how Irish Travelers take on another family's identity and become settled buffers, parking their caravan in the woods behind the house and ceasing their traveling way of life. Apparently the only way for Irish Travelers to live the American Dream is to steal it.

If the program wanted to realistically portray Irish Traveler culture, it would have been far more interesting to actually show their way of life as Travelers, living in their trailer or house, raising their kids, and making a living, just like other Americans, but in their own way shaped by certain practices and traditions (and of course then incorporated into sitcom or television drama plotlines). The show does make us identify with the main characters, yet the conclusion we are funneled into reaching is the same as theirs—namely, there is something wrong with the Irish Traveler criminal way of life and they are to be applauded for deciding to become "normal". If there is one thing we can learn from *The Riches*, it is that we still have a long way to go before Irish Travelers begin to be represented as any other ethnic group would expect to be.

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