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The Romani People in the European Cultural Imagination: Alexander Pushkin, Prosper Mérimée and Virginia Woolf

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The Romani People in the European Cultural Imagination: Alexander Pushkin, Prosper Mérimée and Virginia Woolf

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Dedication

To the one who ignited the love of literature in my heart and gave me a new pair of eyes to see the world in its various colors…to the one who taught me never to let borders limit my compassion and solidarity…to the one who believed in me more than anyone else and more than myself, to my teacher and friend, Refaat Alareer.

Of thine impenetrable Spirit,
Which Earth and Heaven could not convulse,
A mighty lesson we inherit:
Thou art a symbol and a sign

His wretchedness, and his resistance,
And his sad unallied existence:
To which his Spirit may oppose
Itself—and equal to all woes,
And a firm will, and a deep sense,
Which even in torture can descry
Its own concenter'd recompense,
Triumphant where it dares defy,
And making Death a Victory.

Prometheus
Lord Byron

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Abstract

Scholarly literature on Roma is scarce compared to other racial groups as it has been constrained by a lack of academic interest, financial limitations, and other social and political factors. This resulted in a cross-cultural circulation of misinformation about Romani people and the reproduction of Romani myths and stereotypes in fiction. This project aims to analyze selected literary works on Gypsies from three Eastern and Western European countries and two periods to unpack the cultural and political roots of Romani literary misrepresentation. This research employs a range of theoretical frameworks chosen to put the Gypsy protagonists under maximum spotlight without unnecessary repetition, such as social contract theories, new historicism, criminology, symptomatic reading, Orientalism/ Gypsylorism, and psychoanalysis. The research findings show that literature plays an essential role in suppressing marginalized narratives about Romanies. Literature also makes it more challenging to debunk misinformation about the group as its influence creates a fixed stereotypical image in the mind of the non-Romani recipient. The research concludes that Gypsies in literature have been associated with colonized nations, and the place (setting) plays a major role in racializing Gypsies, thus facilitating their sexualization and exoticisation. The employment of the Gypsy symbol in literature shows the flexibility of the symbol as it fits into political, social, and gender contexts and is used as a tool for criticism and self-exploration.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Roma[1] is a substantial European minority that forms one of the largest "native" minorities in the region, with a population of 12 million today (Dunajeva 6). The issue of the Romani people is considered a central European problem. The ongoing discrimination and marginalization of Roma are reflected in their continuously deteriorating socio-economic status, as they are considered the poorest minority in Europe (McGarry 4). While the native land of Roma has not been unanimously agreed upon in the scholarly fields, traces of them in European myths and legends date back to the Middle Ages. The ambiguity of their origin led Europeans to form various theories to explain the "sudden" appearance of Romanies in their countries. For example, since they arrived in England in the early 16th century, they were thought to be from Egypt due to their dark complexion, and in central European countries, they were thought to be Hebrew. Only in the late 18th century, this was changed as new linguistic evidence proved them to be from India, with which a wave of new stereotypical portrayals and exoticization of Romanies started. They became present and influential in 18th-century print and literature, where they were stereotypically portrayed as ugly, unclean, untrustworthy, criminal, primitive, and freedom-loving Indian beggars. They are usually shown to have unique talents like fortune-telling, the ability to heal, and dancing and singing. In less hostile terms, the Gypsy figure was seen as the opposite of the socially and politically rooted and defined self. This enabled writers who wished to let go of their restricting imposed identities to utilize Roma as an emblem of their escapism. The sexuality of the Romani woman is another interesting focus or rather a recurring theme in European gypsy fiction.

[1] Different names have been used to refer to Romas or Romani like gypsies, Tsigany, Sinti, Zingari, bohemians, travelers, and nomads among others. In my thesis, I will use the word Romani when I provide my own analysis or when I talk about theoretical works because Romani people consider other more commonly used names offensive, but I will use the word gypsy when talking about the three fictional works to retain the word used by the authors and to retain its intentional negative implication. However, the etymology of different names is not a concern of this thesis.

Despite generally viewing Roma as ugly, some authors like Mérimée, Pushkin, Hugo, and Gorky, among others, focus on the unparalleled beauty and the uncontrollable sexuality of the Romani woman that seduces a non-Romani man only to lead him to his doom along with her. English authors like Arnold, George Eliot, and Woolf regarded the Romanies as a symbol of gender heterodoxy, femininity, unconventional masculinity, and sexual ambiguity.

This four-chapter thesis discusses the representation of the Romani people, commonly known as Gypsies, in three selected texts from European literature: Alexander Pushkin's poem *The Gypsies* (1827), Prosper Mérimée's novella *Carmen* (1845), and Virginia Woolf's novel *Orlando*[2]. Chapter One explores the race-making of Romanies, who became the Oriental other within Europe. It discusses early Gypsylorist publications that created a fixed fairytale-like image of Romani culture in light of Edward Said's and Ken Lee's theories. Chapter two offers two readings of Pushkin's poem, a philosophical one using Hobbesian and Rousseauian social contract ideas to unpack the deeper implications of associating Gypsies with the state of nature and portraying them as antagonistic to the state apparatus. This is followed by a New Historical reading that brings to the surface suppressed narratives about Gypsy enslavement, hence dismantling the false Russian national image of inclusiveness and military might. Chapter three uses racial criminology theories and symptomatic reading to show how the Gypsy figure in *Carmen* and *Orlando* has been used as a catalyst for the androgynous female sexuality and how Gypsy femininity disturbs the symbolic order by highlighting inconsistencies within it. Chapter four builds on and expands ideas presented throughout the project by bringing together the three literary texts to discuss the importance of choosing Eastern oriental settings (Bessarabia, Andalusia, and Ottoman Empire) in further

[2] While the genres of the three works differ, the focus will be on shared thematic elements related to the portrayal of the Romani people. When introducing the texts, I will include a brief overview of the history behind the texts and highlight some of the autobiographical elements in them. This will serve the purpose of differentiating between representing Romanies based on personal encounters, like in the case of Pushkin, and on the already existing stereotype, as in the case of Mérimée and Woolf.

othering the Romani figure by associating it with already-colonized nations. Then, it expands the influence of orientalizing Gypsies on the relationships between Gypsy women and non-Gypsy men. It uses femme fatales and the masculine split-self concepts to present the consequences of orientalizing and exoticizing Gypsy women who either disappear or are murdered by the end of the plot. The thesis is divided the way it is to allocate the most attention to the particular story of each Gypsy protagonist without being repetitive or giving more attention to particular elements of the Gypsy identity at the expense of others. This theoretical blend helps demonstrate how anthropological, historical, political, and literary discourses on race are intertwined. For example, it presents in chapter one, the works of Gypsylorists like George Borrow and the misinformation it spreads then shows in the application how influential his work was in the case of Orientalising and sexualizing Gypsies in the three literary works.

Scholarly literature on Roma in racial studies is scarce compared to other racial groups. Since Romanies have a visible presence in many European countries and have, in each country, interacted distinctively with the local culture, the literature available on Gypsies in fiction is not comparative. It mostly focuses on one region or two geographically close regions. This project brings together works from three different European cultures and, by doing so, highlights the universality of the (stereotypical) perception of Roma as an ethnic group. It shows the impact of the particular regional contexts in the construction of the Gypsy in literature. It also combines works from two time periods (the 19th and the 20th centuries), showing how the representation of Gypsies was influenced by other changes within the cultural and social contexts. In the 19th century, Gypsies were utilized in political discourses for purposes of criticism by creating a contrast between innocence (nature) and the state apparatus. In the 20th century, Gypsyism was more influential in the realm of the personal and the private (gender, sexuality, and self-exploration). My project shows how anthropological,

historical, and literary discourses on race are intertwined. For example, it demonstrates how the misinformation that was spread by anthropologists and Gypsylorists traveled to literature, where it was reproduced centuries later. This research employs both English and Russian references with my own translation, which will be useful for non-Russian-speaking researchers interested in the area as I found there is a general lack of use of Russian references in research available in English despite Roma being an important ethnic group in Russia and Eastern Europe as a whole.

Chapter 2 : Roma: A Product of the White Fantasy

2.1. Introduction

The 18th century marked the beginning of a pivotal advancement in racial studies in general and in Romani studies in particular. The decline of the influence of biblical genealogies in favor of the scientific empirical method, which became influential in the Enlightenment era, inspired young scholars to carry out research on previously neglected ethnic groups. Around this time, Romanies became, for the first time, a distinct racial group that carried Indian roots and language within the European territories. The 18th century is a relatively late starting point for research on Romanies, considering that early documentation of the group in Europe goes back at least four centuries prior. Still, the newly emerging research was primarily based on inaccurate sources that were influenced by prevailing stereotypes and have consequently influenced the reinforcement of them and the creation of new ones. Until today, while being one of the most significant "native" minorities in Europe with a population of 12 million (Dunajeva 6), research on Romanies remains scarce and, to a high degree, still echoes the misrepresentations of 18th-century publications.

Despite being a minority, Roma has a notable cultural presence in Western and Eastern Europe. Romani vibrant singers, dancers, and literary characters left a lasting mark on the artistic and musical landscape of Europe. Therefore, it is essential to study this cultural influence in light of the ongoing marginalization and discrimination against Roma by unpacking the process of Romani race-making, identity construction, and ethnic categorization. Roma is an enriching case study of the construction and reproduction of group boundaries, the provisional nature of territorial space, and the fluidity of identity and culture. That is because they provide a unique example of an ethnic group that maintains a dynamic identity and lifestyle that enabled it to survive in different regions across Western and Eastern

Europe. They have shown and continue to show impressive adaptation skills that allow them to survive in various economic and political regimes, languages, and cultures. They successfully alternate between nomadism and sedentarism for survival but refused to fully assimilate with either other more traditional nomads or sedentary people. This resulted in considering Roma as part of the establishment and not part of it at the same time.

This chapter will trace the history of constructing Roma as a race with reference to Ken Lee's concept of 'epistemic violence,' which is the intentional misrepresentation of the group in research for purposes of exoticization and othering (*Belated* 32). It will also cover the different approaches to Romani identity construction and the larger impact these constructions have on Roma. Then, the discussion will move to an overview of early Gypsylorist[3] publications of Grellman, Borrow, and the Gypsy Lore Society that claimed to rely on scientific evidence to define and explain the Romani people and culture as an oriental racial group within Europe with its roots going back to India. Finally, it will cover Judith Okely's alternative theories that aimed at deconstructing the Gypsylorists' narratives. This chapter will function as a precursor to my discussion of the literary texts in the following chapters. It aims to present the roots of the stereotypes that we will later see in the Gypsy protagonists. It will also allow us to understand the origin of the positive and negative portrayals of Gypsies by presenting the interconnectedness of history, anthropology, and literature. Finally, situating the Romani studies within their historical context will allow us to better understand the influence Gypsyism had on movements like Romanticism and Lesbianism in literature.

[3] Gypsylorists are scholars who write about Romani-related matters. Gypsylorism and Gypsylorist are simulations of Orientalism and Orientalists used to talk about Orientalism within Europe.

2.2. Race-making

The word ‘Gypsy’ tends to evoke two specific and contrasting images in the mind of its hearer: a romantic image of innocence and a demonized image of social outcasts. Based on the former, the ‘Gypsy’ is imagined to live in a rural encampment and lead a carefree life where men take care of the cattle, the women are dressed in colorful skirts and cook in the open fire, and naked children run around the camp. The other image is of the deceitful criminal Gypsy who lives in the city's margins and disrupts order. The men are smugglers, and the women are seductive young ladies or old fortune tellers. The social and political historian David Mayall argues in his book *Gypsy Identities 1500–2000* that there are plenty of sources that can be used to back up the various contradicting arguments made about Romanies. This creates the impression that whatever narrative a person adopts regarding Roma is scientifically and academically valid (3). But who are the Romanies, and how was their racial/ ethnic identity constructed?

Romani presence dates back to the 13th century in Eastern Europe and the 15th century in Western Europe (Lee 1). Since their initial arrival, they have been given different names often associated with far-away geographical regions. In England, they were Egyptians. In France, they were Bohemians; in Scandinavia, Tatares, and so on (Okely 63). These were attempts to put Roma in a particular racial group, even if unintentionally. The Romanies’ differences in appearance, behavior, and lifestyle made them enigmatic to the common Europeans, who resorted to folkloristic fables to explain this ambiguous group of people. Thus, Romanies gradually entered the realm of folktales and remained the subject of unsupported theories until the 18th century, when scholars made multiple attempts to explain the existence of Romanies in Europe and their origin allegedly with scientific reasoning. The following paragraphs will explore the concept of race and race-making in the case of the Roma to pave the way for later sections that discuss Romani race theories.

Starting from the eighteenth century, there was a growing interest in origins and the notion that every group of people had shared physiological features, behavioral attitudes, and a homeland. 'Race,' a word that used to loosely refer to the generational lineage, particularly in royal families, started gaining new, more fixed connotations influenced by religious, social, and political changes, as Ivan Hannaford explains (5). He argues that the French and American Revolutions, in addition to the social upheavals that followed, made the understanding of race as part of a people's identity ingrained in people's understanding of the world and themselves (6). Moreover, Benedict Anderson shows how the religious upheavals and the rise of the mechanically reproduced printing press, enabled by the rise of capitalism, allowed the creation and the dissimulation of a national print language (37). The standard local dialects that appeared in the printed materials as a replacement for Latin brought people together, creating a sense of oneness or 'nationhood' between inhabitants of a single community, which Anderson referred to as *Imagined Communities.* While Anderson used the word "nation," not "race," his argument adds to the understanding of how particular shared characteristics enabled different communities to think of themselves as one group different from others. Nancy Stepan notes that "The word 'race' was given a great variety of meanings in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries. It was used to refer to cultural, religious, national, linguistic, ethnic, and geographical groups of human beings" (xvii). Interestingly, she shows that some groups, like the 'Jews,' the 'Celts,' the 'Irish' and the 'Chinese' among many others, were considered separate races due to the shared characteristics each of them had (xvii).

Likewise, the eighteenth century was also the time the Romanies were believed to be a separate race. Some initial attempts to prove the origin of Romanies aimed at proving that the already-existing categorizations like Egyptians or Bohemians are factual using science. For example, Blumenbach, regarded as the father of anthropology, legitimized the Egyptian

origin theory, which was widespread in England, by arguing that the Romani skulls have shared features with those of the ancient Egyptians (Williams 40-41). But in reality, as Mayall argues, he relied on biblical stories in Ezekiel that prophesied the removal of Egyptians from their homeland, "I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations and will disperse them through the countries" (Ezekiel, xxix, 12 and xxx, 23 qtd. in Mayall 127). Other attempts aimed at searching for a resemblance between the European Romanies and other non-European nations in hopes of locating their land of origin. The most famous example of this is Heinrich Grellman's Indian origin theory (1783), which was based on a comparative linguistic analysis of the Romani language and some Indian dialects. Grellman's theory became quickly influential in scholarly and literary circles alike, and it had the most impact on formulating the racial identity of the Romani people.

Nevertheless, there is more to 'race' than a mere innocent attempt to classify people. Karen and Barbara Fields show that race is not an inherent element of human biology like breathing and reproduction, nor is it an independent concept or idea like the speed of light; it is, in fact, a socially constructed ideology that was crafted at a historical moment for historically understandable reasons (121). Similarly, Holt argues that "'race' inheres neither in biology nor in culture but must be summoned to consciousness by encounters in social space and historical time" (6). Once it was agreed upon in scholarly fields that race is a social construct, scholars like Du Bois, among others, tried to outline the reasons that contributed to race-making and how race can be un-made. Holt provides a list of these attempts, which include resorting to scientific facts to educate ignorant white people, psychological reasoning in addition to theories of economic exploitation and fear of competition and capitalism, which he believes have failed to give a full account for race creation even if studied in combination. In the American context, the racial image of the African other was created in the mind of the white person through "a thousand details, anecdotes, stories" (Holt 2). This makes any

confrontation between them a traumatic experience for the black person whose identity is created and fixed in the mind of the non-black other before even being given a chance to live and choose one's own self and meaning (Holt 2). Race-making is also when the person of color starts looking at him or herself through the eyes of the other and adjusting their person to fit into the environment of contempt all around (Du Bois 3). The Fields give multiple good examples to help us think of race-making as an ideology by showing how racial categories can actually change based on political changes. For instance, in 1987, the American Supreme Court was considering whether Jews and Arab Americans could become eligible to seek relief under civil rights law for acts of discrimination against them by asking whether they qualify for the distinct "Caucasian" racial group, which was the only eligible racial group to seek relief (Fields & Fields 114).

The formulation of Romani's racial identity happened over time. It depended on a wide range of sources ranging from language, myths, misconceptions, rumors, plays, poems, and fine art, among others, that found their way to the common mind. When academics started documenting their perception of Roma as a race, they focused on notions of non-European origin, distinct language, behavioral and cultural differences, occupations, and, most importantly, physiological features (Mayall 125). The following paragraphs are paraphrases of different sections from Mayall's chapter "Constructing the true Romany" that show the various aspects of the Romani racial identity, primarily their physical appearance, customs, manners, behavioral patterns, and mindset as were perceived by the non-Romani other. The remainder of this section will also show that it is not necessary for every person classified as Romani to possess all the features and that a lot of the features mentioned can actually apply to non-Romanies. In addition, it will demonstrate how, especially after the Indian origin theory was established, particular Romani racial features were essentialized, like speaking the "real Romani" tongue and practicing fortune telling that created and

reinforced the Romani as an exotic other. This idea will be more thoroughly discussed in later sections.

First, the distinct physiological constructed image covers all physical features that are visibly noticeable, like their olive-colored skin, black hair, dark eyes with long eyelashes, thin curled lips, white teeth, and pale cheeks (Mayall 132). More specific studied details include the shape of the head (long), limbs (small), and their average height (5 feet 4.9 inches). Interestingly, recurring attention was given to the eyes or the 'Gypsy gaze' with adjectives such as mysterious, piercing, or unexplainable aura. Distinct descriptions were given of Romani women. They were described as gorgeous, black-haired with arched nostrils, well-formed shoulders, and high-spirited movements (133). The Romani unique style of dressing is also emphasized. Women, in particular, go for distinct, colorful skirts and kerchiefs, perfectly fitting the oriental Indian narrative. While men's clothes are not as colorful, they still stand out with slouch hats, velveteen jackets with silver buttons, and corduroy pants (133).

Secondly, the Romani people were distinguished by their culture and customs preserved over centuries. Under the umbrella of culture, Romani language, occupations, folktales, music, rituals, taboos, marriage, divorce, death, and burial traditions were studied with attempts to trace all these practices to their 'original' Indian roots. Romanies were famous for their sorcery and fortune-telling skills. It was commonly believed that the Romani ritualistic beliefs regulated their life in its totality (Mayall 134). Published in 1891, Charles Leland's book *Gypsy Sorcery* presented a collection of the different Romani customs and their implications, with particular attention to witch-doctoring and love-philtering, demonstrating one of many examples that helped formulate the exotic image. Marriage rituals included jumping over a broomstick to legalize the marriage, displaying nakedness, and sacrificing a horse were reflective signs of divorce (134). Burial traditions included

incinerating the deceased's belongings and abandoning the habits practiced by the dead person by the family members, pouring ale over the grave, among others (134).

However, what generated the greatest intrigue and captured the most curiosity was the Romani system of taboos, especially those connected to female sexuality and the contamination concept. All aspects associated with femininity were encompassed within the Romani/ Indian code of behavior, like preparing food, washing clothes, and even long hair and menstruation (Mayall 134). The codes of behavior included instructions on what can be touched and done by a menstruating woman. For example, in the event that a menstruating woman crossed a stream, the whole family would need to relocate their camp, for the water was instantly considered contaminated (134). The same applied to food preparation, so food was immediately deemed inedible when a menstruating woman cooked or touched it. During childbirth, the woman was physically isolated from her family and the entirety of the camp.

Romani racial representations usually also included statements about their private codes of political organization. They rejected the rules and laws of the establishment and favored their own internal systems of governance, which were also occasionally exoticized and linked to Indian origin (Mayall 135). Evocative depictions of their dark, remote, and enigmatic gatherings were provided.

The construction of a racial Romani identity also includes associating certain “typical occupations” to the group as part of their customs and traditions. Romanies are thought to have sought occupations that suited their physical features and attitudes as nomads (Mayall 135). Romani's temperament made them resist steady jobs that require being subservient to a master. They are freedom-loving people who value their independence and refuse any type of imposed authority. Romanies were said to be naturally inclined entertainers, and their musical and dancing abilities were inherited from their Indian ancestry (135). The association of Romanies with performance skills and outstanding dancing and musical abilities has deep

historical roots in the sixteenth century or even before they performed as court entertainers in England and elsewhere. Mayall comments that what is important in forming a persistent racial identity is not the Romani musicianship as such but that it was portrayed to be innate to the group, revealed to us through their performances as wild, vibrant, rhythmic, impulsive, and spontaneous (135).

Mayall's collection of Romani racial characteristics offers a concise synopsis of the perception of Roma in the common European mind. Still, it also shows how most of the recorded characteristics focus on what makes the Romani different and *exotic.* This point will be useful in Ken Lee's discussion on 'epistemic violence' and Okely's discussion on the lack of objective documentation of the Romani life and culture, which will be covered in later sections of this chapter. For example, the Indian roots in the Romani language have occupied great space in all Romani-related discussions for the precise purpose of connecting Roma as a group racially to India. This essentialization closed the door for other significant potential discussions related to the use of language as a survival mechanism, a secret code used in times of persecution that thrived in places and times of inhumane treatment and decayed when the Romani difference was received with less hostility.

2.3. The Four Faces of the Romani Identity

After scholars established that Roma is a distinct racial or *ethnic* group, it became essential to draw boundaries to determine who exactly qualifies to be a member of this group and who does not. In his chapter "Alternative Faces of the Gypsy," Mayall presents a fourfold classification system to summarize the criteria different scholars put in order to define the limits of the Romani identity. He uses the word 'face' for each identity category: the racial face, the socio-economic face, the ethnocentric face, and the ethnic-cultural face. This concise classification system not only helps us see the Romani identity from different

perspectives but also how the contradictions between and within them reflect how fluid the concept of identity is, even when chosen or limited by outsiders.

First, the Racial face/ identity, frequently referred to as the 'real,' 'true blood,' and 'pure' Gypsies, relies on the Indian origin theory to explain the Romani difference or otherness (Mayall 6). This understanding of the Romani identity focuses on the group's physiological features like skin, hair, eye color, and facial and body features. This portrayal also focuses on the group's behavioral patterns, lifestyle, and cultural practices with reference to the heredity theory to justify the continuity of these behaviors and practices (6). For example, nomadism is regarded as a characteristic passed literally through blood from one generation to the next (6). The Romani language, with its distinct Indian roots, is also of importance to this reading of the Romani identity as it provides a universal brotherhood that unites all Romanies together. Basing the identity on a single 'race' puts all Romanies in one category with a worldwide uniting identity, regardless of the location within Europe and possibly outside it (6). This perception of Gypsies became widespread starting in the late eighteenth century when the Indian origin theory was introduced and persisted to this day. Imagining the Gypsies as a pure race opens the door to perceiving them as a rare species that preserved its culture and genetics at all costs. For example, in 1974, Henwood published a book titled *The Secret of the Gypsies,* a pure-bred race that originated in India that has traveling 'in their bones.' She says, "In the midst of our materialistic, fast-moving twentieth century, they are amazingly loyal to their old traditions and ways of life, following occupations and customs originating over a thousand years ago." (9).

The second socioeconomic face takes nomadism as the defining characteristic of Gypsysim (Mayall 7). Mayall notes that this understanding adopts the word 'gypsy' instead of 'Gypsy' or 'Romani,' referring to social outcasts of low socioeconomic status at the edge of poverty and criminality who choose to take the road (7). Thus, what gypsies, according to

this understanding, have in common is their lifestyle rather than a particular shared origin or history. This face is less common and attractive to researchers than the racial face (Mayall 7).

The third is the ethnocentric face that many contemporary Gypsy scholars and activists adopted, like Ian Hancock and Thomas Acton (Mayall 7). This classification is similar to the racial perspective in its focus on the Indian origin and preservation of the language and culture. However, what sets this perspective apart from the racial is its refusal to accept the idea of static, unchanging physiological, behavioral, and cultural qualities (Mayall 7). It also significantly moves from the racial classification of the concept of the pure-blooded race in its acceptance of diversity within the group while not rejecting the ethnic minority status (7). Being modern and more accepting, this approach gives prominence to the history of oppression and persecution this group has faced for the past two centuries until today, peaking with being victims of the Holocaust (7). Both the racial and ethnocentric approaches make parallels between the Jewish and Romani histories and identities, where persecution and harassment helped create a shared history.

It is important to note how the differences between the racial and ethnocentric faces impact the created image in the mind of the receiver about Romanies as a group. We can say that the foundational difference in influence is that, unlike the former, the latter face does not essentialize and, therefore, does not exoticize Romanies. The racial face essentializes the Indian roots and explains all other aspects of the Romani identity through the Indian lens. Meanwhile, the ethnocentric face, while not denying the visible linguistic similarities between the Romani tongue and some Indian dialects, it also accepts the dynamic nature of the Romani character. The ethnocentric face acknowledges that Roma has existed in Europe for centuries and formed its identity within a European cultural scene that was influenced by them and has influenced them. This decentralization of the Indian roots allows perceiving

Roma in a more realistic light and consequently in a more human light. We can say that it takes the Romani from the land of exotic fairytales into the real world.

The last face of the Gypsy is the ethnic/cultural, which weaves together elements from the socioeconomic approach in that it considers nomadism a defining feature and the ethnocentric face in that it highlights the cultural and historical distinctiveness of the group (Mayall 7). The British social anthropologist Judith Okely is considered the primary advocate of this approach (7). She argues, "No criterion interpreted from the outside provides a satisfactory method of identifying Gypsies, whether it be country of origin, race, language, occupation or general culture" (Okely, *Gypsy Identity* 28). Alternatively, she contends that the criteria for definition should be derived from the internal perspective of the Gypsies themselves, especially that for Gypsies themselves, the question of origin does not bear great significance. Thus, aside from nomadism, she regards language, ideology, rituals, and nature of occupation as secondary in the understanding of the identity of the Gypsy (Mayall 7).

While each of the four approaches aimed at answering the question of who the Romanies were, they ended up leaving plenty of unanswered concerns. The racial face creates a seemingly worldwide uniting identity. Still, it strictly requires 'pure blood' and the use of the Romani tongue, but what about interracial, light-skinned, and non-Romani-speaking Romanies? What about outsiders who, for generations, lived in the Romani encampments and shared their lifestyle and culture? While the ethnocentric approach answers some of these questions, its reliance on the linguistic Indian roots ignoring the roots found of other languages in the Romani dialects like Greek, for example, and the voices of Romanies like Konrad Bercovici who warn of the replacement of syllabus and letters in Romani words to make them closer in resemblance to words of Indian roots (Mayall 131). Similarly, the socioeconomic and ethnic/cultural approaches create confusion in their reliance on nomadism as a definitive trait of the Romani identity. They fail to address the fact that

there are Romanies who settle down. Do they cease being Romani in that case, and what would they become then? Do they return to being Romani if they resume nomadism? Mayall's word choice is useful here because while one's 'face' is -or part of- one's identity, the face can also be an external mask, put on and off depending on various factors, especially that in these classifications, the face is even given to Romanies by outsiders.

The remaining sections of this chapter will discuss in more detail the racial face by taking a brief look at Gypsylorist publications that created and reproduced the stereotypical Indian racial identity of Roma. It will also highlight the parallels between Gypsylorism and Orientalism as two Western approaches projected onto the non-white other. In addition, this chapter will examine the works of the most prominent advocates of the social/cultural face, whose writings came as a response to the racial face. Unpacking these two approaches to the Romani identity will bring the perception of Roma full circle from the anthropological and historical perspective, paving the way to comprehending the influence of these approaches on literature in later chapters.

2.4. Gypsylorism and Orientalism

This section will focus on the relationship between Orientalism and Gypsylorism as two interconnected fields of study. It will look at two prominent Gypsylorists and their scholarship that popularized the Indian-origin notion of the Roma identity. The word "Orientalism" has evolved over the past two centuries, encompassing new, deeper meanings. It was first introduced as a colonization tool used by the English authorities to better understand their Indian subjects by understanding their laws, customs, and languages to have more firm control over them, consequently. English colonial administrators in India mistrusted the Indian scholars and translators, as Sir William Jones, the introducer of the term "orientalism," clarifies, "I am proceeding .... in the study of Sanskrit; for I can no longer bear

to be at the mercy of our pandits" (Cannon qtd. in Rocher 235). Jones and other scholars, later called the Asiatrick Researchers, saw themselves as the carriers of an enchanting ancient culture to Europe. Other than the Jonesian approach, the Anglicist approach to "Orientalism" understood the term as a tool to westernize the colonized subjects by educating them in the English language and culture. Another famous approach to the term developed in the 19th century in France to refer to an art movement in which oriental or non-western themes were used in artistic productions.

The paradigm shift in the term's meaning happened after Edward Said published his book *Orientalism* in 1978, where he provided a redefinition to the term. Said's book was a breakthrough that rapidly influenced a wide range of disciplines as it, for the first time, considered the perspective of those who were expected to be silent despite being the examined subject matter. For Said, Orientalism is

> The corporate institution for dealing with the Orient — dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, teaching it, and ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient (Said 3).

Said regarded Orientalism as a Western multidisciplinary project with the aim of conquering the Orient intellectually prior to its military colonization. Orientalism created the image of the Orient by providing commentaries and studies about it, in addition to presenting it in a very particular light in literature and art. This domination stemmed from the European control of the tools of knowledge, which enabled Western scholars to impart inaccurate knowledge about the East with the purpose of othering the Orient. Orientalism was keen to underline its superiority over its non-European Other through which Europe defined itself. Orientalism thus became the ongoing process of managing and producing the "Orient" and the "Oriental" by exercising empirical power over it. The 'Orient,' as Said argues, was to create a binary opposition between the dominating and civilized West (the Occident) and the East that was controlled by a hegemony of power relations that operated through cultural

tools of literature, visual arts, travel writing among others to create a static image of the oriental Other referred to as the 'orientalist discourse' (6). Said argues that Orientalists, that is, writers whose specialty is Eastern matters, formulated an obscured cultural portrayal of the inhabitants of the East that only marginally corresponded to the reality of the region. Such an image was constructed by Western intellectuals who spent relatively little time in the region with minimal interaction with the indigenous people and little to no understanding of the native language and culture. One of the significant contributions of *Orientalism* is its analysis of Orientalism as a political colonial tool that ensured that the East was dominated not only geographically but also culturally by showing how it was robbed of a voice, self-representation, and definition. In fact, Said believed that it was the attraction to the culture of the Orient that initiated and enabled the colonial military action in the region. As Burney clarifies, "It was the initial interest in culture that materialized and eventually colonized the Orient" (24). John Shotter provides a useful argument to help us understand the relationship between the scholar and his subject of study. In his book *Cultural Politics of Everyday Life,* he discusses the process of creating realities in academic discourse. He argues that after the academic spends enough time studying the subject matter, a certain systematic mental image of the studied subject is created, which can be a fictitious reality that is accompanied by a certain 'sense' (141). This sense enables the academic, like a novel writer, to predict the activities of his characters and essentialize them (141). To combine this idea with Said's, the Orientalist researcher exercises his tool of knowledge and depends on the silence of his subaltern to misrepresent, even if unintentionally, the colonized subject by portraying particular characteristics as essential to define the whole. This idea has been taken up by the Romani scholar Ken Lee, who appropriated the arguments of Orientalism to discuss the (mis)presentation of Romanies.

Said's ideas have been widely applied in different discussions on the relationship between Europe or the larger Global North and the rest of the world. Ken Lee utilized Said's theory in his discussion of the Romani people. He coined the parallel, "Gypsylorism," as a similar system of discourse to "Orientalism" that he formulated in relation to the "Gypsies." He explains:

> Gypsylorism can be seen as that field of study that discursively constitutes as its subjects 'The Gypsies'. Like Orientalism, Gypsylorism is a discursive formation that emerges from asymmetrical exchanges of power of different sorts (political, economic, cultural, intellectual, and moral) that, in turn, help to re-constitute and perpetuate the unequal exchanges that underlay the initial discursive formation. (*Gypsylorism* 132).

He regards Gypsylorism as a branch of Orientalism that targets the Romanies as the exotic oriental Other within Europe rather than outside it. Gypsies were a problematic minority in Europe precisely because of the ambiguity of their origin. Before the eighteenth century, no serious scientific endeavors existed to understand Romanies as an ethnic/racial group. Okely explains this long-standing neglect of research on Romanies and the rejection of the application of the 'anthropological gaze' reveals the regionalism within the disciple as it particularly targets regionally the non-Western Other (59). Romanies have been anthropologically overlooked for three reasons, first due to being located within the European territories, secondly because, even when regarded as "other," they were believed to be contaminated by the Western societies, and lastly, because they, as an ethnic group, have not been associated with any geographical territory (55-56). The lack of documented history about them made Europeans for centuries make up theories to explain the origin or lineage of these people, some of which Romanies internalized, and others rejected. Lee discussed three major changes in Gypsy studies that contributed to the creation of Gypsylorism as a systematic area of studying the Romani people, the publication of Grellman's book that proved through linguistic comparative analysis that Gypsies' land of origin is India, Borrow's

books that defined “The True Romany” and “The Romany Rye,” and the formation of the Gypsy Lore Society in 1888.

In 1783, the German statistician and cultural historian Heinrich Grellman published his book *Dissertation on the Gypsies,* the first ever work that provided a scientific explanation of the origin of the European Romani population. The book was rapidly translated into English and French, and multiple new editions were published shortly after. Grellman theory was grounded in linguistic comparison between the Romani language and some Indian dialects, which proved the Romanies’ Indian origin. This marked a pivotal moment in the process of constructing the Romani as an Other (Lee 134). The book is divided into chapters that cover the habits and customs of Gypsies, the relationship between Gypsies and the establishment, the existing theories about the origin of Romanies, and the Romani-Indian linguistic comparison. From the outset, his book is an Orientalist work as it starts with the assumption that Gypsies have an Oriental and Eastern mind as an established fact and occasionally highlights their need for Christian salvation. According to Lee, this book enabled ‘Gypsies’ to be studied from three different perspectives: sociological, anthropological, and linguistic (135-36). Sociologically, Gypsies were studied as lawless people with an anarchic lifestyle that should be contained and assimilated. Anthropologically, they were examined as exotic primitive people who were living chronologically out of sync with the modern world and whose wonderful culture and language remained uncontaminated by the culture of others. This area also focused on Romanies as practitioners of occult arts and the peddlers of witchcraft more than any other nation.

Contrary to the sociologists, anthropologists did not regard Gypsies as a “social problem” in need of integration with modern society but rather as a fascinating exotic phenomenon that should be kept separate from the receiving societies by performing

exclusivist practices in order to be closely studied without being polluted or mixed with others.

Linguistically, Romaies were studied as the carriers of an Indian language in Europe. This comparative philological analysis aimed at finding the closest Indian dialect to the Romani language in order to locate their specific region of origin within India and to draw the route map that Romanies followed to arrive and spread out across Europe. According to Lee, researchers in this area often separated between the language and its speakers, and their claims that some of the major comparativists in this area never communicated with a single Romani (136). Grellman's new ideas rationalized and legitimized a certain othering and exoticizing discourse around the Romanies that has been vastly reused by scholars in different fields for the past two centuries. Until today, many of the obvious scientific errors it included have been dealt with as a given truth (137).

Grellman opened the door for extensive Gypsylorist publications, as Lee explains, paraphrasing Said, "Thus began a body of knowledge for dealing with 'The Gypsies', making statements about 'The Gypsies', authorizing views of 'The Gypsies', describing The Gypsies', by teaching [about] the Gypsies', [and] ruling over 'The Gypsies'" (137-38). A prominent example of this is the publications of George Borrow.

George Borrow was an English travel writer and researcher whose most prominent books are *The Zincali* (1841) and *The Romany Rye* (1857), both of which tackled Romani-related issues. Borrow's contribution can be summed up in the two new concepts he introduced, 'The True Romany' and 'The Romany Ray.' The True Romany is a discourse that confers a preferential status to a particular combination of qualities and characteristics that shape the 'authentic' Romani identity. The function of this concept is to distinguish between the racially pure Romanies and other itinerants who were regarded as socially dangerous. It also considers the danger of the miscegenation between the 'pure' Roma race and other

‘impure’ nomads that produced biologically degenerating hybrids that gradually led to a Romani cultural and linguistic decay (Acton qtd. In Lee 138). Lee describes the process of classifying Romanies as “both implicitly racialized and racist” (138). It is also influenced by a harsh racial hierarchy that dominated nineteenth-century England and Europe in general, drastically affecting the relationship between nomads and the establishment.

The Romany Ray - later referred to as Romani Rai - is another coined term by Borrow and a title of his book which refers to “A patron (always gaje) [non-Romani] whose familiarity with and generosity to Gypsies has earned him an honored status among them" (Behlmer 237). It loosely means a Romani Scholar or expert, and according to Lee, it was mostly a self-avowed status not granted by the Romanies themselves (139). This concept authorizes a privileged power and knowledge dynamic between the “True Romany” and the selected outsider as a source of authentic knowledge about Romanies (139). The Rai concept had major resonance among the members of the Gypsy Lore Society (GLS) that was established by William John Ibbestson, who aimed to bring together Anglo-American Romani Rais to compile and publish scholarly work on Romanies (Lee, *Gypsylorism* 133). To this end, the Rai concept enabled members of the GLS to have rigid control over the research on Romani matters as they considered themselves the sole holders of authentic information. Thus, a true Gypsylorist would naturally aspire to achieve the Rai status. Their productions were recreations of Grellman’s and Borrow’s ideas that reinforced over and over again the alleged exotic nature of the Romani.

In 2004, Lee published another article, “Belated Travelling Theory, Contemporary Wild Praxis,” to expand the concept of Gypsylorism as a tool that practiced epistemic violence on Gypsies by controlling what is allowed to be written and publicized about them. This time, he attempts to expand our understanding of the colonial subject and post-colonial studies by arguing that although Romanies have not been colonized in the traditional sense of

the word by dispossession of land, they, similar to other colonized peoples, have been "victims of imposed discursive (mis)representations and structural inequalities, marginalized, patronized, exploited, stripped of language, culture, dignity" (Lee, *Belated* 32). He shows us two examples of how Gypsylorists reinforced their epistemic power over Romani studies claiming to be the only authorized source of knowledge and research on Romani issues, consequently suppressing other potential viewpoints and narratives. The first is Francis Hindes Groome's hypothesis for the origin of the term 'Egyptian,' which was used to refer to Romanies when they first arrived in Europe. The second is the research activities of the Gypsy and Folklore Club (32).

Francis Hindes Groome, one of the early founders of the Gypsy Lore Society, came across historical evidence suggesting the possibility that Gypsies could be originally Danubians[4] who were taken as war prisoners in Egypt in the 14th century and might have bought back their freedom and returned to the Danubian territories in Europe later and from there moved around Europe (Lee 35). The linkage between these Danubians in Egypt and Europe was the recognizable tattoos on their faces[5]. Lee came across fragments in different sources, primarily Ibn Battuta[6], that could be used to build up alternative narratives to the dominating Indian origin theory (37). Lee's point is not to argue for this particular theory but to prove that there were attempts to provide alternative narratives to Grellman's, yet they were strategically overlooked. He believes that Groome's text should have been familiar to most Gypsylorists, none of whom were interested in giving it serious attention, which Lee refers to as 'epistemic violence' that ingrained as common knowledge the portrayal of the Romani as the cunning Indian nomad (Lee, *Belated* 36).

[4] The inhabitants of the Danube Region a diverse area around the Danube river that stretches along ten modern-day Central and Eastern European countries.
[5] Lee explains that the purpose of these face scares is to be baptized with fire to be protected from hell fire.
[6] A Moroccan 14th-century traveller who visited over 30 years, 44 modern day countries in the Middle East, North Africa, Central Asia among others.

The second example of epistemic violence Lee provides is of how the Gypsy Lore Society was quick to disapprove of any potential competitor research projects. It is important to note that the GLS required membership and subscription for any interested scholars to have access to the articles and to be able to publish (Lee, *Belated* 42). Its founder did not have the intention of developing the journal into a large-scale project, especially since it was supported by a single financial benefactor (40). They, nevertheless, refused to accept the existence of any similar initiative, one of which was the short-lived Gypsy and Folklore Club (1911-1914). Lee was able to access some of the correspondence between the founders of the new club and the GLS, which ended in the former issuing a libel case against the latter for fraudulent and reputation-damaging statements (46). The point here is again not to defend the Gypsy and Folklore Club in particular, especially since its researchers too tried to advertise for themselves by exoticizing Roma but to show that there was intentional marginalization of alternative knowledge construction attempts by a hegemonic discourse (*Belated* 33). Lee clarifies, "That which is ignored, avoided or deemed unsuitable for examination reveals, precisely because it is rejected and suppressed, the system that decides the possibilities of knowledge" (33). In other words, the system, Gypsylorism, accepted a singular static narrative of the Romani identity and culture that enabled Gypsylorists to successfully reproduce its image as the oriental within, the exotic Other.

Only in the late twentieth century, after the Romanies, along with the Jews and other discriminated against minorities, became victims of the Holocaust, did Romani studies take a new direction.

2.5. Post-Gypsylorism

The wave of anti-Gypsyism between the eighteenth and the twentieth century had drastic consequences on Gypsies, who were the victims of discrimination across Europe,

peaking with the Holocaust. In the late-twentieth century, anthropologists began to deconstruct predominant stereotypes about Romanies that were engraved in the cultural imagination of the European nations. Okely argues that the Romani culture was never self-contained. Thus it cannot be studied as a once pure culture that got 'contaminated' by other cultures. Instead, deliberate selections and oppositions directly created, developed, and recreated it (55). She does not reject or agree with the Indian origin or any alternative origin narrative. Still, she believes such narratives have minimal significance as the Romanies themselves show disinterest towards the matter, and the creation of a particular origin myth forcefully connects the Romanies to a culture they do not identify with, consequently reinforcing the othering of the Romanies.

Alternatively, Okely believes that Gypsies should be studied as a European phenomenon, the region where they were first documented. Romani groups were partly generated due to the decline of feudalism and the rise of capitalism when many serfs were forced to join the labor market (65). A large-scale relocation movement had already occurred along the spice trails, trade routes, and crusades. This explains the presence of the 1000 AD Sanskrit in addition to a blend of other European vocabulary and grammatical structures in the Romani vernacular. (65). Likewise, many Romani words have been incorporated into the market trading slang used by non-Romani traders. Taking into account such historical facts, the linear Romani migration theory does not stand. Okely suggests that the first Romani groups consisted of landless peasants, ex-serfs, and others who set out on the road voluntarily or accidentally (65). They gradually became a self-reproducing group as they married individuals with mutual circumstances and preferred endogamy to marrying individuals from different social groups. Romanies are different - from Europeans and other Nomadic people - not due to an alleged racializing and exoticizing Indian origin, but, instead, their difference is a result of their relations with the established sedentary societies on the political, economic,

and material levels. In spite of the degree to which Romanies are portrayed as exotic, romanticized, and racialized in the collective cultural imagination and hegemonic ideology, they maintain a strong link to urban and industrial economies, “what makes Gypsies threatening and exoticized is not their non-conformity to the system but that they are inherently part of the system” (Okely70). Despite being nomadic, the Romanies do not depend on hunting, gathering, and pastoralism activities like other nomads but are economically dependent on sedentary societies. Okely defines the Romani Economy as “the occasional supply of goods, services, and labor where demand and supply are irregular in time and place” (Okely, *Gypsy Identity* 114). In other words, Romanie’s survival mechanism depended on understanding the language and culture of the sedentary society they are roaming in, in order to understand the market demand of that society and hence be able to provide it to their potential customers. This explains the ample professions the Romanies succeeded in, like selling scrap, trading horses, farming, and fortune telling, among others. Okely notes that it is also likely that many Romani occupations were left unrecorded because they were either not exotic enough or not compatible with the projected negative stereotype that regarded the Romani as a thief, beggar, or child murderer, echoing Lee's ideas on ‘epistemic violence’ (66). It is also important to note that Romanie’s presentation of their group identity changed in different contexts as they saw fit to market themselves to a particular customer group. Based on the situation, they would hide, degrade, exoticize, or acknowledge their Gypsies (65). For example, in southern European countries, where fortune telling was believed to be true, Romanies exoticized their own women and presented them as experienced fortune dealers. This adaptability extends to the different names that Romanies were given that they sometimes embraced and other times rejected. Romani nomadism is also not an absolute defining characteristic of their lifestyle, as historical records show different Romani groups had been switching between nomadism and sedentarisation based on

circumstances like the terrains and climate. For example, Romanies in Scotland and Finland spent winter seasons in temporary houses (Rehfisch qt. in Okely 66). To this end, it can be said that Romani culture emerges from "selection, rejection or inversion, if not subversion, of aspects of the dominant society in which they are politically, economically and symbolically embedded" (Okely 64). This understanding deconstructs the myth of the 'True Romany' with an Indian culture that got eroded by exposure to other European cultures and continuous migration. Alternatively, it presents the creation of Romani culture, like all other cultures, as a dynamic process that affects and is affected by geographical and social changes. While Okley's ideas have been widely spread and referenced, she received heavy criticism, and a suit was filed against her for denying Romanies an ethnic identity (Mayall 4).

Gypsylorists writers had a major influence over literary production in the past two centuries. Renowned authors across Europe have read Grellman and Borrow and created Romani characters based on them. While Pushkin himself was a source for Borrow's section on Russian Gypsies, Mérimée borrowed all the Gypsy words and expressions from Borrow's book and relied on Borrow's description of Gypsy women in creating his heroine Carmen (Ives 81-88). Woolf's imagined "wild England" was inspired by Borrow's *The Zincali* and the more England-focused study, *Lavengro* (Southworth 176). Later chapters will analyze the Romani characters in the three works to show they can also function in different degrees as Gypsylorist literary publications that contributed to the enforcement of the Romani image. They will also show that despite of this, we can still recover a more humane image of the Romani who uses different techniques to manipulate his or her identity to survive within the establishment.

Chapter 3 Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin: *The Gypsies*[7] (1827), Two Readings

3.1. Introduction

The Gypsy figure in nature has been widely used by Romantic poets across the globe as a tool of political and social criticism. Inspired by the stereotypical image of the Gypsy as a symbol of innocence and the opposite of the modern corrupted civilization. Alexander Pushkin, Russia's national poet, was passionate about Gypsies and their lifestyle. He was first acquainted with Gypsies in the parties of the nobility that figured Gypsy dancers and singers, and later on, he lived for a couple of weeks in a Gypsy encampment to engage in a fuller Gypsy experience. His writings figured main and minor Gypsy characters that were used as a celebration of the inclusiveness of Russian literature and the Russian Empire in general. In this chapter, I will provide two readings of Alexander Pushkin's poem *The Gypsies* (1827), which tells a love story between a female Gypsy protagonist and a non-Gypsy male antagonist. I will shed light on the use of the Gypsy figure to convey political and national messages. In the first section, I will read *The Gypsies* in reference to the social contract theorists Hobbes and Rousseau and their understanding of the state of nature, putting in juxtaposition the non-Gypsy antagonist who fails to recover his human nature that was lost in the civilized modern Empire, and the Gypsy encampment whose morality and human dignity have not been influenced by the values of the state. In the second section, I will use new historicism to unpack the political choices that Pushkin, as a writer in a position of power, took when writing the poem. While the surface narrative of the poem focuses on Gypsies as a symbol of freedom, historical documents show that they were heavily affected by the political and military situation within the region, and their status alternated between state-peasanthood and slavery at the time of writing the poem. I will also discuss how the choice of the poem's

[7] (*The Gypsies*; Pushkin's spelling)

setting was assertive of Russian nationalism and mightness as a stronger and more capable Empire than its surrounding neighbors.

3.2. I: The State of Nature: A Hobbesian and Rousseauian Reading

Political philosophers like Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), John Locke (1632–1704), and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78) have attempted to explain and confine the essence of political authority on the basis of individual advantages and reasoned consent. They studied the advantages of having an administrative state apparatus and the presumed disadvantages of the state of nature. They particularly examined the circumstances under which a civil government is beneficial and should consequently be accepted as a voluntary obligation, a social contract between the government and the people that mediates their rights and responsibilities. The social contract theorists approached the state of nature in two ways: either by hypothetically removing the state of law and order and observing what is left of humanity without authority or by going further back in time and analyzing the pre-civilized society. While in both cases, the state of nature implies the absence of sovereignty, the implications of this absence are what marks the sharp difference between thinkers. In this section, my argument is that Pushkin's *The Gypsies* creates a dialogue between Hobbes and Rousseau's philosophies of the state of nature and freedom, one presented by the antagonist, the civilized modern man Aleko, and the other by the Gypsy encampment.

Hobbes postulated that human nature is "nasty and brutish" (130). When humans are in a state of nature, the pre-societal condition before the formation of governments and laws, they are in a condition of unhinged chaos, "a war of every man against every man" (212). Hobbes perceived freedom negatively as a state of no external interference whatsoever in the motions/ actions of an individual. "The liberty of the man…consisteth in this, that he finds no stop, in doing what he has the will, or desire, or inclination to do" (Hobbes 209). In the

absence of a sovereign authority, humans will act upon their natural instincts, consequently violating the lives and security of others. This leads to complete fear and suspicion between individuals, creating a barren environment antagonistic to development, justice, and culture. However, as rational individuals, people reject this impotent state by collectively deciding to give up their freedom to an absolute higher civil authority. This Leviathan-like government will offer them protection against savagery in the form of a social contract. Individuals participate in the 'right transfer' event, each stating the declaration, "I Authorise and give up my Right of Governing my selfe, to this Man, or to this Assembly of men, on this condition, that thou give up thy Right to him, and Authorise all his Actions in like manner" (173). And when everyone has declared his/her consent to be governed by the sovereign, people enter a state of safety and collective understanding based on mutual benefits. Hobbes did not believe that this step was an actual historical event. Yet, he argued that comprehending the state apparatus becomes easier when perceived as a result of such an agreement.

Rousseau opened his book *On the Social Contract* with his famous statement, "Man was born free, and everywhere he is in chains" (156). He opposed Hobbes's ideas on the social contract and those of other less extreme philosophers like John Locke, believing that they eventually lead to the corruption of human nature. Unlike Hobbes, for Rousseau, the state of nature is a rich environment in which early peoples experienced peace and simplicity. For him, human beings are inherently good, compassionate, and rational beings who possess 'moralily', not selfish brutal savages thus, the absence of authority does not create anarchy. Rousseau explained, "We might also add to the advantages of the civil state moral freedom, which alone enables man to be truly master of himself." He continues, "For the impulse of mere appetite is slavery, while obedience to a self-prescribed law is freedom" (167). This means people do not need to surrender their liberty to a totalitarian sovereign in exchange for protection. Instead, individuals have the freedom of self-governance by applying the concept

of the 'general will.' In simple terms, the general will is an expression of the common interests or a collective decision-making system that favors the common good to each individual's personal preferences. As Kain Philip explains, the general will is not the "will of all" or the "sum of private interests"; neither is it the "vote of the majority" (317). Of course, the general will manifests itself in practice by the collection of votes to legitimize a decision. Still, the voters are expected to put their particular interests aside and choose what is fair and proper and provide equality for all. In fact, what Rousseau has in common with Hobbes is the idea of an absolute sovereign who is given full authority to implement the right decision. While for Hobbes, the sovereign is one individual or a selected few, for Rousseau, the sovereign is the people and the general will. In both cases, when an individual goes against the laws of the sovereign, he/she must be subjected to particular consequences. Therefore, Rousseau believed that in the process of the creation of the general will, voters have to think in abstraction about an idea and its implications. When doing so, people will be able to reflect on the larger meaning of a concept (Philip 318). For example, a thief will vote against theft despite being contrary to his immediate selfish interest because he knows that the further implications of this decision will make him subject to theft, too (Philip 319). This is what makes the general will always be right, unlike the will of all, which does not necessarily express the best decision for the group. And because people themselves are the prescribers of the law, they are free, and man becomes "truly master of himself" (Rousseau 167).

Pushkin's *The Gypsies* portrays Gypsy life in Rousseau's terms as an optimal representation of the natural pre-civilized state of human society. It regards Gypsies as moral and rational possessors of truth and freedom. The poem contrasts their lifestyle with the life of the antagonist, Aleko[8]. This Russian nobleman grows up in an empire led by a sole sovereign to whom Aleko and others surrender their freedom. Aleko presents an example of a

[8] (Pushkin's namesake, as is commonly indicated. Aleko is a shorter form of Pushkin's first name Alexandr).

corrupted individual who lost his natural human moral compass in the civilized state. He escapes the Empire in the pursuit of freedom among the Gypsies; however, he fails to favor common interests to his own selfish desires and is eventually banished from the encampment.

Aleko decides to become a Gypsy after meeting and falling in love with a Gypsy girl, Zemfira. He joins Zemfira's encampment and lives with them for two years, but then he learns that Zemfira is meeting another guy, a Gypsy. Out of mad jealousy, Aleko kills Zemfira and her lover and is, consequently, dispelled from the Gypsy camp. The poem does not give us enough information about Aleko's past life prior to joining the Gypsies. We are introduced to him by Zemfira as the person "pursued by the law" (Pushkin 47) and who, as Zemfira explains, "Wants to be a gypsy, like us" (46). While being on the run from the law implies criminality, intentional vagueness makes any crime, ranging from murder, petty crime, or political exile, possible. Yet critics like Bocharov, among others, find Aleko's criminality unlikely, especially since, on different occasions in the poem, his exile is described as "voluntary," he is likened to a migratory bird that is always chasing spring and escaping winter. In addition, while Pushkin used the same embellished, highly literary language for all his characters, Aleko's knowledge and interests expose him to be from an educated class of people, possibly the nobility. He asks philosophical questions about the meaning of freedom, life, glory, and love and criticizes modern towns' aristocratic life and enlightenment values (Pushkin 229).

Aleko is a person produced morally and intellectually by the establishment. He becomes aware of the price he pays in exchange for security, a system of laws, and other benefits like money and ranks. Addressing Zemfira, he provides a loose critique of modern civilizations, notably the Russian Empire, that he likens to enslavement:

> If you could imagine
> The servitude of stifling towns!
> There people in throngs behind a barrier
> Do not breathe the morning cool,

Nor the vernal perfume of meadows;
Of love they are ashamed, thought they persecute,
They trade their freedom,
Bow their heads before idols
And ask for money and for chains (Pushkin 150-160).

Aleko is alluding to the relationship between the nobility and monarchy, where the sovereign is the idol and the nobles are the enslaved who literally trade their freedom in exchange for materialistic benefits. Russian nobles always had to maintain a good relationship with the monarch to sustain their ranks and not lose their membership, as nobility was given or taken by the monarch's command (Hamburg 9). Being close to royalty also had other advantages, like receiving new awards or medals that entailed a more prestigious reputation (9). Thus, the civilized individual binds himself in chains to qualify for more material advantages. The state of unfreedom is reflected in the realm of sentiment as well. Aleko finds modernity to be robbing people of their ability to express their genuine emotions, making them embarrassed by pure feelings like true love[9].

In contrast, becoming a Gypsy allows Aleko to liberate himself from his suffocating reality as he becomes a "free dweller of the world" (l. 99), likened to a bird that can freely move and change location when the circumstances are not favorable. His new life also enables him to spurn "the shackles of enlightenment" (l. 229) and enjoy the "intoxication of everlasting leisureliness" (l. 237). Aleko lives in the Gypsy camp for two years, during which he believes himself to be fully assimilated with the group. It is worth noting that contrary to the responsibilities of noblemen, ranging from running estates, controlling serfs, and attending to the requests of the monarch, Aleko's life among Gypsies was labor and turmoil-free, a continuous state of leisure. He adopts their nomadic lifestyle and merely

[9] This could suggest the frequency of scandals, infidelities, and divorces among the nobility, of which the author's own family was not innocent (Driver 22). Pushkin's family scandals made Pushkin critical of his nobility and aristocracy, and, as a way of rejecting them, he frequently identified himself as middle-class instead (Driver 22). It is worth noting that Pushkin's rejection of his status was not a rebellious socialist act of exposing the struggles of the lower classes (22). It did not stem from a serious political ideology. It was instead his boredom with the aristocratic bureaucracy and his wish to be freer from the obligations of his class and enjoy being a wandering Romantic poet.

acquires a simple, typical Romani occupation, singing and looking after a bear. However, the poem at different times foreshadows the end of this experience and the inevitable failure of this assimilation. The narrator tells us that there is a mysterious feeling of discomfort in Aleko's bosom, a particular passion that torments his breast, and warns us that these passions will soon wake up (ll. 140-45). Zemfira's father, the old man, tells Aleko an old story of the poet Ovid[10], who was also exiled to Bessarabia and lived a nomadic life among Gypsies. Yet, he could not get accustomed when living conditions became harsh, so he turned pale and angry, shedding lots of bitter tears and regarded Gypsy life as a punishment from an angry god. "But he to the concerns of [our] poor life/ Never could accustom himself" (ll. 202-03). His only wish was to be buried in his homeland when he died (ll. 211-15 178-145). The old man also foreshadows an eventual clash between Gypsies' understanding of liberty and Aleko's. Aleko manages to survive two years among Gypsies because his interests during this period of time never collide with the common interests. He was not yet put in a position that requires him to let go of his individualism and accept the general will, thus not fully comprehending the meaning of liberty to a man in the state of nature, "But not always dear is freedom/ To one inured to a soft life" as the old man warns (ll. 179-80).

Gypsies love freely, not possessively, so if a wife leaves her husband for another man, he lets her go and lets her be. Even if this brings deep sorrow and loneliness to the abandoned individual, he cannot act in a way that violates another person's right to be free in love, for this violates the general will, the consensus among Gypsies. Aleko's human nature is put to the test when his individual interest clashes with the general will. He starts breaking with his new and temporary Gypsy identity when Zemfira tires of him and starts meeting another man. The old wise man appears again to explain that among Gypsies, love cannot be forced,

[10] Ovid spent the last ten years of his life exiled to a remote part of the Roman Empire in the Black Sea. 1800 years later, Pushkin voluntarily followed his steps exiling himself in Bessarabia among Gypsies. Ovid influenced Pushkin's views on exile as evident in his works like *The Gypsies* and *Eugene Onegen* enabling him to establish the genre of 'exilic elegy'(Houston 130).

and if a woman's heart chooses another, then a true Gypsy will let her go and not deprive her of freedom and free will. Not pleased, Aleko replies, "I am not like that. No, I will not without contest/ Renounce my rights!/ Or at least I will enjoy revenge" (ll. 418-20). Aleko's language shows him in Hobbes's state of nature where it is a contest, a war of "every man against every man" (212). He becomes a dangerous, destructive individual who understands liberty as his right to act upon his impulses with no interference from others. He was driven by a selfish interest, a desire for self-preservation by having Zemfira for himself only.

This condition is what Rousseau called the 'amour propre.' Amour propre is a state in which individuals develop a conscious sense of self as distinct from others. It is when people evaluate themselves in terms of particular comparative standards, the criteria of inferiority and superiority (Kolodny 168). In this state of mutual comparison, one is always striving to be better than others in rank, esteem, and possessions, and what Dent describes as "the rage for singularity" (52). Rousseau did not regard the amour propre as intrinsically wicked. It is a trait that develops naturally as individuals become more conscious of being independent of others and can lead to positive individualism that is centered around the development of oneself, that is, one's skills and abilities like mastering the skill of hunting, for example. However, it usually takes a different turn. "Amour-propre is a useful but dangerous instrument ... it…rarely does good without evil" (Rousseau *Emile* 536). This warns of the pitfalls of the 'inflamed' amour propre that renders individuals unfree as they become dependent on the judgment of others. Hence, their perseverance for improvement ceases to be a form of self-love but a form of living for others and living to surpass others. Amour propre is a replacement for 'amour de soi'[11] which individuals had in the state of nature[12]. It is a

[11] Both amour propre and amour de soi translate literally to self love yet they carry different connotations. Some critics translate amour propre to vanity/ pride like Bloom for example. However, as Dent argues this wrongly implies that amour propre is inherently negative which contradicts Rousseau's argument. Thus Dent and other use the terms untranslated as they appear in Rousseau's *The Second Discourse*.

[12] I didn't associate the amour de soi with the Gypsies in the poem because they are in a more advance mental state than the primial man with whom the term is associated. The Gypsies in Pushkin's poem, despite living in the state of nature, have passed the stage of developing a 'general will'. For the same reason, I did not use the

healthy, not egoistic, form of self-love that focuses on securing basic needs for survival like food, settlers, and reproduction. Aleko is fully possessed by the inflamed amour propre as he feels threatened by another man. Not having Zemfira for himself makes him feel inferior to the Gypsy lover; thus, he demands a "contest" so that the better of the two wins Zemfira. He kills the Gypsy lover, and when Zemfira challenges his threats, he kills her, too. "I'm not afraid of you!/ your threats I spurn,/ Your murder I curse…" (ll. 484-86). So Aleko savagely stabs her, "Die, then, you too!" (l. 487).

In the banishment scene of Aleko, the old man makes a comparison between the nature of Aleko and the Gypsies and their views on laws and freedom.

> "Leave us prideful man
> We are savages; we have no laws,
> We do not torture, do not put [men] to death
> We have no need for blood and groans
> But live with a murderer we will not…
> You were not born for the life of the wild
> You for yourself alone crave freedom;
> Dreadful will be your voice to us:
> We are timid and good of soul
> You are fierce and bold—leave us then;
> Farewell, may peace be with you." (511-521).

While the old man starts his speech by declaring that Gypsies "have no laws," he goes on to provide a list of collectively agreed-upon regulations between Gypsies. That is to say, Gypsies do not have laws in the sense of the traditional social contract between a sovereign and citizens of the establishment like those Aleko used to follow before his exile. Instead, they have a 'general will' reached by consensus among camp members. These regulations include the prohibition of inflicting harm upon another person in all forms, ranging from physical pain to murder. In case murder occurs in the encampment, the murderer shall be an outcast, as Gypsies do not accept having a killer among them. The old man also distinguishes between the nature of Gypsies and Aleko. Gypsies are savages, timid, and good. Their human

theory of the 'natural man'/ 'the noble savage' as it was according to Rousseau a pre-conscious and pre-linguistic stage inapplicable to the Gypsy encampment in the poem.

nature has not been corrupted by modernity, so they still possess kindness, compassion, and genuine freedom. On the other hand, Aleko is prideful, moralless, and in search of individualistic freedom. Upon leaving the establishment, he is not aiming to return to freedom in the state of nature. In fact, even if he wants to, the damage inflicted on his nature by civilization cannot be undone. He is instead searching for liberation from the set of laws and orders in the empire.

In conclusion, thinking of the encounter between Aleko and the encampment through the lens of corrupted and uncorrupted human nature crystalizes the contradiction between them. It enables us to see the inevitable failure of Aleko's assimilation. This reading highlights Aleko's difference not as a result of his race as a white man versus Gypsies but as a product of a state apparatus that renders people unable to retain their humanity and sincerity once engaged in the social-contact system. This poem is symbolic in its nature, employing the Gypsy figure as the natural contradiction to the state, thus facilitating any criticism of the state without direct engagement with it. In the remainder of this section, I will read the poem from a historical perspective, comparing the status of Romanies within the Russian Empire to the Gypsy portrayal in the poem.

3.3. II. *The Gypsies*, with a Little Help from New Historicism:

I am tempted to start my argument by stating the significance of studying literature in light of history, but I'm afraid that by doing so, I will be misusing the ideas of the scholars that I will be referencing extensively in this section. This is not because history is not essential for literary analysis but because it is wrong to assume that 'literature' and 'history' are intrinsically separate. New historicists believe that literary texts are inextricably linked to other discourses and cultural practices. Therefore, we cannot establish an unequivocal distinction between literature and other cultural practices except that they have a different

mode of formation. Greenblatt clarifies that art is "made up along with other products, practices, discourses of a given culture" (*Shakespearean Negotiations* 13). And because new historicists believe that writing history is a continuous process, not a static fact-based product of the past, literature is part of history that is still in the making. "Methodological self-consciousness is one of the distinguishing marks of the new historicism in cultural studies as opposed to a historicism based upon faith in the transparency of signs and interpretive procedures" (Greenblatt *Poetics of Culture* 12). New Historicists reject the autonomy of a literary text and highlight the importance of going outside the text, searching in its margin for hidden discourses. These silenced narratives will enable us to create a fuller picture of a text (Greenblatt *Shakespearean Negotiations* 4). They also warned against assuming that a particular reading is 'final' or 'complete'; instead, we should think of the different readings as fragmentary and disjunctive.

Greenblatt argues that literary texts are nested in particular social, economic, and political circumstances in which they are produced. And because these circumstances are prone to undergo rereadings and revisions, literature too becomes part of this circulation of social energies influencing the culture that produces it. In a different essay, Greenblatt introduces a new approach to understanding literary texts as products of a network of negotiations "between a creator or class of creators, equipped with a complex, communally shared repertoire of conventions, and the institutions and practices of society" (Greenblatt *Poetics of Culture* 12). In other words, the author of a literary text is in a position of power, be it knowledge, patronage, or connections, among others that put him/ her in a state of political choices and negotiations, which are a "subtle, elusive set of exchanges, a network of trades and trade-offs, a jostling of competing representations" (Greenblatt *Shakespearean Negotiations* 7). With this, I want to follow the new historicists' approach by looking at the sidelined narratives in Pushkin's *The Gypsies* by trying to point out the negotiates that were

in place at the time of its production and the consequences of political choices on the Russian cultural scene later. I will argue that the poem has a covert nationalistic narrative that aims at representing the might and power of the Russian Empire in two ways: first, by silencing the reality of Romanies at the time of its writing and secondly, by choosing a territory seized by Russia after a fierce war as the poem's setting.

The Gypsies has been read in multiple different ways which are not mutually exclusive. Some critics read it auto-biographically by drawing the similarities between the documented story of Pushkin's exile to Bessarabia, where he too fell in love with a Gypsy girl who was later killed by her lover. Others read it as a turning point in Pushkin's writing style by breaking with the Byronic tradition, which has influenced his previous productions, in addition to more traditional readings of it as a romantic poem that celebrates simplicity and nature. All readings, without fail, make sure to highlight the theme of Gypsy freedom in the poem. In fact, if we are to point out the single most prominent thematic feature that the poem presents, it is going to be Gypsyism as a symbol of freedom. The poem does not only portray Gypsy life as opposite to the establishment with its rigid shackle-like laws, but it also shows Gypsies holding freedom so dear to them that they are ready to die for it, and two Gypsies do die for it in the poem. Interestingly, this celebration of freedom in art was happening precisely when the Gypsies of Bessarabia, the poem's setting, were enslaved. In 1824, Bessarabian Gypsies became serfs of Bessarabian or Russian landlords (Crowe 159). 1824 is also the year in which Pushkin began composing his poem.

By the mid-18th century, Gypsies in Russia lived two contradictory lives. First, fortunate, talented Gypsy singers and dancers were a leading source of entertainment for the nobility, and, as David Crowe clarifies, the presence of a Gypsy chorus and orchestra was an essential part of the 'decoration' in the houses of Russian nobles (155). They were also regular entertainers of the Royalty, a habit initiated by Empress Catherine the Great

(1729-1796) and followed by the emperors and empresses who came after. These Gypsies were often richly dressed in shawls with golden embroidery and expensive jewelry (Crowe 164). They were also loyal to the Imperial expansionist vision and sometimes provided financial aid for the army during wartime (164). At that time, Russian writers composed plays and operas, especially for the Gypsies to perform, and the Gypsies, in turn, also wrote specific songs for their Russian audience (155).

Pushkin himself was very fond of Gypsies and their art and regularly attended their performances, especially in his youth. As Crowe notes, documentary records show that the voice of Tat'yana Dmitrievna, the lead Gypsy singer of the Orlov chorus, brought Pushkin to tears (165). Pushkin's admiration of Gypsies extended to his personal life. While the church did not legalize marriage between nobles and Gypsies, and even when it was, in rare cases, it scandalized the couple (Willems 189), Pushkin was supportive of his friend Nashchokin's marriage to a Gypsy woman. He also agreed to be the godfather of one of their children, which was his only recorded case of godfatherhood (Muryanov 1). Even like his protagonist, Aleko, Pushkin exiled himself to Bassarabia and lived among Gypsies for a month time, where he fell in love with a Gypsy girl, Zemfira, and asked her father to join their tribe to be with her. This love story ends when he discovers she has replaced him with another lover and runs away. Years later, he learns that her lover tragically murdered her and decides to write a poem about these events.

However, the majority of Gypsies within the Empire's territories did not enjoy aristocratic privileges and were subject to harsh discrimination. Their social status alternated between serfdom and state peasanthood, and they were heavily affected by different political and military activities within the region, like the partition of Poland, the Russo-Turkish wars, and even the change of rulers within the Empire (Crowe 154-57). Each monarch had a new plan of inclusion or expulsion for Gypsies. Russian authorities imposed a registration system

for Gypsies to facilitate tax collection. Still, they were deprived of their passports, which were forcibly kept with their landlords to end their nomadism (Crowe 158). This was the case even when they were classified as peasants, not serfs. Gypsies suffered from internal political conflicts between monarchs. For example, Tsar Paul, who always felt overshadowed by his mother's achievements, Empress Cathrine the Great, coupled with his misogyny about having a female ruler, was motivated to reverse her reforms regarding minorities during his reign. He wanted the empire to regain its absolutism and might, stating that "each segment of society, from the great nobility to the peasant serfs, was confirmed and reinforced in its traditional role and status" (157). Thus, he enforced an *ukas* (order) to ensure tax collection from Gypsies in all Empire territories (Crowe). Following his steps, his son Alexander I (r. 1801-1825) made an ukas to relocate all Gypsies to settle in government-assigned villages as a means of ending their disorderliness and nomadism. Once relocated, they were stripped of their passports as a preventative step to settle their nomadism matter definitively (1809). To ensure successful tax collection from Gypsies, Alexander I assigned the Ministry of Police armed with a watchdog agency to inspect the Gypsy matter. They were responsible for the registration of Gypsies within all empire territories, and those who did not register were considered vagrants and slackers.

The end of the six-year Russo-Turkish war by signing the Treaty of Bucharest in 1812 led the Russian Empire to acquire more Gypsies who resided in the newly seized Turkish lands. The poem's setting, Bessarabia, has its specific tragic history. Bessarabia was a war zone between Turkey and Russia for six years, and the latter, in turn, depopulated the area, expelling its Turkish and Tatar inhabitants (Crowe 158). This large empty territory soon attracted outlaws, runaway serfs, vagabonds, and Gypsies who temporarily lived relatively under their own self-government, during which they suffered from poverty and general lousy living conditions. While they were initially neglected by the authorities, in 1824, the Gypsies

of Bessarabia were declared to be serfs. It is worth noting that the documents available on the status of Gypsies in Bessarabia are scarce, and Crowe himself relied on two archival sources for his study. This should not be surprising because Gypsies were not a topic of much interest to scholars, as shown in more detail in chapter one. In addition, Bessarabia is but a small territory that was a war arena between two gigantic powers. Thus, the focus of official history was not concerned with Gypsies so much as the larger and seemingly more important narratives. I'm clarifying this because new historicists have commonly been accused of taking a small and maybe doubtful piece of information and using it to subvert documented and more obvious narratives adopted by critics for long periods of time. This accusation simply misses the actual aim of new historicism because new historicists do not aim at replacing one narrative with another. Instead, they search for the silenced and marginalized voices that enable us to add a piece of information to the standardized narrative. As new historicists insist that no narrative is complete and all narratives are fragmentary, bringing downtrodden voices to the discussion brings us a step closer to a somewhat holistic viewpoint of the text.

Pushkin's *The Gypsies* does not address the political and social status of Gypsies during his time. In fact, as Philip Landon clarifies, the poem's conclusion, as shown in the epilogue, transforms the larger issues in the poem, like the male abandonment by women and the murder of Gypsies, into "a generalized vision of nature's indifference" (49). "But there is no happiness, even among you/ Nature's poor sons!...And everywhere are fateful passions,/ And against the Fates there is no defense" (Pushkin ll. 563-64 & ll. 569-70). The language of the poem does not directly suggest the serfdom of Gypsies. Yet some lines subtly expose Aleko to be a nobleman with particular rights over a subject of possession (Zemfira). "I am not like that. No, I will not without contest/ Renounce my *rights*!/ Or at least I will enjoy revenge" (ll. 418-20; emphasis added). I want to suspend momentarily the Rousseauian

understanding of the word ‘right’ and view it in more socio-political terms. Why would Aleko view Zemfira as his right? If we think of Aleko as a nobleman, we can imagine that he used to have his own estate with serfs and peasants working under his command. The serfdom of Zemfira makes murdering her easier for Aleko because she does not only belong to the very bottom of the social hierarchy but also because she is ownable. Her serfdom makes her an object of Aleko’s possession that he can use or do with whatever he wants. Zemfira is his right, and because she is not obedient, like a rebellious serf, she is murdered. This also allows us to see the significance of choosing the protagonist to be a Bessarabian Gypsy, not a noble Slavic lady. In the latter case, Akelo could not have claimed ownership of his beloved, and even if he did, he could not kill a woman from the nobility.

After Pushkin’s death, *The Gypsies* became implicated in Russian nationalism. Alaina Lemon conducted a field study on how art forms are attached to different aspects of identity, bolstering national and racial ideologies (31). For Soviets and Russian nationals, the Gypsy, who is presented in art, became a means of defining oneself through one’s opposite (31). “Pushkin reigns as an authority on the ‘‘Gypsy soul’’ because he was lauded, both under Stalin and under the tsars, as the titan of imperial poetry, a creator of ‘‘Russian soul”’ (Lemon 36). In his speech honoring Pushkin as the national poet during the unveiling of his monument in 1880, Dostoevsky used *The Gypsies* poem as an example of Pushkin’s universal sympathy and ability to unite Russians and imperial subjects. He read the poet as a celebration of difference and praise of how Gypsies cling to their ‘free will’ at all costs (36). As Lemon translates, Dostoevsky said, ‘‘There has never been a poet with such a universal responsiveness as Pushkin. It is not only a matter of his responsiveness but of its amazing depth, the reincarnation in his spirit of the spirit of foreign peoples.’’ (Lemon 36). The inclusion of Gypsies in fiction became a means of presenting the greatness of Russia as a melting pot of different cultures and ethnicities, irrespective of the actual status of non-Slavic

minorities. A Soviet journalist in a 1992 interview by Lemon said, ‘‘In Russia, there is much big space. Gypsies thus felt free here like nowhere else in the world”. He continued, “They could even ignore state attempts to put them into reservations and enforce residency permits, though the government did send whole camps to the gulag, on any excuse’’ (40). However, this reading of *The Gypsies* and all reproduced art that was based on it stresses the unique otherness of the Gypsies yet dismisses the fact that Gypsies were harshly marginalized and were subject to enslavement. Landon, thus, argues that Aleko was looking for freedom in the wrong place because the Gypsies of Bassarbia had been enslaved by the Russian Empire for centuries (49). Pushkin’s creation of a particular Gypsy image became significant because he was canonized (Lemon 37). Thus, his literary heritage became a source of truth for the common reader, referencing the people and cultures Pushkin explored. For example, Lemon notes that readers reject creating their own view on Gypsies based on personal experiences and alternatively rely on Pushkin’s poem *The Gypsies* and other similar artworks. This is due to a common belief that Pushkin possessed transcendental genius, enabling him to access knowledge and understanding of other people and cultures unattainable by the public (Lemon 35). When Lemon was interviewing Russians to know their perspective on Romanies, they usually confused ‘Gypsies’ and ‘Gypsy art’ by referencing literary descriptions of Roma rather than giving an answer of their own (34). Lemon comments that such slippage between art and identity occurs even among writers and intellectuals (32). The speech of Dostoevsky and the interviews of Lemon show the far-reaching effect Pushkin’s literary heritage, in general, and his Gypsies, in particular, have on the common perception of Gypsies among Russians. In Lemon’s field study, there is no reference to Gypsy oppression or persecution as if they only belong to the realm of art and imagination. On the national level, *The Gypsies* and other similar artworks contributed to creating a gap of communication and understanding

between Romanies and non-Romanies, consequently prolonging the invisibility of their struggle.

Another way in which the poem asserts Russian nationalism is its multiple references to the previous state of war between the Russian Empire and the Ottoman Empire in Bessarabia and the final victory of Russia. Again, it is not a coincidence that Pushkin chose Bessarabia to be the setting of the poem instead of Moscow or Saint Petersburg, where he first met and mostly interacted with Gypsies. For example, one of these references is when the old man tells Aleko about when his wife abandoned him and Zemfira. “Long long ago, when the Danube Was not yet menaced by the Moskal” (ll. 371-72). He continues, “At that time we feared the Sultan,/ and the Budzhak was ruled by a pasha/ From the lofty towers of Ak-kerman” (ll. 376-78). These lines suggest the strength of their previous ruler, the Turkish Sultan, whose authority Gypsies feared. This sultan used to appoint a pasha to rule over the Budzhak, a Turkish word that means corner and here refers to Bessarabia (Arndt 299). Despite the might of their previous ruler, he was conquered by the Moskals (Mouscovites), who became the rulers not only of the small corner of Bessarabia but of all the territories of the Danube River. Another example is the meeting place of Zemfira and her Gypsy lover, “There beyond the mound above the grave”(l. 437). The (Курган) *Kurgan* or mound is a tumulus constructed over large solider graves after a war (Pető and Barczi iv). The meeting place of the Gypsy lovers not only foreshadows their own near death but also invokes another war reference that highlights Russia’s military superiority and triumph over the Turks. This large Kurgan is a burial place of mostly Turkish soldiers who faced their doom at the hands of Mouscovites. Aleko, yet another Russian and possibly Mouscovite, is about to kill two defenseless Gypsies and send them to the grave. He says, addressing Zemfira before killing her, “You are in a good place right here by the grave” (l. 475). The poem’s ending with an eagle flying over the corps of Zimefra and her Gypsy lover symbolizes yet another victory for

the Russian Empire through iconography (the eagle) over the Gypsies, feeding into the imperial nostalgia Dostoevsky was alluding to.

> In the land where long, long the dread
> Clamor of arms never fell silent,
> Where the Russian marked for Stambul
> His imperious borders,
> Where our old double-headed eagle
> Still rustles with its bygone glory, (ll. 545-50)

This ending once again signposts Russia's glory and military power as it expanded its sovereign borders to the lands of Stambul (Constantinople) and its eagle-like authoritarian eye flies implementing extensive surveillance over the Empire's territories. Lemon contends that both Soviet and post-Soviet Russian critics tend to "link Gypsies with the vastness of Russian lands, lands extending to the East, lands that promised endless material resources" (51).

To conclude, new historicism allows us to explore the unofficial narratives that are overshadowed by the canonical account of the literary work. *The Gypsies* shows that literature and cultural practices are interconnected. They penetrate people's perception of their reality as a nation in relation to other ethnic groups. The political circumstances in which The Gypsies was written expose the hidden narratives and the actual suppressed experience of Roma as a marginalized and enslaved minority in favor of the stereotypical celebration of Gypsy freedom. The danger of this lies in the influence the poem has beyond the realm of art and imagination as it widens the gap of communication and understanding between non-Romanies and Romanies. Addressing the reality of Roma and their suffering does not mean saying goodbye to the strong and daring Romani literary characters we love like Zemfira, but understanding where to draw the line between art and reality. Doing this will allow the poem and other similar artworks to be viewed in an actual, more inclusive, and positive light that analyzes with a critical eye the reality of Roma in art and reality as a valuable component of society and culture.

Chapter 4 : Putting on a Gypsy Face

4.1. Introduction

This chapter will discuss two different perspectives on the influence of Gypsyism on non-Gypsies. The first section is a reading of Merimee's *Carmen*, which will focus on the racialization of criminal activities. It will show two strikingly different approaches to crime based on the race of the offender, which contributes to understanding race-making and racism from a new perspective. It presents a criminal European whose criminality is not only justified and blamed on Gypsies, but it allows him to temporarily be associated with Gypsies, the innate criminals lending him a Gypsy face. The second section will provide a symptomatic reading of Woolf's *Orlando*. It will also show how a non-Gypsy character assumes a temporary Gypsy identity, which he employs as a means of sexual exploration. While Gypsyism is presented in a less hostile light, it still presents an unrealistic and stereotyped Gypsy picture, which sits Gypsyism at a distance from the reality of Romani people.

4.2. *Carmen*: Criminalization and Racialization

Chapter one discusses how the word Gypsy tends to invoke two contrasting images in the mind of the hearer, one of natural innocence and the other of demonized social outcasts. Pushkin's portrayal of Gypsies is based on the former image of kind-hearted, freedom-loving

Gypsies[13]. Meanwhile, Mérimée's *Carmen*[14] follows the later pattern of Gypsy[15] stereotypical characterization, presenting Gpysies as seductive, deceitful criminals who fail to respect the laws of the state apparatus. Carmen was written at a time of a growing interest in the idea of race. As established in Chapter One, the nineteenth century witnessed a surging curiosity for understanding one's self as part of a larger racial identity that unites the individual with a group based on shared characteristics of appearance, behavior, religion, and language against an Other who does not possess these typical features. Colin Webster believes that this was also a time when racialization[16] became closely associated with crime theories that made parallels between racial groups and their tendencies to commit crimes (12). This is evident in the writings of Cesare Lombroso (1835–1909), who is regarded as one of the founding fathers of criminology. Lombroso was the first to assign moral worth to physical characteristics as he equated physical 'anomalies' to the manners and principles of a person or a race. Lombroso based his arguments on empirical data and biology, making his ideas prominent in both criminology and eugenics (Webster 13). His theory of the 'born criminal' argues that criminality is inherited by bad biological heredity (13). Criminals have in common their physical imperfections and abnormalities that render them capable of malicious behavior. While he believed that physical defects are not limited to non-white races, he argued that races can be ordered hierarchically based on the symmetry of their physical features and intellect (Webster 13). Accordingly, races of color were considered

[13] Pushkin and Mérimée were admirers of each other's writings. Mérimée learned Russian and translated many Russian literary works, including poems by Pushkin. Championing Pushkin in France, Mérimée once wrote, "Pushkin's lyric poems are the most perfect thing I know since the Greeks." (Qtd.in Ives 126). Although he translated *Gypsies* after having published *Carmen*, critics believe he had read it earlier, and it was one of his main references in writing *Carmen* (Briggs 84).

[14] Countess Montijo and Borrow were other direct references to Mérimée's French-Spanish tale. *Carmen*'s plot was partly inspired by a story Countess Montijo told Mérimée about a Spanish man from Malaga who kills his mistress (Ives 80). As Mérimée explained in a letter to the Countess, he was doing research on Bohemians around the time of writing, hence making his protagonist a Bohemian (80).

[15] Mérimée used the word Bohemian to refer to the Romanies in Carmen. However, the English translations on the novella change it to 'Gypsies' which is the more common way to refer to Roma by English speakers.

[16] "Racialisation refers to those instances where social relations between people have been structured by attributing meaning to biological and/or cultural characteristics, as a result of which individuals may be assigned to a social group – a general category of persons – which is said to reproduce itself biologically and/ or culturally" (Webster 3)

inferior, primitive, and lagging behind on the evolutionary scale, thus more capable of criminal activities. Lombroso came up with the innovative claim that white people are also capable of crime, and in such cases, they can be equated with non-white races. As Webster puts it, “European criminals exhibited physical and psychological features that [Lombroso] believed were anomalies for the white race but normal for lower, less civilized races” (13). These ideas formed the underpinnings of the notion that populations are criminal in their appearance and that a particular facial/ racial look is an indicator of a crime to be committed. “Race and criminality are confused in the notion of criminals as a race apart” (Webster 13). In this section, I argue that Mérimée framed his story in a manner that parallels Lomberso’s idea on racialization and criminalization. While the story presents criminal activities committed by Gypsies and non-Gypsies ranging from smuggling, theft, and murder, race is essentialized only for the former. Gypsyism is portrayed as the root of all evil that hurts Gypsies and non-Gypsies alike. In fact, Gypsies are blamed for the malicious behavior of non-Gypsies and for their own murder.

Carmen is a novella in three chapters, first published in 1845. It starts with a frame narrator, a researcher traveling across Southern Spain who meets a bandit, Don José, and aids him to escape from authorities. Then, the narrator recounts how he meets Carmen, a beautiful, confident Gypsy woman who offers to tell his fortune and steals his watch on the same day. Later, the narrator meets José in prison, who is about to be executed for a murder charge. At this point, *Carmen*'s main plot starts as José tells the narrator about his tragic romance with Carmen. José used to have a promising military career until he was sent to the cigar factory to capture Carmen for slashing the face of a fellow worker. She seduces him, and he falls in love instantly. Thus, he helps Carmen escape. As a result, he is reduced to the ranks and sentenced to a month in prison. Shortly after his release, Carmen convinces him to let a group of smugglers pass under his watch. He later kills a soldier out of jealousy for

Carmen, thus ending his own career. He joins Carmen's Gypsy friends and becomes a smuggler. A while later, he discovers that Carmen has been married the whole time to a Gypsy named Garcia, whom Carmen helps escape imprisonment. Again, out of jealousy and contempt, José kills Garcia and threatens to kill Carmen if she does not obey him. He gets tired of smuggling and asks Carmen to come with him to start a new life in America. She refuses, so he kills her and submits himself to the police. Later, Mérimée included a fourth chapter to add an ethnographic perspective to his novella. The chapter was a study about the Romani language and traditions for which he used Borrow's The Zincali as a source[17].

The first two chapters provide readers with an introduction to the two main characters, José and Carmen, respectively, through the lens of the French frame narrator. These short chapters prime the readers' view of the two characters, allowing them to generate expectations about their behaviors throughout the narrative. Richard Gerrig and David Allbritton attempt to understand the psychological impact of the readers' first impression of the literary characters. They state that it is wrong to assume that readers of fiction are passive recipients of information. Instead, readers use the accumulating information that the text provides to predict the behavior of a character later on. They also argue that first impressions leave a strong effect on the portrayal of a character so that if the initial character descriptions are rich, they lead to a process of categorization or "impression-formation". Categorization here implies allocating characters into binary categories of 'good' and 'bad.' This process influences the readers' interaction with the actions and decisions of characters later on as they tend to "color objectively neutral information to fit [their] initial hypotheses" (Gerrig & Allbritton 385). Therefore, Gerrig and Allbritton also suggest that the process of

[17] Unlike Pushkin and Woolf, Mérimée used plenty of Romani words and phrases, which he learned from the publications on Romanies of the Gypsylorist Borrow, as he clarified to Jeanne Françoise Dacquin (Ives 85). He also used Borrow's books to learn about gypsies' physical features, customs, and lifestyle. Interestingly, while Mérimée highly praised Borrow's research, he was doubtful of some positive traits Borrow attributed to Gypsy women, like chastity, for he believed that Gypsy women sell themselves for money (Ives 88). Overall, Mérimée tone in his letters shows his antipathy to Gypsies, whom he considered ugly, unclean, and uncivilized, an attitude that is reflected in his novella (88).

characterization is, to a certain extent, resistant to alteration or correction. The following paragraphs will examine the initial depictions of José and Carmen and track the process of categorization for each through the racial lens.

We are first introduced to Don José by the frame narrator as he travels on a historical and geographical scholarly mission in Spain. The narrator is accompanied by a guide, and they meet a stranger, Don José, while crossing a remote area in Andalusia. By that time, José is already "the most notorious bandit in Andalusia" (44), and a reward of two hundred ducats is to be granted to anyone who turns him in. The narrator and his guide have suspicions the moment they see José, "I had no doubt that the man I was dealing with was a smuggler, or perhaps a robber" (41), as the narrator notes. Yet, he feels a peculiar sense of comfort in the man's presence, believing that he cannot cause them harm despite carrying a rifle. He says, "[he] seemed to have no evil intentions towards us, for he had set his horse loose again, and his blunderbuss, which at first he had held at the ready, was now pointed towards the ground" (39). In fact, he feels that traveling with a bandit could provide the group with protection against other bandits and thought it would be an exciting opportunity to be in the company of an outlaw, "there is a certain pleasure in finding yourself in the presence of a dangerous individual, especially when you sense that he is feeling mild and amenable" (41). The narrator shares his food and cigars with José in a gesture that implies friendliness and good-heartedness. Before parting with the narrator, José tells him that despite his criminal past, there is humanity in him that makes him worthy of compassion and sympathy, "there is still something within me that deserves the pity of a man of honour" (46). At the end of chapter two of the novella, when the narrator learns that Don José has been convicted of murder and many other crimes, he insists on meeting him and wishes to help him in whatever manner possible, "I asked him whether, with money or the influence of my friends, there was anything I could do to mitigate his fate" (54). Right before the narration of the story of José

and Carmen starts, Chapter Two ends with José's touching and deeply sorrowful plea to have mass salvation said for his soul and to deliver a medallion to an old woman, probably his mother, and inform her of his death. I find the framing of José presented in the opening chapter confounding. It does not deny his criminality, but it presents it in a twisted manner alongside a number of good, amiable traits that prime the reader to feel sympathetic with him even before listening to his story with Carmen. This also suggests that there is more to José than his bad actions. His mistakes are not essentialized; that is, he cannot be defined solely by his criminality. José's confidence that there is goodness and humanity in him that deserves the sympathy of an honorable man despite his crimes shows that he views his malicious actions at a distance from his being. This priming of José's personality makes it slightly uncomfortable to categorize him as 'bad.' In fact, the 'good' category might seem more suitable, especially since his Christianity allows him to be portrayed as a sinner capable of regret and repentance.

The narrator's encounter with Carmen is rapid and focused on specific aspects of Carmen's personality. After she bathes in the river of Cordoba, she notices the narrator watching the other bathing women and sits near him. She tries to initiate a conversation, but we soon learn that she is more astonished by his expensive watch than his person. She playfully lets him predict her identity, and when he fails, she exposes herself to be a Gypsy and asks if he wants to know his fortune. "Come, come; you can see perfectly well that I'm a Gypsy. Do you want me to tell you *la baji*[18]?" (49). She asks him twice about the time, then straightforwardly asks regarding his watch, "Is it really gold?" while "scrutinizing it with excessive attention" (51). Later, he realizes that his watch is missing. This brief portrayal of Carmen concentrates on her sexuality, Gypsyism, and robbery. In fact, it presents her innate Gypsyism as the driving force behind her manipulation of her own sexuality and

[18] Fortune in the Romani language

fortune-telling skills to seduce the narrator in order to be able to steal his watch. After all, she was the initiator of the conversation with him and the one who proposed reading his future. This presentation of Carmen primes the reader to view her as an attractive, cunning, manipulative witch and thief. Her cunning and joyful personality makes her an interesting character indeed, but categorizing her as 'good' might be problematic. However, if readers are to put each of the two characters into a binary category, they will be the 'Basque Christian' versus 'the Gypsy.' Therefore, when the tragic love story of José and Carmen is narrated in the third chapter, the reader will expect Carmen, being a Gypsy, and, based on previously provided evidence, to perform criminal activities. This expectation becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy as we see her behave with José in a manner similar to the narrator's, but instead of robbing him, she lures him into the Gypsy life of smuggling.

In chapter three, the narration shifts to José as he tells the French narrator his tragic love story with Carmen. Before looking at the crimes committed by both, it is important to note that José narrates the events from his perspective and that we do not hear Carmen's side whatsoever. José's narration is defensive in its nature, which is understandable as the confession takes place in jail, where he is about to be executed for murder charges. José mentions at least six crimes that he has committed and at least four committed by Carmen, his being of much higher intensity and fatality. Nevertheless, he justifies each crime he has executed and puts the blame on Carmen or the Gypsies. His narration focuses on his initial purity and innocence before he is corrupted by joining the Gypsies. He used to be a soldier with a bright career and was promised a promotion to the sergeant rank. He recalls how he used to take his tasks seriously and not waste time flirting with women while on duty. All this is altered by the appearance of Carmen in his life as she seduces him and manipulates him into becoming a Gypsy smuggler like herself.

The crimes that Carmen has committed are portrayed as regular Gypsy businesses that do not need further justification. Carmen is a Gypsy; therefore, she is an innate criminal. José mentions four crimes that Carmen executed during the time they knew one another. She slashed the face of a fellow factory worker, helped her convicted husband escape imprisonment, robbed an Englishman, and carried out smuggling activities. Meanwhile, José's crimes are explained slowly and rationalized as actions carried out under external influence. His first crime is letting Carmen escape after slashing her coworker, for which he spends a month in prison. He contends that Carmen distracted him by speaking in his native language, Basque, which he dearly missed while serving in Andalusia. Being a Gypsy, he says, she was able to speak multiple languages, "[Gypsies] speak every language, and most of them are equally at home in Portuguese, French, Basque, or Catalan" (59). José describes Carmen's effect as a witch spell that rendered him unable to carry out his assigned duty properly, "I was behaving like a drunken man; I was beginning to talk like a fool, and I was on the point of acting like one too…As God is my truth, I forgot my orders, I forgot everything" (60). His second crime is letting smugglers pass under his watch in exchange for spending a day with Carmen. He initially refused her offer, but then he says, "I was weak enough to call her back, and I promised to let the entire Tribe of Egypt pass if need be, on condition I received the only reward I wanted" (68). His next crime is murdering a fellow officer out of jealousy whom he sees in the company of Carmen. Having committed the capital offense, his career as a soldier was over, and he had to either submit himself to the police or flee with the Gypsies. He chose the latter, "I thought that such a rebellious and hazardous existence would bring me closer to her…I could already picture myself trotting up and down the mountainsides with the pretty Gypsy girl seated behind me" (70). From this point forward, José puts on a Gypsy face. He lives with Gypsies, smuggles with them, and speaks their language. However, his crimes surpass smuggling and other Gypsy offenses as

he commits homicide two more times. He kills Garcia, Carmen's husband, out of jealousy, assuming it will allow him to possess Carmen. When this fails to bring about the outcome desired, he kills Carmen and submits himself to the police. José portrays the murder of Carmen as the only option he has. She destroyed his career as a soldier; he became a Gypsy because of her and submitted to her every request and desire. However, to his surprise, she still rejected him. He believes that Carmen's end is a result of her Gypsyism that prevented her from living and behaving properly, "Poor child! The Calé are to blame for bringing her up as they did" (87).

José's conclusion that Carmen's murder should be blamed on Gypsies for having raised her according to the Gypsy way of life resonates with Lomberso's ideas on the racialization of criminal activities. Despite admitting to having killed Carmen without being physically threatened by her in any way, José still believes she is guilty. Starting from the introductory chapters of impression formation and categorization until the conclusion, Gypsyism is framed as a dangerous phenomenon that manipulates the best and most noble and disciplined Christian men into becoming criminals. If not for Carmen, José would have had a bright military career dedicated to the service of the people and fighting offenders. Yet, the appearance of Carmen in his life lends him the temporary Gypsy face that deviates him from his true self. It is worth noting that José committed the most hideous crimes when he identified as a Gypsy and spoke the Gypsy tongue, which also parallels Lombroso's argument that when Europeans commit crimes, they can be equated with non-white races. Criminal Europeans are considered anomalies, for despite possessing superior physical and mental abilities, they demonstrate behaviors akin to those of inferior races. *Carmen* presents a clear example of discrimination and racism against minorities within Europe that weaponizes fiction to become a means of the reproduction of dangerous stereotypes under the name of tragic exotic romance. Not only is Carmen deprived of a voice in a narrative structured

around condemning her and her people, but she is burdened with false accusations that demand the reader to hold her accountable for someone else's crimes. Webster notes that while radical anti-minority laws within Europe were largely abolished after World War II, the ideas these laws carried "continue to insinuate themselves into popular and occasionally academic thinking about crime and criminality" (12). As chapter two displayed, literature plays a major role in race-making and reinforcing negative stereotypes. Carmen presents a concise example of how Gypsyism is carefully crafted through a twisted narrative and charged accusations brought to the reader through a chain of biased, unreliable narrators. Mérimée's story, which is inspired by the famous Gypsylorist Borrow, succeeds in creating a lasting image of a deceitful, cunning, and criminal Gypsy that turned into a universal opera by Georges Bizet which continues reinforcing the stereotypical Gypsy image. Thus, we can say that the prevalent anti-Gypsy sentiment is a result of an accumulated body of racist canonical literature that fails to undergo serious post-racial criticism, which would turn these texts into an asset of deconstructing stereotypes. Before then, we remain in a continuous racial era that continues to reproduce over and over racially charged narratives in the popular realm of culture and fiction regardless of changes in institutional laws and approaches.

4.3. *Orlando:* Gypsyism, a Catalyst for the Androgynous Female Sexuality

The 1970s witnessed an interchange of ideas between various scholarly fields as a result of accepting psychoanalysis and Marxism as metalanguages (Best & Marcus 1). This led to the emergence of a new method of interpretation called "symptomatic reading." This approach entails that the meaning of a text does not appear on the surface but is hidden and repressed, demanding close analysis from the interpreter to disclose the deeper meanings and truths. Symptomatic reading assumes that the actual message of a text resides in the unspoken (1). As Apter et al. explain, symptomatic reading theorizes that "what a text means

lies in what it does not say, which can then be used to rewrite the text in terms of a master code. By disclosing the absent cause that structures the text's inclusions and exclusions, the critic restores to the surface the deep history that the text represses" (qtd. in Best & Marcus 3). Symptomatic reading spots explicit absences and ellipses in a text and then investigates the factor that created them and how they convey the underlying questions that motivate the text, which the text is unable to articulate (Rooney 187). While this could seem a forced complication of a text, different critics believe that particular meanings and ideologies cannot be seen on the surface. As Fredric Jameson explains, "If everything were transparent, then no ideology would be possible, and no domination either" (60). Therefore, it is not right to assume that "the text means just what it says." Instead, the interpreter should disclose "a latent meaning behind a manifest one" (60). The process of interpretation aims at "rewrit[ing] the surface categories of a text in the stronger language of a more fundamental interpretive code" (60) and disclosing truths that "remain unrealized in the surface of the text" (Jameson 48). Symptomatic readers concentrate on elements in the text that can symbolize something latent or hidden. For instance, Sedgwick's queer symptomatic readings interpret closets and ghosts in literature as exterior signs of concealed homosexuality that the text cannot explicitly expose. That's why, as Best and Marcus explain, symptomatic reading combines sets of opposing elements: "present/absent, manifest/latent, and surface/depth" (4).

Different branches of symptomatic reading engage with particular pairs of oppositions. For scholars like Louis Althusser, symptomatic reading originates from the Marxists' understanding of ideology and commodity (Best & Marcus 3-4). Althusser reads Marx's *Captial* through the presence/ absence dichotomy, focusing on highlighting the gaps in the text. He assumes texts are formed by questions they do not ask but contain symptoms that enable interpreters to articulate these absent questions. He also connects the newly revealed questions to other texts. Althusser explains that the reading method he found in

Marx "divulges the undivulged event in the text it reads, and in the same movement relates it to a different text, present as a necessary absence in the first" (28). Other symptomatic reading scholars, like Jameson, who were more influenced by Freud's ideas on dreams and the unconscious, focus more on extracting covert and hidden meanings from the given text, the manifest/latent dichotomy.

More recent symptomatic reading scholars like Mary Crane and Margaret Cohen expand Althusser and Jameson's ideas, taking into account different genres and the unique nature of particular literary texts. In "Narratology in the Archive of Literature," Cohen explains that symptomatic reading is not equally effective for all genres. That is because not all kinds of literature require decoding to reveal deep, hidden meanings (57-58). Instead, reading a literary text along with nonliterary types of writing that share common aspects in addition to relevant archival sources can be a more productive way of addressing the gaps and the ellipsis in a text. We can think of this way of reading as horizontal symptomatic reading rather than vertical, where reading from the outside can help disclose symptoms within the text. Placing the text in its discoursive context enables the interpreter to identify textual characteristics that are otherwise left unnoticed. Cohen stresses the importance of recovering the relationship between literature and other discourses, what she calls 'forgotten poetics,' in order to uncover the layers of meaning that are not visible on the surface of a literary text (57). To this end, I will use Cohen's understanding of symptomatic reading to analyze the gaps and hidden meanings in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando.* My reading will focus on connecting the ambiguous moments in the text with the discursive context of the novel. I will be referencing the letters between Vita Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf, in addition to other sources Woolf left or used while writing *Orlando*. These external sources will enable me to expose the symptoms in the text itself and their latent meanings.

The 50 years preceding the publication of *Orlando* were the pinnacle of British Imperialism that promoted the image of the 'respectable middle-class English woman' in England and its colonies." This image became linked to racial purity and the performance of heterosexual respectability (Hovey 394). These notions were destabilized after World War I, and new anxieties and concerns about racial demographics, gender roles, masculine women, and lesbianism occupied the English public (394). Lesbianism, in particular, was a topic of interest due to the emerging novels and films that hinted at unconventional sexuality, the rise of moral panics, and the censorship of subversive content, in addition to the attempts of the English Parliament to outlaw lesbianism (Weeks 116). In light of the above, Hovey reads *Orlando* as a novel that attempts to create space within the nation in which white women who identify as masculine or queer find belonging (394). But how did Woolf and other women writers approach this topic, and what is the significance of the 'Gypsy figure' in talking about polymorphous female sexuality?

Kirstie Blair notes that the period spanning from 1910 to 1930 witnessed extensive writings on Gypsies both in scientific fields like anthropology and linguistics and in fiction. In England, Gypsies occupied space in high and popular literature with a focus on "exoticism, primitivism, nature, sexuality, and savagery" (Blair 142). Blair further notes that female writers, in particular, like Sackville-West, Violet Trefusis, and Woolf, used the Gypsy figure as a hint to same-sex desire[19] (142). Very often, these writers either imagined running away with Gypsies or becoming Gypsies themselves. Deborah Epstein Nord explains this phenomenon, "To imagine oneself a gypsy is to escape, in some sense, from conventional

[19] Noteworthily, most English women writers had little to no documented interaction with Gypsies. Still, they were readers of the English Gypsylorist George Borrow, whose writings asserted that the Bohemian life could be achieved. This notion, according to Michael Collie, captivated a broad audience as it created an imaginative escape path from societal prudishness, excessive nationalism, and class distinctions (228). Borrow's writings influenced writers like Mathew Arnold, George Eliot, and Woolf, among many others. Vita Sackville-West and Violet Trefusis learned the gypsy language from Borrow's books and used it as a playful secret communication code to discuss their love. For Woolf, Borrow was a favorite travel author whom she regarded as a "successful writer of sentimental journeys" (Southworth 200). Southworth notes that the title of her novel *Orlando*, which is also the name of the protagonist, could have been inspired by Borrow's list of Gypsy names in his book *The Romany Ray,* amongst which is 'Orlanda' (201).

femininity; it is also to claim kinship with those who mirror and explain one's anomalousness" (192). *Orlando* plays on these opposites of normal and eccentric, respectable and outlandish, by first creating suspicious gaps within the official narrative of the life of the protagonist and then by breaking free from the normal by assimilation with Gypsies.

Woolf's *Orlando* is a novel taking the form of a fictional biography about the ambiguity of gender. The events of *Orlando* are loosely based on the life events of her lesbian lover Vita Sackville-West, to whom she dedicated the novel and, by doing so, immortalized their relationship. In it, a young man, Orlando, undergoes a transformation into a woman spanning over three centuries. Orlando, the protagonist, is born male into a noble Elizabethan family who had close contact with the queen. He lives a lavish life surrounded by beautiful women admirers. He is engaged to the noble Lady Margaret but later falls in love with Sasha, a Muscovite Princess, and together, they plan an escape to Russia only to be abandoned by his lover. He later falls in love with another woman, Archduchess Harriet Griselda, who is, in fact, a man disguised as a woman to seduce Orlando. But Orlando gradually cools off from their relationship when he realizes that he only feels lust towards her (him), not love. Then Orlando is appointed ambassador in Constantinople and later awarded Dukedom. He gets sick and falls asleep for a whole week. During this time, his attendants find a marriage deed between Orlando and a Gypsy dancer, Rosina Pepita. It seems that Orlando was in a relationship with Rosina, whom he married secretly and with whom he had three sons, as we learn at the end of the novel. Rosina does not appear, and we only learn about her briefly through the discussion of other characters. My symptomatic reading of *Orlando* will focus mainly on Chapter Three, which I think is most central for our understanding of Orlando's character, change of sex, and relationship with Gypsies.

As a novel, *Orlando* does not hide its gaps and ambiguities. In fact, the narrator makes sure to underline on different occasions that lots of sources about Olrnado's life are

lost, and some of the narrated events are based on fragmented documents and rumors. Chapter three opens with a regretful statement that despite Orlando's time in Constantinople being the most significant period of his career, the available documentation about it is very scarce. This is the time when Orlando plays a vital role in the negotiations between King Charles and the Turks, resulting in awarding him Dukedom status. This is also the time when a revolution erupts in Constantinople, leading to an overall atmosphere of chaos. A fire breaks out that damages lots of Orlando's papers and records, and even when an important document is recovered, the narrator finds " [it] scorched a deep brown in the middle of the most important sentence" or sees "a hole in the manuscript big enough to put your finger through" (Woolf 75). For that reason, the narrator clarifies before narrating the events of the most crucial period of Orlando's life, saying, "We have done our best to piece out a meagre summary from the charred fragments that remain; but often it has been necessary to speculate, to surmise, and even to use the imagination" (75). This introduction sets the stage for the mood of the chapter. The lack of clarity prepares us to approach Orlando's character with doubts and questions. While the revolution brings chaos and disorder, it also signifies change and new beginnings functioning as a symptom of Orlando's transition.

The novel presents two levels of narration: an official narrative and a daydream. The official narrative covers Orlando's life in his mansion in Urban Constantinople. It focuses on Orlando's career as a politician, a Duke, and a prosperous and attractive diplomat who charms women and men alike. The daydream narrative exposes Orlando's wishes to escape to nature to be liberated from gender and sexual norms. This narrative penetrates the former at times when no one is looking when it is dark and safe for Orlando to be him/herself. Gypsyism enables the dream to come true and, even if temporarily, takes the place of the official narrative. An example of this narrative infusion is when Orlando gazes at Urban

Constantinople and dreams of being in the untrodden mountains he sees from afar. He gazes at the view from the window, thinking,

> There were no hedges for ferns to grow on, and no fields for sheep to graze. The houses were white as egg-shells and as bald. That he, who was English root and fibre, should yet exult to the depths of his heart in this wild panorama, and gaze and gaze at those passes and far heights planning journeys there alone on foot where only the goat and shepherd had gone before; should feel a passion of affection for the bright, unseasonable flowers, love the unkempt, pariah dogs beyond even his elk-hounds at home, and snuff the acrid, sharp smell of the streets eagerly into his nostrils, surprised him (Woolf 76).

This passage shows Orlando's yearning for freedom away from people and the city. He imagines wandering in the wild nature that is only pondered by goats and shepherds. Such a place, with its scenery and smell, invokes the passion in Orlando's bosom, making him suspend his official and public character as an English diplomat. The deeper message of this extract can be unfolded by looking at its possible source. Nicolson reads this passage as inspired by or a reference to Vita's journey to the Persian mountains, about which she wrote to Woolf in her travel book *Twelve Days* (1927) (qtd in Lyons & Gilbert 385). Nature and freedom in nature were recurring themes in the correspondence between Sackville-West and Woolf. Sackville-West used Gypsies as the representation of people living in nature to allude to an imagined freedom where the two of them, as lovers, could be themselves. In a letter to Woolf, she persuaded her to run away to live in nature with the 'zingaros,' Spanish Gypsies:

> Long Barn, Knole, Richmond, and Bloomsbury. All too familiar and entrapping. Either I am at home, and you are strange, or you are at home, and I am strange; so neither is the real essential person and confusion results. But in the Basque provinces, among a host of zingaros, we should both be equally strange and equally real (Sackville-West 54).

Similar to Orlando, Sackville seems tired of urban metropolitan places that, despite being familiar, make her feel strange. Here, Sackville-West used the Gypsy figure in nature as a means to fantasize about an escape place or a refuge for two women lovers where they can find liberation from the familiar atmosphere and its restrictions through complete

estrangement. Sackville-West equates being 'strange' to being 'real.' In other words, in the Gypsy encampment, where the image of the respectable middle-class English woman vanishes, estrangement is transformed into a positive attribute that enables the women lovers to be their true selves[20]. There are more examples of how Orlando experiments with realities different from his own. For instance, the narrator reports rumors about Orlando:

> Sometimes, it is said, he would pass out of his own gates late at night so disguised that the sentries did not know him. Then he would mingle with the crowd on the Galata Bridge; or stroll through the bazaars; or throw aside his shoes and join the worshippers in the Mosques. Once, when it was given out that he was ill of a fever, shepherds, bringing their goats to market, reported that they had met an English Lord on the mountain top and heard him praying to his God (Woolf 78).

This extract suggests that Orlando is searching for something that he himself is not sure of yet. His experiences seem random and disconnected. He is seen joining crowds of commoners in marketplaces and streets cloaked in disguise. Then, he joins a group of praying Muslims, attempting to assimilate with people of a different religion and race. Finally, he is seen secretly praying on a mountain, a place we will later learn to be inhabited by Gypsies. These seemingly disjointed encounters become comprehensible when Orlando finally transitions to a woman and publicly joins the Gypsies. More strange happenings unfold in the evening preceding Orlando's seven-day sleep. Orlando throws a massive party to celebrate his newly awarded title as Duke, but the riots outside halt the festivities. He locks himself in his room, which is against his habit. Rustic shepherd's music is heard, and a washer-woman sees a man covered in a cloak with "a woman, much muffled, but apparently of the peasant class, [being] drawn up by means of a rope which the man let down to her on to the balcony" (Woolf 84). She says, "They embraced passionately 'like lovers' and went into the room together, drawing the curtains so that no more could be seen" (84). This is the last documented encounter we know of Orlando before he falls asleep and transitions. During his

[20] In addition to her letters, we can learn more about the particular significance of Gypsies for Sackville-West, which later influenced Woolf, by looking at Gypsy depiction in her novels *Challenge* and *Heritage,* where the Gypsy figure symbolizes liberation, uninhabited sexual expression, and frenzy.

sleep, thieves and rioters enter the room, stealing some of his possessions but leaving him alone, assuming he is dead. His servants later discover among his scattered documents a marriage deed between Orlando and a Gypsy dancer, Rosina Pepita.

Orlando wakes up as a woman. The transition process seems to have been very smooth and painless. While it becomes a shock to everyone around Orlando, including the narrator, Orlando receives the change without the slightest bit of surprise as if it was natural, expected, and was in the making all this time: "The change seemed to have been accomplished painlessly and completely and in such a way that Orlando herself showed no surprise at it" (89). Debates about whether Orlando has always been a woman in disguise or that she/he has been and is still a man confuse biologists and psychologists (89). The narrator himself finds it difficult to choose the appropriate pronouns to refer to Orlando as he stutters between her, him, and they until he decides that feminine pronouns are the most suitable, "In future we must, for convention's sake, say 'her' for 'his,' and 'she' for 'he'"(89). Orlando dresses in Turkish coats and trousers worn by both sexes and, in the open daylight, rides a donkey with an old Gypsy and leaves Constantinople heading to the mountains. I believe that this is a pivotal moment in understanding Orlando's transition because it breaks the line between the official narrative and the daydream, allowing Olrando to be publicly herself for the first time. I also believe that this freedom was achievable only through Gypsies, and Rosina Pepita in particular as the catalyst to the coming out of Orlando's androgynous personality. To explain this, I would like to look a bit closer at the utilization of the Gypsy figure by Sackville-West as a coded reference to same-sex desire.

While there is not a clear link in the novel between Gypsies and homosexuality in Orlando, the bazaar use of Gypsyism functions as a symptom of a deeper personal meaning to Woolf and her female lover. Critics tend to look at Orlando's encounter with Gypsies in light of Woolf and Sackville-West's fondness for Gypsies, especially since the novel is dedicated

to Sackville-West. For example, Blair clarifies that Sackville-West used to identify with Gypsies in her letters to Woolf as an indirect reference to homosexuality (142). In fact, Sackville-West has claimed to have Gypsy roots because she has a Spanish grandmother who was possibly a Gypsy, and she used this as proof of her unconventional sexuality and attraction to women (149). We can also see Woolf linking Orlando's sexuality and Sackville-West's in the "desire letters" that she was sending to Sackville-West when she was writing *Orlando,* "But listen; suppose Orlando turns out to be Vita, and it's all about you and the lusts of your flesh and the lure of your mind" (9 Oct. 1927, L III 428-429 Qtd. in Sproles). Therefore, Blair regards the reference to Gypsies in *Orlando* as an allusion to heterosexuality (157). Other critics like Karen Lawrence regard Gypsies, in the context of *Orlando*, as androgynous with polymorphous sexuality (271). The textual evidence for this is the words of the narrator, "The gipsy women, except in one or two important particulars, differ very little from the gipsy men" (Woolf 92). We can, thus, infer that Gypsyism in *Orlando* was less a reference to a Roma as a race and more so a hint to sexual liberation. And because Turkish Gypsies, in particular, were infamous for homosexuality[21], the textual references that suggest Orlando's smooth assimilation with Gypsies imply that Orlando's androgynous character is innate. The Gypsies treat Orlando with generosity and hospitality, and unlike the court aristocrats, the Gypsies do not care about Orlando's gender or her past. Although Orlando never claims to have become a Gypsy, she gradually assimilates into the Gypsy lifestyle, helping milk cows and herding cattle. Her darker-than-usual complexion and hair make her look like one of them. In fact, the narrator says that Orlando's physical proximity to Gypsies makes one believe that she was actually born a Gypsy but then kidnapped by an English aristocratic family, "her dark hair and dark complexion bore out the belief that she was, by birth, one of them and had been snatched by an English Duke from a

[21] This point is discussed in more detail in the Chapter 4

nut tree when she was a baby and taken to that barbarous land where people live in houses" (91). The Gypsies even considered wedding her to a man of their own. She enjoys this carefree life as it allows her to take a break, not only from the new completions of her change of sex but also from her long service to the crown.

Before becoming a woman, Orlando was attracted to women and feminine men. Since the narrator tells us Orlando was in contact with Gypsies and has evidently married a gypsy woman, Blair even raises the question of whether Orlando's communication with Gypsies made the change of sex possible. Unfortunately, critics have not paid enough attention to Orlando's marriage to a Gypsy, which makes sense as the Gypsy wife, Rosina Pepita, was not present at all as a character. However, I think the very absence and the secrecy of the matter that even the omniscient narrator was shocked by it are suggestive and contribute to our understanding of the secret love relationship between Woolf and Sackville-West[22]. Orlando, an English nobleman, marries a Turkish Gypsy dancer, which is a scandalous encounter because of the difference between them in class, culture, and race. However, this English respectability is rendered meaningless. Similar to Sackville-West's only imagined escape with Woolf to become akin to Gypsies, Orlando, and Rosina Pepita had the opportunity to be strange and real in the mountains of the orientalized Turkish lands far away from England. But where does Rosina go? Why don't we meet Rosina in the gypsy camp Orlando escapes to? Their relationship seems like a dream real only in the imagination and the piece of paper (the marriage deed), like that of Sacville-West and Woolf, which was only real in letters. Yet, Orlando and Rosina's relationship must have been real, and because they had three children, it was not short. Considering the special meaning 'Gypsyism' had for Woolf and her lover, I would argue, answering Blair's open question, that it is not a coincidence that Orlando transitioned to women after marrying a Gypsy. Rosina is the catalyst that enables Orlando to

[22] While the romance between Virgina and Vita were not a secret in Bloosbury circle, it became known to the public later when the letters and diaries of the two women were published.

accept her androgynous character and polymorphous sexuality. She disappears after Orlando becomes a woman, simply because her role as a catalyst and a literary character finishes. Rosina and other Gypsies enable Orlando to embrace her true character and sexuality. Before, Orlando was lost between the laws of English respectability, the insistence on heterosexuality, and the hiding amid foreign crowds and strange places. He used to live a double life, an official narrative and a daydream, which became one only after interacting with Gypsies. Rosina is the last person Orlando, as a man, interacts with when they embrace and spend the night together. It is also the last time Orlando feels the need to be disguised. After a week passes, he wakes up a woman; Rosina is not there, but so is the old, confused Orlando. Rosina enables Orlando to achieve her true identity, which we instantly see as Orlando abandons her official duties as Duke and joins the Gypsy encampment. By the end of the chapter, Orlando leaves the Gypsy camp on a ship sailing back to England that is because, similar to Rosina, the role of the camp ends too. It is the nest that embraced Orlando at a sensitive time after the transition, and when Olrnado is completely ready to resume her life in her new identity, she leaves. Her time in the camp is a transition period that helps her fully accept the change.

To conclude, we cannot deny that the way Woolf and Sackville-West utilized the Gypsy figure was genius. It created an entirely new discourse around sexuality dependent on oblique and covert means of expression. The Gypsy, as a symbolic figure traditionally associated with the concepts of freedom and liberation, became flexible and attractive to the creative minds who expanded the idea of freedom to encompass the intimate, the private, and the personal. However, these symbolic old and new associations with Gypsies have little to do with the actual Romanies. These writers seem to know very little about the gender dynamics among Gypsies, like the restrictions of female sexuality and the different codes of behavior and clothing between Romani men and women, as discussed in chapter one. The

shortage in knowledge is understandable, especially since these writers mostly depended on misleading sources like publications of George Borrow to be acquainted with the Romani figure. Yet, it was more than just reading from the wrong sources. The amount of misleading representations of Romanies shows the lack of interest in and the recognition of Roma as a group of people and the mere interest in the symbol, the image. The Roma are suitable, usable, and expandable because they are so different from the English person, allowing them to be the antithesis of the English national self and its respectability and rigidness.

Chapter 5 : Romani Women: The Feminine, the Infidel, and the Exotic

5.1. Introduction

The Enlightenment era witnessed the development of new transformative approaches to various scientific disciplines like botany and zoology, presenting unprecedented strides in the realm of natural science. These progressions came as a response to the need for a systematic method to classify new exotic animals, plants, and even non-European peoples that were discovered in the new colonies (Hancock 183). Certainly, the decline in the influence of biblical genealogies and medieval environmentalist approaches left a lacuna in human sciences, spurring an urge to find new ways to explain human diversity (Vartija 1). These incipient concepts later crystallized, forming present-day concepts of race and racism. Despite the unparalleled value of Enlightenment thought that introduced empiricism and the scientific method, many scholars find Enlightenment advancements directly responsible for the emergence of racial classification and modern scientific racism (Vartija 1). Popkin contends that when we examine the ideas of the Enlightenment, we are faced with a paradox: originating from the core of the esteemed Enlightenment humanist convention arose the not-so-enlightened premises of the inferiority of non-European peoples (246). Kramer and Richiko Ikeda argue, “The Enlightenment scientists rationalized that ‘subhumans’ were genetically inferior and behaviourally irrational (of course, according to the criteria they devised), they created intelligence/power in their own image.” (90). During the 19th century, the Enlightenment ideals were pervasive. There was a substantial uptick in scholarly work focused on “race” and the ranking of human categories among which were the Gypsies. These new hierarchical evaluations, in addition to genetic, social, and technological advancement, considered gender as well (Hancock 183). Among these academic publications

was the *Dissertation on the Gipsies* (1787) by the Gypsylorist Heinrich Grellmann, which was first available in English in 1807. As discussed in chapter one, Grellmann's book was a pivotal moment of perceiving Romanies as a 'racial Other' as it attempted to explain their behaviors through their racial difference as Indians. Discriminatory language towards Romanies was common among 19th-century scientists and academics. For instance, Charles Darwin made sure to highlight that the appearance of "Gypsies and Jews…contrast[ed] sharply with all the virtues represented by the territorially settled and 'culturally advanced' Nordic Aryan race" (557). He then underlined the physical and intellectual superiority of men over women who possess higher levels of assertiveness and intuition (557). Gender and sexuality were also at the center of these new studies that attempted to highlight the connection between the sexuality of women of color and their race.

The racial classifications lead to a widespread notion of the genetic and social dangers of 'race-mixing' reflecting a covert political fear of demographical imbalance or the aspiration of race-mixed children for political equality (Hancock 183). However, the prevailing belief was that the mixed-race offspring acquire the worst traits of the two parents or that the good traits of the white parent are mixed and dissolved with the barbaric traits of the parent of color. William Smith explained this by saying, "Whatever is bad among the Europeans and the Negroes is united in them so that they are the sink of both" (213). Hancock contends that such notions served the need to protect white womanhood from the dark-skinned races. This is evident in legal practices like the Moldavian Civil Code, which stated, "If a Gypsy slave should rape a white woman, he would be burnt alive" (Panaitescu *Section 28* 14). This deep-seated sexual anxiety is also highlighted in the practices of castrating male Romani slaves in the Balkans (Hancock 185). This echoes Spivak's ideas on the long-held tradition that the man of color is a barbaric beast, and it is the job of the white man to protect white women and oftentimes, also protect brown women from brown men

(294). This notion has justified past and modern-day colonial activities that portray the white man as the savior who is on a mission to rescue the weak women from their own race[23]. Paradoxically, literature is filled with white men falling in love with attractive and dangerous women of color. These femme fatales are portrayed to possess some sort of bewitching allure that makes the white men succumb to them. Hancock notes that the forbiddance itself made the topic of miscegenation very attractive to journalists, photographers, and writers alike, whose artworks introduced a plethora of erotic stories of white males falling in love with the exotic, passionate, and attractive woman of color and in plenty of cases this woman was a Gypsy (183). Traces of sexualizing Gypsy women can be found in the first historical books on Gypsies, like Grellman's *Dissertation,* in which he explained that Gypsy women are ready to make themselves prostitutes to satisfy the needs of any man (163–70). In *The Zincali*, George Borrow stressed the Gypsies' ability to invoke the passions of men outside their race: "The Gypsy women and girls…are capable of exciting passion of the most ardent description…in the bosoms of those who are not of their race, which…becomes the more violent when the almost utter impossibility of gratifying it is known" (64).

This chapter is divided into two sections: Orientalizing the Setting and The Femme Fatales and the Masculine Split Self. In section one, I will explore the implications of choosing oriental, not Western, European settings to talk about Gypsies in literature. It will mostly focus on *Carmen* and *Orlando*. Despite taking place in Spain, a Western European country, *Carmen*'s events are particularly placed in the Andalusia province, a region with a Moorish Arab heritage which caused Spain to be associated with the Orient in the 18th and 19th centuries. In *Orlando*, the encounter with Gypsies takes place in the Muslim Ottoman Empire, which too was subject to the European Oriental gaze in the 19th century. Section two will provide a psychoanalytic explanation of the effect of Gypsy women, as femme fatales,

[23] For further reading, check Lila Abu-Lughod's book on the matter *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?*

on non-Gypsy male lovers and the aspects of masculine triumph over death, which are gained by the murder of the Gypsy women in *The Gypsies* and *Carmen*.

5.2. Orientalizing the Setting

Before talking about the sexualization of the three Gypsy female characters, I would like to talk about the importance of the settings in which the three stories take place. In chapter one, I briefly reviewed Ken Lee's ideas that Gypsies are colonized subjects because they are victims of epistemic violence like other colonized people despite not being colonized through traditional dispossession. I want to expand this well-founded point by arguing that in literature, Gypsies have been associated with colonized nations and that in the colonized territories, they have been twice the victims as an already outcast and othered race by the colonized natives. Additionally, because women are also an 'other' to the dominating men, Gypsy women in colonized territories are the victims of three layers of oppression. It is not a coincidence that the encounters with the Gypsies in the three stories take place away from the metropolis and the homeland of the authors. Despite the abundance of Gypsies in Moscow and Saint Petersburg with whom Pushkin was familiar (discussed in Chapter 2), Aleko meets Zemfira in Bessarabia, then a Turkish territory ceded to the Russian Empire after a battle. *Carmen's* events do not take place in France or Paris, where Mérimée first interacted with Bohemians, but in the Spanish province of Andalusia. At the time of writing, Spain ceased to be an imperial rival to France and became a conquered other after Napolen's wars to seize Spain at the outset of the century (Colmeiro 129). While most of the events in *Orlando* take place in England, the encounter with Gypsies occurs in a remote mountain area in Turkey (the Ottoman Empire). The Empire's territories were dismantled after World War I, and parts of which were granted to England. Having this point in mind makes it more comprehensible for us to see Gypsies as oriental subjects, as it has made it easier for the three authors to write

about Gypsies. Having picked these specific Eastern and somewhat orientalized locations creates a link between what has been written about the Orient and what is familiar to the receiver about these regions. This also facilitates the task of sexualizing the exotic Gypsy woman as her body becomes a colonized product for the imperial white male to consume and then exorcise.

First, it is important to address the contradiction of associating Spain, once a brutal colonizing European power, with Orientalism, which by definition targets the colonized East as its subject. Mónica Bolufer expands Said's understanding of Orientalism by addressing the complexity of the European identity itself (451). While Said argues that the Orient is a European creation that, in a way, supported colonial activities in Eastern regions throughout the 19th century, Bolufer underlines the importance of viewing the formation of the European identity not only through its external opposite but its internal differences as well (451). In fact, She continues, in particular contexts, the North-South dichotomy appears more central than the East-West contrariety for understanding the history of Europe, where the South was "backward, primitive…wild and picturesque" as opposed to the "modern, civilized North" (452). In the early modern period, Spain was undoubtedly a significant European country that played a vital role in the colonization of the New World. At that point, it was economically and politically in line with its European neighbors. However, that period was followed by a gradual intellectual, cultural, and political decline, creating a widening gap between Spain and Northwestern Europe (453). Spain became infamous for religious intolerance as its Catholic monarchy was marked with despotism in contrast to the rising parliamentary monarchies within the region (458). It also lacked an intellectual movement, making it viewed as a country unable to provide any meaningful contribution to the European cultural scene. European scholars started considering Spain a warning example of how the rest of Europe should never become. "Spain became the negative model of Western civilization and

progress, the mirror image by which modernity itself was defined" (Bolufer 454). This, along with other factors like the extreme southwest location of Spain, its historical association with Muslims, and even its hot climate, paved the way for the creation of Oriental Spain.

In the second half of the 19th century, European journeys in Spain significantly increased, and scholars were encouraged to document not only knowledge of modern civilized nations but of primitive ones as well. For example, as appeared in the Critical Review in 1775, "Spain and Portugal are undoubtedly less attractive to a traveler than the more polished countries of Europe," however, to advance knowledge, one has to view "the manners of the rudest, as well as by an intercourse with the most civilized nations" (304 qtd. in Bolufer 453). These scholars were documenting what they saw as similarities between Spain and Asia or Africa. Alexandre Dumas declared that "Africa begins at the Pyrenees" (Colmeiro 130). William Dalrymple described Spanish architecture as 'Moorish' and some Spanish customs as 'Arab,' like women's custom of sitting on cushions and carpets in private female spaces (10-15 & 88). Voltaire saw a significant difference between French and Spanish women, whom he described as enslaved a century earlier. He said that Spanish women were "almost as confined as in Africa, felt more wretched when they compared that slavery with the freedom of France" (15). Bolufer argues that the legacy of Islam in Spain, which was under Moorish control for 700 years, spurred these Orientalist opinions. In fact, the influence of Islam was perceived beyond culture, language, and traditions to have actually diluted the purity of the Spanish blood that became mixed with that of Africans and Muslims (460). The oriental enchantment with Spain was associated with one particular Spanish region, Andalusia, the furthest to the South and the most impacted by the rule of Muslims. Thus, Andalusia became definitive of the Spanish identity as a whole (462).

Interestingly, this insistence on the Easterness of the Spanish identity was not always an external label by Europeans. In their cultural practices, Spaniards have sometimes

identified with Eastern peoples, particularly Gypsies, to send political messages. Colmeiro argues, "Spaniards themselves had helped create this confusion of identities as a nationalist act of resistance against foreign influences" (130). He contends that in the 19th century, Spaniards started a cultural movement against the French and Italian invasion by rejecting Western values and essentializing a unique aspect of their collective Spanish identity (130). Members of the Spanish aristocracy began associating themselves with Madrid's lower classes by impersonating their clothing and habits. Because the Gypsies were popular entertainers in Spain associated with flamenco and bullfights, the aristocrats also embraced these models of public entertainment (130). The Gypsy figure was fundamental in this infusion of identities as it was the embodiment of Spain's Jewish and Moorish history, a unique past distinguishing it from its conquerors and the rest of Europe (130). This explains the paradox of the centrality of the Gypsy figure in Spanish literature and collective imagination and the outskirtness of Gypsies in the actual society (130). The Spanish Gypsy minority dominated the portrayal of Spaniards in the European imagination. This internal identity disorientation further helped the ongoing Orientalising movement by European travelers in Spain. With that, portrayals of Oriental Spain entered the realm of European fiction. Victor Hugo, writing about orientals, said, "Spain is still the Orient. Spain is half African, Africa is half Asiatic" (11). Lord Byron particularly described Andalusia as 'Harem' (Colmeiro 132). Spaniards were called the 'Christian Arabs' and 'Catholic Turks' (Colmeiro 132-137). Gypsies became a symbol of Spanishness in the European imagination. In fact, the Gypsy protagonist Carmen became the third literary character most identified with Spain after Don Quiote and Don Juan (Pulido 10).

Colmeiro observes that identities are entwined within a binary structure of the "male European self/female Oriental other" (135). Then, the divisions within each group are portrayed as interchangeable: "Gypsy, Arab, Jew, Middle Eastern, Andalusian, and Spanish

versus English, French, and European" (135). In *Carmen*, we can see this identity confusion in the first encounter between Carmen and the nameless French frame narrator. Upon looking at Carmen, he assumes she is Andalusian and that she could be of either Moorish or Jewish roots before she reveals her true identity as a Gypsy. For him, there isn't any significant difference between all these categories, for they all classify as 'oriental' in his mind. Similarly, Carmen mistakes the narrator for an Englishman owing to the fact that for orientals, all northern Europeans are also grouped under the same category. It is also important to note that even Don José, the protagonist and stand-in narrator, is from the Basque, not Andalusia. The Basque region is located in the western Pyrenees, straddling the border between France and Spain. Most of the Basque territories are in Spain, including José's homeland, Navarre, and the northern part of it is in France. The French narrator and the Basque Don José differ very little from one another as both are educated and civilized white men traveling temporarily in a foreign 'oriental' region. In Colmeiro's words, they are representatives of the "male authority figures displaced in an exotic territory" (136). I find it significant that Mérimée chose José to be almost double of the narrator, except that José is from the Spanish Basque, thus creating a safe distance between him and the narrator. This allows the narrator to project his views on Spain as an orientalized region without the risk of direct engagement with the Other, whether it is a northern civilized Spanish or an oriental Andalusian.

What the narrator and José also have in common is the sexualization of Carmen, whom both perceive as oriental and exotic. Not only do they meet her in Andalusia, the "earthly paradise offering unlimited numbers of local women to fulfill male desires" (Colmeiro 136), but the encounters happen in explicitly erotic settings. The narrator meets Carmen in Cordoba while watching naked women bathing in the river, among whom is Carmen. He explains that it is a common tradition for the women of Cordoba to bathe every

evening after the Angelus bells ring. Men are not allowed to participate in this tradition, so they only gaze at the women from the streets above the river, and sometimes they attempt to bribe the bell ringer to ring them early. That way, men see the bathers before the sun sets. Don José first meets Carmen in a tobacco factory in Seville where "around four or five hundred women work...They roll the cigars in a large room in which men aren't allowed without a pass" (56), and they are "in their undergarments and precious little else" (57). Because the factory is a private female territory, men only get to see them and gaze at them from afar during lunch break. The choice of such particular settings confirms Byron's words that Andalusia is Harem.

The Ottoman Empire as an Eastern and Muslim territory was also perceived with an oriental gaze by the West. Ottomans were regarded as non-Western totalitarians who could not achieve progress (Makdisi 768). During the 19th century, the empire was commonly referred to as the 'sick man of Europe' due to its military and economic weakness and social unrest. This ultimately foreshadowed its downfall and partition, which happened after the end of World War I. Before looking at Gypsies, it is useful to see how the empire dealt with the various ethnic groups that were under its rule. Makdisi states, "In an age of Western-dominated modernity, every nation creates its own orient" (768). Thus, Ottomans started a modernization and reform movement to resist the Western views of the Empire as a backward Eastern nation. However, they could not change being an Eastern and Muslim nation. Because European Orientalism was founded on the basis of opposition between the Christian West and the Muslim East, Ottomans had to create a new variant of Orientalism on the basis of ethnic differences. This movement targeted the non-Turks within the empire who were regarded as primitive and not yet Ottoman. This enabled them to distinguish between the modern, civilized, and secular Turk Muslims and the pre-modern Arab Muslims and other

non-Muslim subjects in a fashion akin to that of European colonial administrators in dealing with their colonial populations (769).

Ottoman Gypsies, whether Muslim or Christian, were called Kipti or Copt, the word used to refer to Egyptian Christians (Marushiakova et al. 24). In the hierarchy of Ottoman pre-modern subjects, Gypsies were in the lowest ranks, stigmatized and marginalized due to their professions. They were a diverse group of wandering entertainers, musicians, dancers, and animal trainers (Çelik 9). While both men and women took part in these occupations, women mostly led them. Unlike the case in Russia (discussed in Chapter 1), the audience of Ottoman Gypsies were common people for whom they used to throw parties where they danced, sang, and practiced prostitution, which was a defining trait of Ottoman Gypsies (Çelik 9). In fact, Gypsies faced allegations of exploiting their wives and daughters for prostitution and retaining the generated revenue without fulfilling their tax obligations (10). Some of the professional dancers were often associated with homosexuality for performing to audiences of the same sex (9). Such activities were highly stigmatized in a society that presented itself as conservative Muslim. These activities were deemed not only immoral but also sinful crimes. For example, in the case of prostitution, the punishment was “100 hundred lashes for an unmarried culprit and stoning to death for a married offender” (Çelik 10). Yet, historical records show that corporal punishment was hardly ever implemented in the Ottoman Empire (10). Gypsies' identification with sex trade activities made them despised by Muslim communities who demanded their expulsion from their neighborhoods and historically Muslim districts (10). Having this background in mind will help us better understand the significance of choosing the suburbs of Constantinople for Orlando’s encounter with Gypsies.

Most of the events of Orlando’s three hundred years are based in London. In the 18th century, Orlando is appointed Ambassador and sent to Constantinople, where he serves as a

successful negotiator between King Charles and the Ottomans. During his stay, he marries an Ottoman Gypsy dancer, Rosina Pepita, and has three children with her. While Rosina as a character does not appear, and we only learn about her from the narrator and other characters, we can infer who and what she was like in reference to the status of Ottoman female Gypsies in general. We learn about Orlando's marriage by accident when he falls asleep for a week prior to the change of sex. Then, his secretaries decide to examine the scattered papers in his room.

> There were also various state papers and others of a private nature concerning the management of his estates in England. But at length they came upon a document of far greater significance. It was nothing less, indeed, than a deed of marriage, drawn up, signed, and witnessed between his Lordship, Orlando, Knight of the Garter, etc. etc. etc., and Rosina Pepita, a dancer, father unknown, but reputed a gipsy, mother also unknown but reputed a seller of old iron in the marketplace over against the Galata Bridge (84).

Rosina belongs to an outcast race of low-class Ottoman entertainers associated with prostitution and homosexuality. Her unclear family records can imply that she was born an illegitimate child with no identifiable parentage. While dancing is her profession, she also sneaks to men's houses at night, among which is Orlando's. It also seems that Rosina is the last person Orlando interacts with before locking himself in the room and falling asleep. A washerwoman observes the night before, "A woman, much muffled, but apparently of the peasant class, was drawn up by means of a rope which the man let down to her onto the balcony" (84). She continues, "They embraced passionately "like lovers," and went into the room together, drawing the curtains so that no more could be seen" (84). Having chosen Rosina to be a Gypsy in an already orientalized region exoticizes Orlando's experience as a white aristocratic western man getting involved in an affair with an enigmatic oriental woman. He is invited into the enchanting oriental world of Turkish Gypsies, a realm of alluring passions and mysterious adventures. He experiences the excitement of temporarily breaking Londonist taboos by secretly marrying a Gypsy who is not only incompatible with

him in class and race but possibly also infamous for prostitution and homosexuality. When Rosina sneaks into his room at night, she allows him to explore new facets of his identity, and he literally wakes up with the body and the soul of a woman. Like a fascinating, dreamy story about the East, Rosina disappears after this encounter, and Orlando completely dismisses her from his thoughts. The only time we are reminded of her is when the three sons she had with Orlando confront him. Yet, Orlando never acknowledges being the father of Rosina's three sons. In fact, like Rosina, their existence is hushed like a scandal.

Similar to what Colmeiro observes in *Carmen*, in *Orlando*, we can also see Orientalism displayed in mixing different Oriental ethnic categories (Turk, Arab, Muslim, Gypsy, Persian, Egyptian) and regarding them as interchangeable. The old Ottoman Gypsy who takes Orlando on a donkey is named Rustum[24], an originally Persian name of the hero in Firdawsi's great epic, the Shâh-nâma (Book of the Kings). While living with the Gypsies, Orlando mixes costumes between Gypsy rugs, Turkish trousers, and Arab hooded cloaks 'burnous.' The Gypsies with whom she lives express pride in their ancestral roots, who built the Pyramids long before Christ was born, an explicit reference to the Egyptian origin myth widespread in England. While the precise religion of these Gypsies is not mentioned, they are portrayed as intolerant of theological differences. They become very skeptical once they learn that Orlando worships nature, a god other than their own. They even plan to kill her, "Already the young men had plotted her death. Honour, they said, demanded it, for she did not think as they did" (98). The Ottoman Empire was indeed a melting pot of various ethnic groups, and slippage between different groups was likely to happen by a foreigner, especially since lots of groups had similar physical characteristics. Nevertheless, the creation of uninformed discourses about Eastern peoples is part of the larger built-in system of Orientalism that contributes to the construction of the Orient as the binary opposite of the West. According to

[24] The only other Gypsy name given is of Orlando's wife, Rosina Pepita, which has Italian and Spanish roots and is the nickname of Sackville-West's grandmother.

Said, the imagined Orient, which is manifested in Western literature and art, is an expression of the hegemony of power relations of dominating the Orient.

5.3. The Femme Fatales and the Masculine Split Self

After having established the significance of orientalizing and exoticizing the Gypsy protagonists, I will turn to discuss their portrayals as femme fatales who have to die to restore order that was temporarily lost by their presence. The femme fatale is a figure that persistently appeared in 19th-century Romantic and decadent literature. It depicts a fatal, dangerous, seductive woman who allures the helpless male lover who succumbs to her desires. The femme fatale is antithetical to the traditional maternal submissive femininity. She emerges as a modern woman who literally goes against her reproductive and creative nature, assuming a more destructive role (Ridge 352). The nature of her love changes as she loses her function as a caring and loving wife and mother, replacing it with dooming love that drives her male beloved to destruction. As a figure of mystery and fascination, she possesses power despite herself, which evokes fear and instability in her surroundings. Mary Ann Doane attempts to delineate the characteristics of the femme fatale in literature and cinema and trace the roots of femme fatale as a phenomenon in other disciplines like philosophy and psychoanalysis. She describes the femme fatale as a figure that invokes "discursive unease" because she never truly appears as she seems (9). What makes her enigmatic is the aura her presence arouses, a threat indiscernible, unforeseeable, and unrestrainable (9). The threat of the femme fatale is presented as a perplexing and unresolvable mystery that causes turbulence and instability in her surroundings. Consequently, the unmasking of this enigma becomes a necessity to resolve once and for all the chaos created by her presence. This puzzlement is deeply linked to the sexuality of the dangerous woman.

Sexuality is at the center of the anxiety invoked by the femme fatale because it interweaves epistemophilia, a desire for understanding and knowledge, and scopophilia, a desire to look at what is sexually stimulating (9). Thus, in the 19th century and following, the femme fatale became a distinct indicator of the depth of the fears and anxieties stirred by the understanding of power dynamics in the sexual encounter (10). We can understand this anxiety in two ways. First, it manifests the rooted fear of female sexuality that can be explained with reference to reproductive and social aspects. Having the woman in control of her sexuality threatens to pollute the honor and lineage of the man's family. Additionally, as will be more relevant to the preceding discussion, unregulated sexual female behaviors can break social bonds between men, turning them against one another. As Smuts puts it, female sexuality becomes "a source of male temptation to adultery that, in turn, threatens male solidarity by creating conflict between men" (25). Secondly, the anxiety can be understood from a more psychological perspective as a threat to masculinity, as such, fostering its demise. The deadly woman frustrates the traditional male's wishes for sexual domination and lasting and reassuring love. As Ridge describes, the man "searches for beauty but finds ugliness; he looks for love but discovers death" (352). When the female reclaims agency over her body, she becomes defined by it. Doane clarifies the moment the male figure ceases to possess access to the female body is when the femme fatale comes to overrepresent the body (10). It becomes her weapon through which she challenges masculine dominance. Consequently, she represents the dread and angst that occur when the masculine self, the "I," the ego, loses its stability and centrality. Both Doane and Bronfen used the word 'castration' to refer to the impact of the dangerous woman on the male she seduces. The femme fatale effeminizes the masculine omnipotence and its imaginative power of possessing the woman (Bronfen 186). This leads to another recurring theme in fiction, which is the murder of the dangerous female. The threat to masculinity that the femme fatale awakens turns her into an

evil that needs to be exorcised. Thus, the emasculated men feel the urgent need to get rid of their object of desire that overpowered them by the act of murder. By killing the femme fatale, they eradicate the source of anxiety and threat, leading to the restoration of feelings of masculine control and power. Wim observed that female Gypsies were commonly stereotyped as "femmes fatales" and that Mérimée's Carmen[25], in particular, was behind the immortalization of this stereotype (190). In light of that, the femme fatale and the exoticizing and sexualization of the Gypsy woman as an oriental figure can be used together to talk about the representation of Gypsy women in Mérimée's *Carmen* and Pushkin's *The Gypsies*.

Both Zemfira and Carmen challenge their male lovers and disturb their order in different ways. In *The Gypsies,* Aleko escapes the life of modernity in the empire in pursuit of a peaceful and genuine life among the Gypsies. He falls in love with a beautiful Gypsy girl who allows him to momentarily believe that he will be happy forever. Before long, Zemfira disturbs his carefree life, his "intoxication of everlasting leisureliness" (236), and gradually creates a menacing atmosphere even before the 'real' threat is realized. After living for two years with her, Aleko starts feeling a strange anguish and worry, "[his] sorrow's secret cause/ Dares not interpret to himself" (Pushkin II. 96-97). "Black-eyed Zemfira is with him…/Why then does the young man's heart quake" (II. 98 & 102). A couple of lines later, the narrator comments that strange passions played with Aleko's soul and tormented his breast and that, soon enough, these passions will be awakened (II. 140-46). These lines come at an early point in the poem, and critics tend to read them differently. For example, those who read the poem biographically interpret Aleko's torment as the search of a poet for inspiration or muse. However, I want to trace the development of Aleko's internal conflict throughout the poem in

[25] While Carmen is commonly considered the most famous femme fatale in literature, some critics argue that she is not motivated by an evil purpose which sits her apart from more obvious femme fatales like Lady Macbeth and Salome (El Hadidi iv). For further discussion, refer to El Hadidi, Jala Sameh. *Carmen: Debating the Femme Fatale*. 2007. American University in Cairo, Thesis. AUC Knowledge Fountain. https://fount.aucegypt.edu/retro_etds/2117

relation to the shifts in the stability of his relationship with Zemfira. After living with her for two years and possibly having a daughter with her[26], he assumes that he had full possession of her forever. While we learn about Zemfira's affair with another man in the second half of the poem, it is unclear at what point in her relationship with Aleko that she starts meeting the Gypsy man. Yet, Aleko senses this threat early and starts having nightmares and talking in his sleep, which scares Zemfira, so she leaves to sleep in her father's tent. "Oh my father! Aleko frightens [me]/ Listen: through [his] heavy sleep/ He groans and sobs" (ll. 302-04). Aleko develops this anxiety more strongly after he listens to Zemfira singing an old traditional Gypsy song about a wife hating her husband and loving another, which he finds "barbaric" (l. 268).

> Old husband, grim husband,
> Slash me, burn me:
> I am firm; I fear
> Neither knife or fire
> I hate you,
> I despise you;
> I love another,
> Am dying of love (Pushkin ll. 260-67),

And later she continues the same song:

> How I caressed him,
> In the still night,
> How we laughed then
> At your gray hair! (Pushkin ll. 279-282)

Aleko is highly agitated by this song as it fuels the doubts he has had for a long. One must admit that the song's words are disturbing, but according to the old man, this is a famous song among Gypsies that even his wife, Zemfira's mother, used to sing in the past. So, most likely, Aleko heard it before. However, it is particularly hurtful because it evokes a threatening feeling of the possibility of losing his object of desire, Zemfira. This song also signifies the beginning of the chain of events that directly led to Zemfira's murder.

[26] It's not directly stated in the poem that Aleko and Zemfira had a child. Some critics like William Wims read the scene when Zemfira is sitting with her father and singing near the cradle as an evidence that she is nursing her baby "By the cradle [his] daughter sings [of] love" (Pushkin I. 256).

As discussed in the previous section, we are introduced to Carmen twice, first in Cordoba by the French savant who travels in Spain for research purposes. One evening, he sees her near a river where she is bathing and is instantly impressed by her appearance and smell. We are introduced to her again by Don José as he tells his story with Carmen to the French savant in prison after killing Carmen and submitting himself to the police. Don José first meets Carmen when he is on duty as a corporal soldier and is sent to the cigar factory where Carmen works after a fight between the workers. Carmen, who is arrested for her involvement in the fight and slashing the face of a fellow worker, uses her "Gypsy" charms to seduce Don José to help her escape. She promises to give him a magical stone that will make all women love him and speaks to him in his native language, Basque, which makes his heart leap. She lies to him about being originally from Navarre [27] and having to work to help her poor mother. This marks the beginning of their tumultuous relationship, with Don José becoming increasingly infatuated with Carmen and willing to do anything for her, even if it means going against his duties as a soldier. The reader's first impressions of Carmen are that she is very beautiful and seductive, violent, deceptive, involved in magic or some kind of witchcraft, and speaks multiple languages. Although the stereotype is expanded and reinforced throughout the narrative, the strong and typical exposition creates a typical "Femmes Fatales." Carmen is presented as a hard-to-get character who seduces the framed narrator and the stand-in narrator, creating instability in her male surroundings through her simple existence. However, her femme fatale character intertwines with her Gypsy stereotypical characteristics that increase her mysteriousness and people's fascination with her, like her ability to speak different languages, her involvement in magic, and her swiftness and mobility.

[27] Navarre (a medieval Basque kingdom)

Elizabeth Bronfen expands the idea of feminine death in literature by resorting to psychoanalysis to unpack the significance of the act of murder in restoring a unified masculine self. Both Aleko and Don José want their beloveds to give them reassurance by being faithful to them only. They acquire a feeling of power and security when they are confident of being the sole possessors of their objects of desire. This turns femininity into a signifier of masculinity as its signified (201). Thus, when a woman's love is exclusive, she signifies the dominance and possession of her male lover. However, when the woman has multiple partners, she becomes a signifier for the signified sequence of lovers. Hence, she destabilizes the unified image of the male lover and the dispossession of his secure being as she ceases to be his sole possessed object of desire.

> If the function of the loved object is to reflect the lover in a stable, secure manner, translating the Woman into a signifier for masculine wholeness or completion, then for a woman to have more than one lover, to be faithless, turns her into a deceptive mirror, more disruptive than supportive of his illusion of wholeness (Bronfen 186).

This explains why Aleko and Don José start by killing the male lovers first before their Gypsy beloveds. Zemfira's song about the handsome young man marks the end of the peaceful life of reassurance and unity Aleko has. He becomes gravely paranoid, mixing between dreams (hallucinations) and reality and not believing either. "Ah, I believe nothing:/ Neither dreams, nor sweet assurances,/ Not even your heart" (ll. 334-36). When Zemfira's father, the old man, shares with him the story of his wife and Zemfira's mother, Mariula, who abandons them and escapes with a new lover, Aleko is bewildered by the old man's calmness and lack of revenge. He says, "I will not without contest/ Renounce my rights!/ Or at least I will enjoy revenge" (ll. 418-20). Zemfira is *his*, his right, his possession. She is the sole affirmation he has of his undivided 'self.' Thus, for him, retribution becomes a must to regain the suspended unity. He continues with a hypothetical image of finding his villain enemy (the other male lover) sleeping "over the bottomless depth of the sea." Even then, he would still

reach him, thrust him, and savagely laugh at his fall (ll. 421-30). When he sees Zemfira over the hill with her Gypsy lover, he runs after and kills the man first and only kills Zemfira after she stands against his behavior.

Similarly, Don José gets so agitated with Carmen's suitors that he murders two of them and almost kills a third in an attempt to annihilate the sequence of masculine signifieds, irrespective of the consequences. First, he murders a lieutenant from his regiment who woos Carmen, hence fueling José's raging jealousy and anger. This event marks the end of José's career as a soldier and turns him into a smuggler with a recognizable scar on his face. Then he kills Garcia, Carmen's Gypsy husband and smuggling partner. It is worth looking at the events leading to Garcia's murder and his interactions with José. Garcia is a one-eyed Gypsy man who is sentenced to hard labor and spends two years in jail until Carmen bribes his surgeon and helps him escape. José immediately detests Garcia, whom he describes with aversion as monstrously ugly with skin darker than his soul. He gets especially furious when Carmen calls him 'my *rom*,' which means husband in Romani. Like Carmen, Garcia is a man of business who will do whatever it takes to survive, even if it means killing a band member. When Garcia is around, José refuses Carmen's closeness. He resists her kisses and stops talking to her. His refrain happens as Carmen becomes a constant reminder of his split self since she signified Garcia, not him.

Two particular encounters make Carmen find Garcia a more skilled and reliable fellow bandit than José, hence further shaking José's self-esteem and manhood and triggering his inclination to eliminate Garcia once and for all. First, when their band gets chased by a police squad, causing them to lose their horses and getting a fellow bandit injured, José attempts to carry the wounded man to help him escape along with the rest, a foolish behavior received with vehement disapproval by Carmen and Garcia for it will slow the band down and increase the chances of being caught. Garcia takes the more strategic approach, emptying

his blunderbuss (rifle) in the man's face, allowing them to get rid of the burden of the wounded man and simultaneously destroying his identity, thus covering tracks to where they are. The other encounter is when Carmen trusts Garcia to take down a rich Englishman instead of José. She was doing Gypsy business in disguise in Gibraltar and, like the skilled contrabandist she is, creates a detailed plan to rob the wealthy aristocrat. Carmen instructs José to report the plan to the band, making sure that Garcia is the first to attack the Englishman. Interestingly, when José first sees her with the rich man, assuming him to be another suitor, he confesses a desire for murder, "I could cheerfully slash you across the face in front of your lover" (77). However, when she is alone with him later, he does not resist her affection and caresses as if the absence of Garcia and the other suitors temporarily suspends his view of Carmen as a signifier for all these men, allowing him to enjoy imagining having her for himself. Although he does not explicitly reveal his unpleasantness that Carmen trusts Garcia more to lead the operation, that night, he starts a knife fight with Garcia, ending the Gypsy man's life. To his surprise, when he proudly describes to Carmen the murder scene and his Navarrese skills, she mocks his abilities. She insists that Garcia was a stronger bandit and that his death happened only because his time on this mortal plane has finished. "You will always be a lillipendi[28]! García ought to have killed you. You and your Navarrese defense— why, he'd put paid to better fighters than you. It's because his time had come. So will yours" (81). To which he replies, "And yours too…if you are not a true Romi to me" (81).

Soon enough, José realizes that his efforts to kill all of Carmen's suitors fail to give him the satisfaction and self-unity he desires. He recognizes that eliminating the symptoms of anxiety is not enough, and the only way to regain his unified self is by terminating the root of the problem. It becomes time to kill Carmen. On different occasions, José describes Carmen's

[28] Idiot in Romani

effect on him in a language that implies full absorption by another. She engulfs his being to the point of "figural self-dissolution" (186). "I was so weak in the presence of this creature that I submitted to her every whim" (72). Bronfen explains in their tremulous relationship, José becomes dependable on Carmen as she assures him of infinite bonding and togetherness that vanishes once the erotic moment ends, resulting in a multiplication of fragmentation and disappointment.

> Carmen's presence is felt as a figural 'castration' of his sense of omnipotence because she arouses a desire that makes him dependent on another, promises the bliss of an eternal union, yet only serves once the erotic moment is over, to point to a double loss or deprivation – the loss of self in the erotic act and the acknowledgment that such absorption is not sustainable (Bronfen 186).

With a little help from George Bataille, Bronfen explains the nature of the enthrallment that the erotic moment creates. Eroticism gives a temporary allusion that the discontinuity of each individual can be overcome by experiencing a profound continuity. While each individual suffers from loneliness and isolation, eroticism comes with a promise of total but momentary togetherness. Soon enough, the boundaries between self and the other are redrawn, and the individual comes to the frustrating realization that the state of discontinuity is inevitable. This frustration is coupled with suffering from the dissolution of the self in the erotic moment and coping with the trauma of the non-durance of the experience of continuity, making the moment of eroticism synonymous with death (187). "Eroticism evolves into death; death evolves into a negation of individual duration" (186). Both Zemfira and Carmen allow their beloveds to experience this short-lived continuity. They offer them the feeling of completeness, security, and unity and, most importantly, hope that these feelings will last. Aleko explains to Zemfira that he does not desire any pleasures from the vain world except to share with her durable and persistent love. "What of the noise of city pleasures? Where love is not, there are no pleasures" (ll. 168-69). He continues, "And I–my one desire/ [Is] to share with you love, leisure…" (ll. 174-75). Yet, before long, she starts singing about loving

another, destabilizing Aleko's reassurance of a lasting continuity, "I despise you;/ I love another,/ Am dying of love" (ll. 265-67). José, too, describes Carmen's love for him as unlike any other. At different times, she engulfs him with compassion and care. José says, describing the way she nurtures him after he gets stabbed by a fellow officer, "For a fortnight she did not leave me for a moment. She did not sleep; she nursed me with skill and devotion such as no woman ever showed for her beloved" (82). Yet, so soon, she pulls out the rug of continuity from under him with fluctuating statements about a change in her feelings. She says, "Ever since you've been my rom in earnest, I've loved you less than when you were my minchorrò[29]?" (81). When he asks her if she loves the bullfighter, she replies, "Yes, I loved him, as I loved you, for a moment, perhaps less than I loved you" (87). These punchy statements made José feel deeply threatened. He is on the verge of losing the durability of the erotic moment, so he falls to the ground, begging Carmen to love him again:

> I fell at her feet, I took her hands, I moistened them with my tears. I reminded her of all the moments of happiness we had spent together. I offered to remain a brigand to please her. Anything, señor, anything! I offered to do anything for her, if only she would love me again! She said: "To love you again is impossible. I do not want to live with you" (87).

This leaves José with one option that will guarantee an end to the fluctuating suffering: killing Carmen. The elimination of the object of desire that causes the unfulfilling continuity/ discontinuity ordeal gives birth to a new hope of the re-emergence of an undivided self. Bronfen also contends that as the opposite of non-durance of the experience of continuity, murdering the object of desire transforms the dead body into a static memory that has endurance (187). The death of eroticism, which is demonstrated by the death of the beloved, allows a sense of masculine omnipotence and possession to be restored. The body of the beloved, which turns into a dead, forever static object, becomes the source from which the male procures power. He repossesses the beloved by outliving her (187). Interestingly, José

[29] My lover or my fancy in Romani

wanted to see Carmen weak before him, thus giving him a glimpse of dominance and strength, “Fury gripped me. I drew my knife. I would have liked her to show fear and beg for mercy, but that woman was a demon”. He proceeds to describe the scene of death, saying, “I struck her twice...She fell at the second thrust without uttering a sound. I can still see her great dark eyes that stared at me, then grew clouded, and closed” (87). Similarly, Aleko kills Zemfira when she fails to show weakness before him after he kills her lover. “No, enough, I am not afraid of you!/ Your threats I spurn,/ Your murder I curse…” (ll. 484-86). In response, Aleko stabs her as he shouts outrageously, “Die, then, you too!” (l. 487). Carmen and Zemfira’s fall allows José and Aleko to restore their internal unity, ending the state of their masculine split self. Carmen and Zemfira and their uncontrollable bodies and sexuality cease to pose a threat to their male lovers. They cannot fluctuate, they cannot disappear and reappear, and cannot give false hope as if they were a fast-moving object that was finally fixated. Carmen and Zemfira are rendered a static memory that reminds José and Aleko of their triumph over the women’s bodies.

In conclusion, this chapter engaged fictional Gypsy female characters with Orientalism and the sexualization of the exotic. Orientalism does not only enable Gypsies to be associated with a wider range of ethnic groups and pinned, consequently, to a diverse set of stereotypes, it also makes Gypsies a symbol of the orientalism of certain regions like the Ottoman Empire and Andalusia. Orientalizing the Gypsy women in fiction facilitates their sexualization as white men experience love in lands of passion and exotic travel. Additionally, these women are portrayed as dangerous and deadly, and the strong white man is emasculated, which makes the death of these women an urgency to restore masculine power and dominance.

Chapter 6 : Conclusion

This research aimed to analyze the representation of Romani people and their culture in the three selected works from Eastern and Western Europe: Alexander Pushkin's narrative poem *The Gypsies* (1827), Prosper Mérimée's novella *Carmen* (1845) and Virginia Woolf's novel *Orlando: A Biography* (1928) in order to delineate the roots of the prevalent anti-Romani sentiment. It employed a range of theoretical frameworks (social contract theories, new historicism, Criminology theories, symptomatic reading, Orientalism/ Gypsylorism, and psychoanalysis) that allowed maximum attention to be allocated to the Gypsy characters in the three works to shed light on different examples of Romani race-making. The thesis showed how the persistent stereotypical Romani representations in literature are extended to real life outside the realm of fiction, where canonical literary texts are treated as credible and accurate sources to draw conclusions about the Other. This, in turn, showed evident confusion between Roma as an ethnic group and Gypsies as fictitious characters whereby depictions of the latter influence the perception and the treatment of the former. This project also demonstrated the interconnectedness between literature and other disciplines and how this interlink lends new perspectives to racial thinking. Pushkin's *The Gypsies* turned Gypsyism into a political tool for celebrating Russia's expansionism and inclusiveness. Mérimée's *Carmen* spread the racist claim of Gypsy innate criminality that continues to pervade in the common imagination even after institutional laws changed. The project also showed how the concept of Gypsyism travels to the personal and private realm and becomes a catalyst for self-discovery, sexual exploration, and queerness, as is the case in *Orlando*. This thesis demonstrated the relationship between Gypsies and other peoples such as Turks, Andalusians, Muslims, and Arabs, who all have been subjected to Orientalism and empirical violence. It also established the significance of choosing an orientalized location to

facilitate the stereotypical presentation of Gypsies as Oriental despite being a European minority. Moreover, it delineated the further implications of Orientalism on women who are already subjected to layers of colonial and patriarchal oppression.

All three literary works are still highly influential today. Pushkin's *The Gypsies* was turned into the famous one-act Opera *Aleko* (1892) by Rachmaninoff, considered one of the most popular Operas in the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation. It is regularly performed at The Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow, where it first premiered in 1893. Although it is less known in the West, it was performed multiple times at the London Opera House and later at the New York City Opera (Gordon 273). *Carmen* was also turned into a famous Opera in 1875 by Georges Bizet, which is regarded as a world-famous opera today. It is performed all year round in the operas and theaters of Paris, Madrid, New York, Moscow, Cairo, and many more. It is a condensed version of Mérimée's third chapter narrated by Jose that focuses on the tragic love between the Gypsy woman and the Basque man. In 1967, the opera was reproduced into a Ballet, *Carmen Suite,* by the Russian composer Rodion Shchedrin, which he wrote for his wife, the Soviet star Maya Plisetskaya, to perform. The Ballet, too, became universal[30]. *Orlando* was turned into a movie in 1992 directed by Sally Potter[31]. *Orlando*'s case is different from the other two works as the literary work retains its fame and influence today and is more influential than the cinematic reproduction. Still, the movie presents an interpretation of the novel that surpasses it in its Orientalisation of the Gypsies and the Ottoman Empire. The movie uses Arabic, Turkish, and Quranic verses interchangeably as background sounds. It also portrays Turkey as a huge desert akin to the Sinai Peninsula, where people commute on camels and dress in loose black attires covering the whole body, especially in the case of women and Gypsies. These modern adaptations of the literary works give new space to reproduce Gypsy stereotypes via new mediums to modern audiences.

[30] For further readings: Curtiss, Mina K. *Bizet and His World*. Knopf, New York, 1958.
[31] Potter, Sally, director. *Orlando (Film)*, Sony Pictures Classics, Sept. 1992.

Consequently, they reinforce the process of Romani race-making, which started in the 18th century and has not been adequately revised until today.

While this thesis was mostly critical in its reading of the texts, that should not suggest canceling these brilliant works or saying goodbye to the amazing Gypsy heroines they introduce. Nevertheless, it aimed to highlight the need for serious post-racial revisions of these texts that would not only open a room for an amble of new gripping and thought-provoking perspectives but also provide a productive way of un-making racial stereotypes. This would, in turn, be a small step towards creating an actual inclusive environment for Romanies within Europe and elsewhere.

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