Catalan Romani (*caló català*) in the work of Juli Vallmitjana: an initial appraisal

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■ 1 Introduction

Catalan Romani (*caló català*), the Para-Romani dialect spoken in the linguistic area of Catalan (NE Spain and SE France), has attracted very little scholarly attention. In fact, following the studies of von Sowa and, above all, those of Ackerley (1914–1915), the subject went largely unnoticed until recent contributions from Escudero (2004) – and even here the research focused more on the Catalan spoken by Gypsies than on Catalan Romani, although valuable details regarding Caló are recorded – and Escudero / Adiego's (2001) vocabulary based on their fieldwork.

Between the material gathered in Ackerley's article and this more recent evidence from the field, there exists a further source containing highly valuable information that has yet to be studied: the examples of Catalan Romani collected in the works of the Catalan writer Juli Vallmitjana. Although Ackerley includes Vallmitjana among his sources, the former drew on only a largely insignificant part of the materials provided by Vallmitjana.

The aim of this paper is to undertake an initial appraisal of these documents in an effort to demonstrate their importance for our knowledge of Catalan Romani. Vallmitjana's materials are, it would appear, virtually the only source providing details of this dialect at the beginning of the 20th century and, as such, they are very important for shedding light on an intermediate phase in the evolution of Catalan Romani, coming as they do between the earliest attested documents dating from the first half of the 19th century (collected in Ackerley's article) and present-day Catalan Romani, which finds itself on the verge of extinction.

The present study is no more than an initial examination and does not seek to provide an in-depth assessment of Vallmitjana's work, which would require a much more exhaustive analysis. I will content myself with presenting the most notable characteristics that can be learnt about the

situation of Catalan Romani around the year 1900 based on the data provided by Vallmitjana, and with formulating an initial estimation of the importance of Vallmitjana's corpus for the debate about the rise of mixed languages (see Matras / Bakker [2003] for a recent discussion on this topic).

▪ 2 Sources

Juli Vallmitjana i Colomines (Barcelona, 1873–1937) was a writer (having started out as a painter) with a particular interest for portraying the least privileged sectors of the society of his day. In this world he was to find a source of inspiration for his narrative and theatrical works as well as abundant linguistic information that he used to give greater realism to the lives of the marginalized people he sought to depict. In the case of the Catalan Gypsies, it is clear that Vallmitjana had direct contact with them and that he was introduced to their way of life and customs, and had the opportunity to learn *caló català* from them. Thanks to this contact, he wrote a number of works that are highly reliable sources for our understanding of Catalan Romani. In examining these sources it is useful to divide Vallmitjana's work in three groups:

1) Dramatic works
2) Narrative works
3) The appendix to *Sota Montjuïc*

(1) Dramatic works:
Between 1910 and 1912, Vallmitjana wrote three plays set among the Catalan Gypsies: *Els zin-calós (Els gitanos)* [The Gypsies] (1911), *Entre gitanos* [Among the Gypsies] (1911) and *La gitana verge* [The Gypsy maiden] (1912). To these we can add his later works *Rují* (1917), in fact a reworking of *La gitana verge* with some slight variations, and *El barander (L'alcalde)* [The Mayor] (1923), a play with a number of highly characteristic features that are discussed below.

In each of these plays, Vallmitjana uses Catalan Romani in order to give his dialogues a more authentic Gypsy flavor. Thus, we cannot properly speak of Catalan Romani texts or even full sentences for that matter: Vallmitjana's concern was merely to pepper his Catalan text with Romani lexicon, while ensuring that these insertions did not hamper the audiences' understanding of the text. To achieve this, Vallmitjana employed various strategies to ensure the Gypsy words would be understood:

(a) By providing an immediate "translation" :

> EL CIGALETA: Ai, l'home, no maleiu la raça, que us podria venir un càstic de part del *benc*.
> EL SALOMA: El càstic ja me l'ha enviat el *dimoni*. (*Els Zin-Calós*)

> [EL CIGALETA:"–Oh, man, don't curse the race, less you be punished by the *benc*."
> EL SALOMA: I have already received the punishment from the *devil*.]

(b) By explaining the word by means of theatrical action:

> LA DADATTA: Mira si al calaix de la taula hi ha un troç de *manró*.
> (...)
> LA XIVET (*busca pel calaix de la taula i treu un troç de* pa): Teniu, mentres tant. (*Els Zin-Calós*)

> [LA DADATTA: Look in the drawer of the table to see if there is a piece of *manró*"
> (...)
> LA XIVET: (*she looks in the drawer of the table and takes out a piece of* bread): Take that for the time being.]

(c) Or simply thanks to the textual context:

> VEÏNA SEGONA: Què són aquests plors? Vaia una manera d'*uribinyâ*! (*Els Zin-Calós*)
> [NEIGHBOUR 2: What's all this crying? What a way of *uribinyâ* [= to cry]!]

In other instances, it is true that the Romani words cannot easily be deduced,[1] but these are typically unimportant for the audiences' understanding of the plot, being comprised mainly of swear words, curses and insults.

Following these three plays published in 1911–1912, Vallmitjana did not abandon Gypsy themes, but rather he adopted a more fantastic, exotic vision of Gypsy people: no longer was he concerned with portraying the local customs of Catalan Gypsies, instead he preferred to set his plays in a timeless, vaguely oriental context. The Romani language, which had been an important tool for creating a specifically *Gitano* atmosphere, disappears from plays such as *Tassarba* (1916) and *La caravana perduda* ["The lost caravan"] (1927). Leaving aside *Rují*, a reworking of *La gitana verge* as men-

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1 This accounts for a number of notable mistakes that appear in a glossary added to a new edition of *Els zin-calós* published in 1982 (Mestre, Iglésias, Gual, Vallmitjana – *Teatre modernista*, a cura de Xavier Fàbregas, Barcelona). The editor offers the following translations for Romani: *atxip* 'neck' (instead of 'tongue'), *dicló* 'hymen' (instead of 'handkerchief'), *garó* 'neck' (instead of 'head'), *najabar* 'to despise' (instead of 'to ruin'), *romandinar* 'to grumble; to dispute' (instead of 'to marry').

tioned above, the sole exception to this abandonment of Caló is *El barander (L'alcalde)* (1923). Here, Vallmitjana once more uses Caló words, but in a slightly different form from that adopted in earlier plays, as some uses would seem to be of Spanish Romani origin (for instance, the use of *ondibel* for 'God'). Whatever the case, this play merits a more detailed analysis and I leave it for a future study.[2]

(2) Narrative works:
The presence of Gypsies and their language in Vallmitjana's narrative works is largely confined to just two books: the collection of short stories *De la raça que's perd* ["About a disappearing race"] (1917), and the novel *Sota Montjuïc* ["At the foot of Montjuïc"] (1908). All ten stories in *De la raça que's perd* are inspired by Gypsy life, but the linguistic material in them is not particularly notable. Quite different in this respect is the novel *Sota Montjuïc,* in which Caló words and even complete sentences appear at various moments in the text. However, *Sota Montjuïc* is not strictly a Gypsy novel, for it describes the lives of the outcast – not solely Gypsies – living at the foot of the Montjuïc hill in Barcelona towards the beginning of the 20th century.

(3) The appendix to *Sota Montjuïc* :
The main important source of Catalan Romani in Vallmitjana's writings is undoubtedly the appendix of words, whole sentences, and texts included within the first edition of his novel *Sota Montjuïc* (1908).

∎ 3 Some characteristics of Vallmitjana's Catalan Romani

It would be impossible to deal here exhaustively with Vallmitjana's writings, so I shall limit myself to identifying some of the most significant traits from an initial appraisal, leaving a more systematic study for future works.

∎ 3.1 Phonology

3.1.1. Vallmitjana's Catalan Romani presents the characteristic features of this dialect as recorded in both earlier and later sources:

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2   In a very late (1928) and unpublished play, *Gitanos* (conserved in the library of the *Institut del Teatre*, Barcelona, and recently edited in *Juli Vallmitjana, Teatre. Volum 2*, Edició de Francesc Foguet i Albert Mestres, Barcelona 2006, 555–573), Romani words are practically non-existent.

- The presence of the phoneme /x/, derived not only from Common Romani (henceforth CR) *x*, but also from CR *š* (as in Spanish Romani). What is unusual is that this sound is absent from the Catalan sound inventory. As with other written sources of Catalan Romani, the absence of an orthographic convention for this sound in Catalan creates certain difficulties when interpreting spellings. Moreover, the sound may become *k* precisely because of its absence from Catalan.

    Examples: *gil* /xil/ 'cold' < CR] *šil*); <curagay> /kuraxˀáj/ 'Moorish' < CR *xoraxáj*

- In Vallmitjana's writings, the fortition of voiced stops, a typical feature of Catalan and Spanish Romani (see Adiego, 2002), is also detectable. As in other Catalan Romani documents, this fortition in Vallmitjana's materials involves the gemination of these stops.

    Examples: *bobbi* pl. 'beans' (cf. *bóbo* 'bean' in many Romani dialects); *Rot de Bel* /rroddəbél/ 'God' < CR *mro devel* litter. 'my God', *baratder* /bərəddér/ 'major' < CR *bareder* comparative of *baró* 'big', *atgat* [əggat] 'shirt' < CR *gat*.

- Vallmitjana also reports the well-established presence in Catalan Romani of an affricate [ts] (*c*) that comes from CR *th* and from different palatalization processes. The similar process in Spanish Romani leads to a *č* sound.

    Examples: <patsano> /pəcənó/ 'on credit' < CR *pat'avnó*, <atsaló> /əcəló/ 'thick' < CR *thuló*.

- The epenthetic vowel before CR *r* (not *ř*) in initial position, typical of Catalan and Spanish Romani, is equally present in Vallmitjana's materials.

    Examples: *aragai* /ərəxˀáj/ 'priest' < CR *rašáj*. *arai* /əráj/ 'lord' < CR *raj*; *uribela* '(s)he weeps' < CR *rovéla*. Compare *rom* 'husband' < CR *řom*.

3.1.2. With some exceptions (such as the presence of the phoneme /x/), Vallmitjana's Romani shows the adaptation of Romani phonology to that of the Catalan dialect used in Barcelona:

- In the vowel system, unstressed *a* and *e* converge on a neutral vowel (/ə/), which in the Catalan of Barcelona is very open, while unstressed *o* and *u* converge on *u*. This explains the indistinct spelling of *a*/*e* for etymological *a*, *e*, and the use of *u* for etymological *o*:

    Examples: *dracá*, *trecá* /drəká, trəká/ 'raisin (pl.)' < CR *drakhá*, *cardó* /kərdó/ 'made' < CR *kerdó*, *panar* /pəná/ 'to say' < CR *phen-*, *quemeles* /kəmélǝs/ 'you wish' < CR *kam-*, *lubé* /lubé/ 'money (pl.)' < CR *lové*.

- The aspirated stops *kh*, *ph* lose their aspiration.
     Examples: *quer* 'house' < CR *kher*, *puró* 'old' < CR *phuró*.
- *v* and *b* converge on *b*: *barbaló* 'rich' < CR *barvaló*.
- Final voiced consonants become devoiced (*dut* 'light' < CR *dud*), as in Catalan.
- Instability of final *r*: this sound can be dropped, held, or strengthened by the addition of *t*. This reflects the situation of final *r* in Central Catalan, where its loss is usual (*estimar* > /əstimá/), although it is maintained in some words, particularly in monosyllables (*pur*, *llar*, *cor*), and in these instances a *t* can be added (*cor* > *cort*, taken as a colloquial phenomenon):
     Loss of -*r* :
          du 'far' < CR *dur*
     Maintenance:
          quer 'house' < CR *kher*
     Addition of *t* :
          xart /čart/ 'grass' < CR *čar*
          gert /xert/ 'ass' < CR *xer*

3.1.3. A particularly remarkable trait of Vallmitjana's Romani is the abundance of forms with the epenthetic vowel. Leaving aside the cases of epenthesis before *r*- (see above), we find an epenthetic vowel <a> (evidently articulated as a neutral vowel /ə/) before *c* (*atsaló* /əcəló/ 'thick' < CR *thulo*, *atset* /əcét/ 'oil' < CR̥ *dzet*), before geminates (atgat /əggát/ < CR *gat* 'shirt', probably also *adai* 'mother' < CR *daj*, if here the pronunciation /əddáj/ is assumed) and before *č*/*čh* and *dž* (atxivem /əčibém/ 'throw!' < CR (imper.) *čhivén*, atxalar /əč̓əlá/ 'to go' < CR *dža-*).

The panorama is highly complex and is further compounded by Vallmitjana's inconsistent spelling. It clearly merits a more exhaustive assessment, but that goes beyond the scope of this appraisal.

▪ 3.2 Morphology

3.2.1. Nominal morphology:
The Catalan Romani reported by Vallmitjana is a mixed language, a *poggadi chib* or Para-Romani dialect. This means that its inflectional morphology is basically that of Catalan. This is particularly apparent as regards the case system, which has disappeared completely (in fact, it was no longer present seventy years earlier, see below).

However, in common with the Spanish Romani from the age of José Antonio Conde (c. 1800), Vallmitjana's Romani retains the Romani plural endings:

-*ó* stems:	
Singular -*ó*	Plural -*é*
barcó 'sheep' *busnó* 'non-Gypsy man, etc.	*espinré* 'feet', *cremé* 'worms', *espalé* 'testicles', *lubé* 'money (pl.)'

-*i* stems:	
Singular -*i*	Plural -*(j)á*
catçnyí /kəcnjí/ 'hen', *busní* 'non-Gypsy woman', etc.	*catçnyà* /kəcnjá/ 'hens', *gallà* /x²əljá/ 'figs'

Consonant stems:	
Singular -ø	Plural -*(j)á* (femenine)
	espurrià 'bowels', *gerà* 'legs', *trecà* 'raisins', *ucà* 'eyes'
	Plural -ø (+ Catalan -*s*) (masculine)
	bals 'hair (pl.)', *xuquels* 'dogs', *bastas* /bástəs/ 'hands'

Athematic -*o* stems:	
Singular -*u* (m.)	Plural -*i*
batu 'father'	*bobbi* 'beans'

As the above tables show, only in the case of the word *catçnyí* /kəcnjí/ ~ *catçnyà* /kəcnjá/ 'hen ~ hens', do we have singular and plural forms for the same word, but it is clear that Romani plural forms were actively used in Vallmitjana's time. Note for instance the following sentence included in *Sota Montjuïc*: 'Aixís un *juquel* rabiós els *busquini* les *gerà*' "Let's hope a rabid dog bites their legs!", where *gerà* 'legs' appears inflected in Romani (< CR *xer*, pl. *xerâ*). However, other examples such as *mulés* 'the dead' (instead of *mulè*) show the tendency to borrow plural endings from Catalan.

Note also that Vallmitjana offers a further instance of the "law of plurals" as detected in older sources of Catalan Romani as well as in Spanish Romani. As Sentmenat's vocabulary demonstrates (Adiego, 2002), Iberian Romani had a plural zero-ending for masculine consonant stems, an archaism shared with Vlax and Paspati dialects. Both in attested instances

of Catalan and Spanish Romani during the 19th century, these "ending-less" plurals borrowed the plural ending from their respective contact languages (Spanish *-es*, Catalan *-s*), while the rest of Romani plural endings were retained. Despite the dearth of examples, we can conclude that the Catalan Romani spoken in Vallmitjana's time (beginning of the 20th century) maintained this state of affairs.

Less surprising is the survival of the gender distinction between masculine *-ó* and feminine *-í* forms in nouns and substantivized adjectives, since this distinction is still present in current Catalan Caló (*piló / pilí* 'drunken man / woman'). In Vallmitjana we find *xavó / xaví* 'Gypsy boy / maid', *busnó / busní* 'non-Gypsy man / woman', *matsangarnó / matsangarní* 'drunken man / woman'. As for gender concordance in adjectives and participles, I have recorded one sole verifiable example, which at least serves to confirm that it was still alive.[3]

Finally, it is interesting to note a particular feature concerning the formation of plurals: in Vallmitjana, many plural forms show a non-etymological prefix *es-* /əs/-: *espurrià* 'bowels', *espinré* 'feet', *escapsà* 'scissors', *espalé* 'testicles', *escatsam* 'ears', *esparrindé* 'Civil Guard(s)', *esbaluni* 'trousers', as well as many forms without it: *cremé* 'worms', *lubé* 'money', *gatcins* 'children', etc. The number of examples suggests that we can rule out the possibility of an error or misinterpretation on the part of Vallmitjana. A similar phenomenon occurs in Colloquial Catalan (and Spanish) but here it only affects a number of *pluralia tantum* (especially *tisores* 'scissors') as a consequence of a false cut and a subsequent reinterpretation (*les tisores* (pl.) → **l'estisora* (sg.) → *les estisores* (cf. also in Colloquial Spanish: *las tijeras* → **la estijera* → *las estijera*s). What is surprising is the much wider prevalence of the formation in Catalan Romani as reported by Vallmitjana, and the absence of this phenomenon in other sources. However, a brief and little known document on Catalan Romani does report various examples of the same phenomenon. In a list entitled "Dialecte dels *gitanos* catalans" of unknown authorship, published in the *Bolletí del Diccionari de la llengua Catalana* IX, Mallorca, 1916, 164–165, we find such forms as *stiritjá* for 'shoes', *las ascan* for 'the ears' and *escañá* for 'hens' (< CR *tiraxá*, *kan* [note the zero-ending!],

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3   The example is taken from *Sota Montjuïc*, p. 209: "Aquesta que *xinela* molt bon *bani*, la Consuelo" ("This woman – Consuelo – that seems to be very pretty", where the predicate adjective *bom-baní* 'pretty' agrees in gender (feminine) with the subject *aquesta* (this one (f.)).

kahnjá, respectively). Therefore, it is clear that this formation had a certain prevalence, but it is impossible to establish its real impact on Catalan Romani.

3.2.2. Verbal morphology:
In Vallmitjana's Catalan Romani, verbs follow the Catalan inflection. This is a key difference to the Catalan Romani documented in the first half of the 19th century, where the Romani verbal inflection was still in use (see par. 4 below for discussion). The only Romani inflectional form in use in Vallmitjana's work (leaving aside the participle – see below) is the plural imperative ending *-én* (used indistinctly in singular and plural forms): *muquén* (< CR *muk-* 'to leave') 'shut up! (< 'leave it')', *garibén* (< CR *gilav-* 'to sing') 'speak!'.

In Vallmitjana's texts we recognize a trait typical of Catalan (and Spanish) Para-Romani verbal inflection: the construction of most personal forms using the Romani third person singular ending of the present indicative, *-éla*. Only those forms that in Catalan (and Spanish) are derived from the infinitive (the future and conditional), as well as the Romani inherited imperative ending in *-én*, do not show this *-el(a)-* element. We can tentatively reconstruct the following paradigms, although Vallmitjana does not provide all the forms:

Infinitive	
Catalan Romani	Catalan
pən-á(r) 'to say' (= CR *phen-*)	*kənt-ar* 'to sing'

Present		
Catalan Romani	Catalan	Common Romani
pən-él-u	*kánt-u*	*phen-ava*
pən-él-əs	*kánt-əs*	*phen-esa*
pən-él-ə	*kánt-ə*	*phen-ela*
pən-əl-èm	*kənt-èm*	*phen-asa*
pən-əl-èu	*kənt-èu*	*phen-ena*
pən-él-ən	*kánt-ən*	*phen-ena*

Future (= infinitive + future endings)	
Catalan Romani	Catalan
pən-ər-é	*kánt-ər-é*
pən-ər-ás	*kánt-ər-ás*
pən-ər-á	*kánt-ər-á*
pən-ər-èm	*kənt-ər-èm*
pən-ər-èu	*kənt-ər-èu*
pən-ər-án	*kánt-ər-án*

This system of forms with -*el(a)*- vs. forms without -*el(a)*- already shows in Vallmitjana's corpus a clear tendency towards an analogical leveling, so that -*el(a)*- spreads throughout the paradigm. This accounts for such forms as the infinitives *diquelar* 'to see' (< CR *dikh-*), *camelar* 'to love' (< CR *kam-*) or *calelar* 'to make' (< CR *ker-*), all formed with -*el(a)*-. The phenomenon is well attested in current Catalan Romani.

Conversely, there are various forms where the expected -*el(a)*- is in fact missing: *habillo* 'I have', *adinyo* 'I give' (instead of *habillelo, *adinyelo, this latter word also attested in Vallmitjana's corpus in its variant form *dinyelo*). These examples are more difficult to account for (there being no occurrences in modern-day Catalan Romani) and, thus, we cannot rule out the possibility that they were erroneously created by Vallmitjana himself.

As in Spanish Romani (see Adiego, 2005: 73), in Catalan Romani we find that some verbs present two fully interchangeable stems, one coming from the Romani present stem, and the other from the Romani preterite stem. This trait is also observable in Vallmitjana's works: the most extreme example is the verb 'to give', which retains only the preterit stem, as it does in Spanish Romani and in current Catalan Romani: *adinyar*, from CR preterite stem *d-inj-*.[4] Other examples: *uribinyar* 'to weep' vs. *uribela* '(s)he weeps' (< CR preterite **rov-inj-* (?)[5] vs. present *rov(el)-*), *habillar* /əbiljá/ 'to have' vs. *valar* /(ə)bəlá/ 'to come' (< CR preterite *av-il-* vs. present *av(el)-*).

Finally, in the case of the participle Vallmitjana offers very interesting information about the evolution undergone by Catalan Romani: in his vocabulary he provides two Romani equivalences for the Catalan participle *fet* ('done, made'): '*Carat* or *Cardó*', i.e., the Romani inherited participle (<

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4   In the Catalan Romani of the first half of the 19th century the present stem was still in use alive, see Ackerley (1914–15).

5   Analogical on *d-inj-*?

CR *ker-dó*) and a participle inflected according to Catalan (*carat*, like *cantat*, from *cantar* 'to sing'). Elsewhere in Vallmitjana's texts we also detect this concurrence of formations: *han adinyat* ('they have given'), *hem carat* ('we have done') vs. *està cardó* ('it is done'), *estic nagatdó* ('I have had it then', literally 'I am lost'). In present-day Romani Catalan, the participle inherited from Romani seems to have been replaced as a verbal category by the Catalan formation, and it only survives in a number of fossilized forms as pure adjectives (ex. *pəngərdó* 'worn-out').

3.2.3. Pronominal Morphology:
There are virtually no Romani-inherited pronouns present in Vallmitjana's corpus: the only Romani pronoun to occur is the first person personal pronoun *manguis* 'I', which appears: i) as the subject in sentences such as *manguis vull panarho* 'I want to say it' (*panar* < CR *phen*-); and ii) when governed by the preposition *de* 'of' to indicate possession (*la rumí de manguis* 'my wife' [literally: 'the wife of me']).

The remaining pronouns occurring in the corpus are always *Catalan* pronouns: demonstratives: (*aquest*, *aqueix*); possessives (*meu*, *teu*, *mos*), and the indefinite (*res*). The articles are also of Catalan origin (*el*, *la*, *un*, *una*, etc.).

This contrasts with the Catalan Romani documents from the first half of the 19th century as edited by Ackerley (1914–15), where not only personal, possessive and demonstrative pronouns but even the definite and indefinite articles are Romani.[6]

■ 3.3 Syntax

Vallmitjana's most important contribution to our understanding of Catalan Romani as it was spoken at the very beginning of the 20th century is undoubtedly the sentences and brief texts that he included in his Appendix to *Sota Montjuïc*. These sentences and texts give a strong impression of authenticity. The Catalan Romani that they reveal to us is one of a strictly mixed language, in which the inflectional morphology – with the exception of plural forms (see above) – and function words are Catalan, while the vocabulary is Romani. The following provides a good example of this (underlining – indicating Romani words and lexemes – is mine):

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6   For the indefinite article, the Romani numeral 'one' (*yekh*) was used as well as the Catalan form, see Ackerley (1914–15: 110).

—Vols <u>purravà</u>'l <u>gras</u> amb la <u>catçnyí</u>?
—No <u>camel</u>o <u>purravà</u>. Si la vols <u>quinà</u>, te <u>dinyaré</u> <u>l'asnó</u>.
—Per quan me l'<u>adinyaras</u>?
—Per <u>pap barí</u>.
—<u>Ginetl</u>o <u>butet</u>.

Vallmitjana offers the following translation of this dialogue: "–Vols cambiar el cavall amb l'euga?" "–No desitjo cambiar. Si vols comprar, et vendré l'ase." "–Per quant m'el daras?" "–Per vuit duros." "–Em demanes massa." ("Do you wish to exchange the horse for the mare? – "No, I don't wish to make an exchange. If you wish to buy her [= the mare], I'll sell you the donkey". "For how much will you give him [= the donkey] to me?" "For eight *duros*." "You ask too much").

This example is highly illustrative since the translation provided by Vallmitjana contains an obvious error: he translates the sentence *Si la vols quinà, te dinyaré l'asnó* as "If you wish to buy her [= the mare], I'll sell you the donkey", i.e., he interprets *l'asnó* to mean 'the donkey', undoubtedly influenced by the Spanish word *asno* meaning 'donkey'. But it seems quite sure that here *l'asnó* does not mean 'the donkey' (there is no parallel for this surprising loanword in Catalan Romani from Spanish); rather, we are dealing with the adjective *lasnó* meaning 'cheap', present in other Romani dialects, and attested in another source of Catalan Romani (Lagunas, 2000). The correct meaning of this part of the dialogue should therefore be: "If you wish to buy her, I will give her to you cheaply." Somewhat paradoxically, Vallmitjana's mistake serves to endorse the authenticity and reliability of his data: it is evident that in this case Vallmitjana was meticulous in his recording of a lively dialogue between two Gypsies, although he failed to understand its meaning fully.

∎ 4 Vallmitjana's corpus and the rise of a mixed language

I wish to conclude this initial appraisal of Vallmitjana's work with a provisional assessment of its importance for the history of Catalan Romani and, more generally, for the on-going debate concerning the rise of mixed languages.

Vallmitjana's work fills the gap between the first recorded details of Catalan Romani during the first half of the 19th century, in particular the data furnished by Jaubert de Réart in 1835, and the current state of Catalan Romani, made known thanks to the fieldwork carried out by Jean-Paul Escudero and myself at the end of the 20th century.

It is generally assumed that 19th century Catalan Romani, as reflected in Jaubert de Réart and other sources of that time, was not yet a mixed language, insofar as it retained Romani verb inflections and pronouns and Romani endings to express the number and gender of nouns and adjectives, while only the oblique cases of the nominal declension had been completely replaced by the use of (mostly) Catalan prepositions (see Ackerley, 1914–15).[7] Conversely, today's Catalan Romani presents the typical traits of a mixed language: no traces of Romani inflection are evident either in pronominal or in verbal forms. The inflectional morphology is fully Catalan, and only the gender opposition *-ó* / *í* seems to remain functional – a faint echo of Romani inflectional endings.

Between the earliest attestations and the most recent, Vallmitjana's Catalan Romani seems to occupy an intermediate phase. The most important features are, without doubt, the maintenance of Romani plurals and, to a lesser extent, the use of Romani-inherited participles alongside Catalan forms. This evidence seems to indicate that the rise of the current Para-Romani dialect has been a slow process. Unlike Angloromani, for which an abrupt creation is claimed by some scholars on the basis of certain sources of evidence (cf. Bakker, 2000), the data available for Catalan Romani suggests a more gradual evolution as follows (where the dates are approximate):

(1) Loss of oblique cases, replaced by prepositions (prior to first attestations)
   ↓
(2) Loss of verbal inflection (between 1850 and 1900)
   ↓
(3) Loss of noun plural inflection (after 1900)

Further research is needed, but the initial impression is that the rise of the Para-Romani dialect of the Catalan Gypsies was the result of a gradual borrowing of inflectional endings and function words from Catalan, rather than a sudden relexification of Catalan through Romani loanwords.

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7   There are a number of examples of the use of *Romani* prepositions as opposed to Catalan forms in Ackerley's collection. Apart from a couple of examples in a translation of the *Pater Noster* into Catalan Romani (Ackerley, 1914–15: 117), in a sentence collected by Bataillard in Pont Roig (Perpignan) in 1850 which Ackerley incomprehensibly omits from his article, we can detect the presence of the Romani preposition *kaj* used for introducing an indirect object: *Dignum ia baridini kai busno* 'je jette une pierre au bourgeois', literally: "I gave (*dinj-om*) a stone to the non-Gypsy man" (I found Bataillard's manuscript in the Bataillard Gypsy Collection held in Manchester Central Library).

∎ 5 Conclusion

In this paper I have presented an initial appraisal of the Catalan Romani materials contained in the work of the Catalan writer Juli Vallmitjana. The importance of these materials for our understanding of Catalan Romani should not be underestimated, particularly if we consider the dearth of documents about this Romani/Para-Romani dialect. Here, I have dealt with only a part of this documentation, focusing on some of the more interesting findings to be drawn from it. I leave for future study an analysis of the entire corpus. ∎

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◼ Vallmitjana's "Catalan Gypsy" works

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Resum: L'escriptor català Juli Vallmitjana i Colomines (1873–1937) va fer un ample ús dels gitanos catalans com a tema d'algunes de les seves obres dramàtiques i novel·les. És evident que va tenir un contacte molt estret amb els gitanos i que d'aquest contacte va sorgir un interès pel caló català, la llengua romaní de Catalunya. Va inserir mots en caló a les seves obres dramàtiques, i mots i diàlegs a la seva novel·la *Sota Montjuïc*. Per be que tot això constitueixi una font interessant per a aquesta llengua, la seva principal aportació és la important llista de mots i frases inclosa com a apèndix a la primera edició de *Sota Montjuïc*. Tots aquests materials no han estat analitzats en profunditat fins ara: al seu estudi sobre romaní català, Frederick George Ackerley només va tenir en compte alguns mots en caló que apareixen a una obra de Vallmitjana.

Vallmitjana és pràcticament l'única font que omple el buit entre els primers documents escrits del romaní català (a la primera meitat del segle XIX) i els testimoniatges actuals d'aquest dialecte, ara a punt d'extingir-se. En aquest article ofereix una primera valoració de tots aquests materials recollits per l'escriptor català.◼

Summary: The Catalan writer Juli Vallmitjana i Colomines (1873–1937) made extensive use of Catalan Gypsies as the topic of some of his plays and novels. It is clear that he had close contact with Gypsy people, and that this contact resulted in an interest for the Romani speech of Catalonia (*caló català*). He introduced Caló words in dramatic works, and words and dialogues in his novel *Sota Montjuïc*, which constitutes an interesting source of this language, but his chief contribution is a remarkable list of words and phrases in an appendix on Caló català that was included in the first edition of *Sota Montjuïc*. All these materials have not been analyzed in depth until now: In his study on

Catalan Romani, Frederick George Ackerley only accounts for some Caló words contained in a work of Vallmitjana.

Vallmitjana is practically the only source for filling the gap between the earliest written sources of Catalan Romani (in the first half of the 19th century) and the present attestations of this dialect, now on the verge of extinction. In this paper, I offer a first appraisal of all these Romani materials recorded by the Catalan writer. [Keywords: Catalan Romani; Catalan Gypsies; Romani language; Gypsy language] ∎