STUDIES IN EUROPEAN CULTURE AND HISTORY

# "GYPSIES" IN EUROPEAN LITERATURE AND CULTURE

Edited by Valentina Glajar
and Domnica Radulescu

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*edited by*
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# Contents

# Roma in Europe

## "Gypsy" Myth and Romani Reality— New Evidence for Romani History

*Ronald Lee*

The Romani people arrived in the Balkans from Anatolia by the thirteenth century and in the Kingdom of Hungary around 1400 at the earliest. They were in Spain by 1425 and most countries of Continental Western Europe around this date, and in the British Isles by at least 1500. Their history prior to this, according to established "histories of the Gypsies," is vague, except for some Byzantine references to a people called *Athinggánoi*[1] or *Atsingáni* who were originally a sect of Persian mystics who appeared in Constantinople and the Byzantine Empire in the ninth century. Apparently, their name was later applied to the proto-Roma who appeared in this area in the latter eleventh century or early twelfth century because both groups were nomadic and practiced "occult arts."[2]

Prior to this vague reference, Romani history is assumed to have been "lost in the night of time," to quote the many writers who have used this hackneyed phrase. Most published works, dating from the late eighteenth century, have maintained that the Gypsies of Europe were simply *dom*, a low caste of Indian beggars, thieves, prostitutes, musicians, and grave-diggers (Grellman) who wandered out of India over centuries. This is usually claimed to have begun with the legendary Luri of the sixth century mentioned by Firdawsi[3] (Fonseca 93; Rishi iv), to the Jatts from Sindh who were conquered and removed by the Arabs in the ninth century (Rishi v), and any earlier or later migrations. Those who made their way as far as Europe were assumed to be the ancestors of the European Roma; those who remained in the

Middle East or went to North Africa became the "Asiatic Gypsies" or the "Egyptian Gypsies."[4]

If scholars are looking for mythical, nomadic Gypsy groups[5] who left India and wandered west, this might seem to be a logical hypothesis, although without any written evidence. However, if one is looking for Indians who left, or were taken out of India, and later became proto-Romanies outside of India, then there is a strong body of written evidence for this theory, which, until recently, has never been seriously investigated. Nobody seems to have considered the thousands of Indian ghulams or slave soldiers[6] taken out of India by Mahmud Ghazni in the early eleventh century. These were utilised as ethnic units, along with their camp followers, wives and families, to form contingents of Indian troops to serve in the Ghaznavid Emirate in Khurasan as ghazis[7] and in the bodyguard of Mahmud and his successors. The existence of such troops is well documented in contemporary histories of the Ghaznavids, as is their participation in the battles in Khurasan.

In battles from 1038, the Ghaznavid Empire in Khurasan was overthrown by the Ghuzz Turks, also known as Seljuks, culminating in the three-day Battle of Dandanqan near the city of Merv in 1040. Mas'ud, the son and heir of Mahmud, managed to escape, but the multiethnic Ghaznavid troops were stranded there and unable to return to Ghazni. It is recorded that the Turkmen and Muslim troops captured were then enlisted by the Seljuks (Hancock, "On Origins"). What happened to the Indian contingents and their camp followers is debatable since there is no recorded account of their fate. Since they could not return to Ghazna, are we to assume that a large contingent of somewhere around sixty thousand Indian troops serving in Khurasan and their camp followers, including the women and children, were entirely massacred and had no subsequent history? Admittedly, the fighting men would have been decimated in the battles in the Roman sense of the word, but not totally annihilated.

There are two theories presented that are still being researched by various scholars: The Indian troops fled the Seljuk conquest of Khurasan and took refuge in Armenia, or they, too, submitted to the Seljuks and served them as auxiliary troops and spearheaded their advance in their raids into Armenia.[8] In any event, the Indians ended up in Armenia[9] (Fraser; Hancock, "On Origins") and later, in the Seljuk Sultanate of Rûm[10] along with their military koiné composed of Persian overlaid into their related Indian dialects, which had been

derived from the Pakrits (Hancock, "On Origins"). This Indian-Ghaznavid military lingua franca was the origin of later Urdu, but was originally nobody's language in the ancestral Romani population that left India. It became their language in Rûm with the admixture of a massive amount of Greek (Hancock, *We are the Romani People*, 140–43), and some Armenian. There was no Turkish because the Hindu Shahi kingdom, conquered and held as vassal states by Mahmud, the Ghaznavids themselves, and the Seljuks in Roum used Persian as their administrative languages (Hancock, "On Origins"). There is also no Arabic, except for a few words adopted from Persian, because the passage of the Indian troops and their camp followers through Arabic-speaking regions would have been too rapid to adopt any.[11]

The migration from Ghazna to Khurasan and thence to Rûm could have occurred in one generation (the battle of Dandanqan, 1040, to the Battle of Manzikirt, 1071, at which time Indians were already in Anatolia) according to this latest theory. Some modern disciples of Grellmann, and those who expanded on this, have defined this latest theory as "revisionist" despite the fact that it is based on written evidence and related recorded history, unlike earlier theories, which have no basis in written records and are simply scholarly hypotheses. This latest theory, admittedly still being researched, does have solid historical data to sustain it, along with the evidence found in Romani dialects, blood groupings (Hancock, *A Handbook of Vlax Romani*, 24), and recent DNA studies (Salleh).

During the two to three hundred years during which these proto-Romanies remained in Anatolia, they abandoned their organized military capacity and adopted a nomadic lifestyle[12] based on artisan work, trading, animal dealing, and entertainment (Hancock, *We are the Romani People*). Gradually, small groups wandered westward into Cilicia[13] and Byzantine Nicaea, across the Bosporus to Constantinople, and from there up into the Balkans to reach Central Europe by 1400, leaving local groups in all the regions they had passed through. In a nutshell, this is a synopsis[14] of the latest theory based on what has been recorded of Mahmud Ghazni and his raids into India, military structure and policies, and the history of Byzantium and the Seljuk Turks. The presence of batteries of the same Greek and Armenian loan words in modern European Romani dialects—such as *molivi* (lead/solder) and *bov* (stove)—speak for themselves.[15] The presence of two genders in Romani date it as a New-Indian (NIA) language.[16] Those who made this transition from three-gender languages or OIA

languages became two-gender languages by the tenth century, which precludes any earlier migration groups from being part of the Romani exodus (Hancock, "On Origins"). Published blood-grouping studies have connected European-Romani blood types with the Kshatriya groups of India, not with the *dom*,[17] while the DNA study recently published by Luba Kalaydjieva and her team (Salleh), date the exodus around the year 1000.[18]

## ACROSS THE BOSPORUS

Once they arrived in the Balkans, the migrating Romani groups were called by a variety of names from Greek *Atsingani* or *Gyifti*[19] in derived forms such as *cigany*, *tsigani*, or *kubti*, *kibti*.[20] In Central/Western Europe, beyond the Balkans, the newly arriving Romanies were misnamed Turks, Saracens, Egyptians, heathens, pagans, and *kleine aegipter*, in German, which refers to people from Asia Minor.[21] These early groups of Roma, as described in contemporary accounts, had counts, dukes, or earls, with titles like "Duke Andrew, Lord of Little Egypt"; rode magnificent horses; carried hawks on their wrists; wore elegant clothing; and were followed by a motley group of "subjects" mounted on inferior horses. Women and children are shown in two-wheel carts drawn by oxen (Nicolle 273 for two-wheeled bullock carts in Indian armies). All the followers were attired in less elegant clothing with the poorest on foot and in rags. How much power these early counts, dukes, and earls actually had over their "subjects" cannot be implied from contemporary accounts since events described were probably staged by the Romanies to mislead the authorities or to avoid persecution, just as they often are today.[22] The only leadership the Roma have ever had internally were these "big men" who represented traveling groups or sedentary populations who accepted them because of their proven ability to protect the group. Among some groups, they were elected, as in Poland (Ficowski). Some groups, such as the Vlach-Roma and the Polish Lowland Gypsies, or *Polska Roma*, also had the Romani tribunal or *Kris-Romani* to handle internal matters dealing with allegations of pollution, infractions of the rules of behavior acceptable to the group, and disputes that could lead to violence in the group. With a scattered and diverse people like the Roma in Europe, there was never any attempt to create any form of united leadership beyond the local "big man," whose leadership was limited

to his own group.[23] Modern Romani Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and other organizations are working from the top down, not from the bottom up, and most of their organizations are unknown to the average Romani man or woman in the rural settlements and the urban slums. Modern Romanies do, however, have a flag,[24] used internationally by Romani organizations and cultural groups, as well as an anthem, *Opre Roma* or *Djelem Djelem*, which is always heard at Romani cultural gatherings and music festivals, and appears on many CDs of Romani music. Romanies also celebrate April 8 as International Romani Day, commemorating the first World Romani Congress in London, United Kingdom, in 1971, when the Romani flag and the anthem were adopted, along with a decision to petition the United Nations for membership as an NGO. This became a reality in 1979.

In Europe and the Balkans, the migrating groups either chose the locations they wanted to claim as their own territory or, through persecution, were driven into regions they might not have chosen to reside in. Originally seen as wandering pilgrims, this status ended by the sixteenth century following the collapse of Roman Catholic hegemony in Europe due to the Protestant Reformation and other factors. The Age of Romaphobia and persecution had begun, and continues into the twenty-first century in Europe. Europeans also associated them with the then expanding power of the Ottomans into Central Europe, and saw them as Turkish spies (Fraser; Hancock, "The Emergence of Romani"). These early Roma followed an exclusive culture, based on the Indian caste system, because of which they saw surrounding non-Roma as sources of pollution that must be kept away from their camps and settlements.[25] The outsiders, mainly peasants, saw this as an attempt to hide something. They began to believe that Roma were thieves, child-stealers, cannibals, and definitely outside the bosom of the church. Local priests told their flocks that the Gypsies had made the nails used to crucify Christ, and that they and the Jews had colluded to "murder the Son of God."[26] Their alleged Christianity was also suspect in an age of religious intensity where life revolved around the church, the saints, avoidance of sin and Satan, and eventual salvation after death. Roma never attended mass or took the Holy Sacraments, nor appeared to follow the Christian virtues of hard work for long hours, poverty and misery on earth, leading to eternal rewards in Heaven.[27]

Gypsies seemed to come and go as they pleased, there was always the sound of music[28] and gaiety from their camps, their women dressed in sinful bright clothing, and they seemed favored by the local nobility. They were seen as dirty[29] and ugly in appearance like Satan's imps. Black was definitely not beautiful to the medieval church and the peasantry. Soon, they were defined as "worshippers of Satan" and the petty pilfering of peasant produce by Roma was another cause of hatred. Periodically, mobs of armed peasants would attack and murder Roma in their camps or settlements, or kill lone Roma they encountered. There were no laws in force to prevent this.[30] In some countries, "Gypsy hunts" were still being conducted where nomadic Roma were hunted down and killed like wild animals into the nineteenth century (Hancock, *The Pariah Syndrome*, 58)

In feudal Eastern Europe and in the Ottoman Empire (Marushkiova and Popov, *Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire*), Roma were found to be useful for the artisan services they could perform and were tolerated, if not loved. In Christian Europe, many settled around the castles of the nobility and later on the edge of villages; others became seasonally nomadic and returned to their settlements during the winter. They paid taxes and, in Central/Eastern Europe, tax collectors called *Voevods*, or some other title, were appointed to supervise them and collect the taxes. Some of them might have been Romani.[31] In Western Europe and Bohemia, Roma were discouraged from settling, especially in Britain, France, the Netherlands, the German states, Scandinavia, and Italy, which were technologically more advanced than feudal Eastern Europe, and they were developing a growing, urban, mercantile class. The feudal system had given way to the Renaissance, and the nation states were cementing their power, except in theocratic Spain, which, although a nation state, remained scientifically and technologically behind and straitjacketed by the Inquisition.[32] The western countries already had strong trades and artisan guilds that resented Romani artisan interlopers and requested the rulers to get rid of them, thus driving them into the hinterlands, where they obtained some protection from the nobility who appreciated their services on their vast estates.

The Western-European Romanies were thus forced into commercial nomadism, servicing the nobility and the local villages far from the urban centers where the trade guilds had monopolies. This, then, became their traditional way of life, artisan work, entertainment, middle-men activities, horse trading, fortune telling by the women,

begging, and other nomadic professions augmented by smuggling, a widespread industry among non-Roma during this period and supported by people in high places. In England and other countries of Western Europe, they were lumped with the "masterless men and their wenches," "tinkers," and other wandering vagabonds such as maimed ex-soldiers of the kings' wars and former monks—now homeless after Henry VIII's altercation with the Pope over his divorce, resulting in the end of the monasteries in Protestant England[33]—and similar groups on the continent. Gradually, they began to lose their ethnic status of Egyptians. Until the seventeenth century, they were seen as an undesirable social group rather than an original, ethnic population, even if misnamed "Egyptians."

Because of persecution, hangings, banishments and transportation to the colonies of the maritime, empire-building nations, such as Spain, Portugal, later France, the Netherlands and Britain, Romanies were never as numerous as the Roma of Central/Eastern Europe and the Ottoman Empire where the greater part of the Romani population was located.[34] Here, the Romani dialects and customs were better preserved among settlements and widely traveling nomadic groups, constantly intermixing and intermarrying, than in Western Europe where the small Romani populations traveled in small family groups and were cut off from the Roma of Central/Eastern Europe and the Ottoman Empire.[35] Over time, Romanies in the West became subgroups unconnected with Romanies elsewhere. New arrivals from Eastern Europe were few, if any, until the mid-nineteenth century, and their Romani dialects gradually decayed over time until they became registers[36] of the vernacular surrounding language (Borrow, *Romano*; Acton and Kenrick; McLane) and lost their original grammatical structure.[37] In Spain, nomadism was outlawed, and Romanies were forced to settle in *gitanerías* in towns and cities; their ethnic clothing and language were banned, and they were ordered to become *Nuevos Castellanos* or New Castilians (Leblon). As persecution waned in Britain, France, and other countries of Western Europe, Romanies became part of the rural scene, colorful and mysterious, if often feared, nomads who passed through, peddling their wars and plying their trades, trading horses, attending local fairs while the women told fortunes, and practicing midwifery and herbal medicine.

In the Ottoman vassal provinces of Wallachia and Moldavia, Roma had been gradually enslaved beginning in the fourteenth century, and their status soon became the same as that of the Africans in

the southern states before the American Civil War (Hancock, *The Pariah Syndrome*, 16–48). They were not totally emancipated until the *Slubuzhénya*[38] of 1864. Serfdom, and even slavery, for Romanies existed elsewhere in Europe,[39] but not on the totality and scale of the Romanian Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia. Where Roma were not slaves or serfs, they existed in numerous subdivisions, often defined by occupation of the group as a whole, by geographical location, or by some other factor. Within these subgroupings, they were further divided into extended families and clans. Leadership of these groups was centered on the "big man," variously called *Rrom baro*, *bulabasha*, and *shero-Rrom* depending on the group and location, and whether nomadic or sedentary. These men were usually self-appointed, and accepted because of their abilities to eliminate problems for the group and to obtain money and favors from the local baron, the church, or some other outside source, much like the modern executive directors of citizens: self-help organizations. Big men were often referred to as "Gypsy kings" to the outside world, which gave rise to a mythological belief in Gypsy Royalty (sic) among outsiders. Elders of the group were spiritual advisors and custodians of the traditions, genealogies, and culture of the groups, while post-menopausal women served as spiritual advisors for the young women and were feared for their knowledge, real or alleged, of magic and witchcraft. This gave rise to the mythical *phuri dai* (grandmother, matriarch) in literature, another hackneyed creation by the concocters of the Gypsy myth. Barbara Walker writes: "The matriarch was the center of gypsy tribal life. 'Everything that went on around a tribal mother resembled the old pagan sex rites.' Her husband was a drone whose function was to impregnate her. The tribe supported him in idleness but looked down on him as a non productive member. If he failed to beget perfect children, he was 'accidentally' killed and another stud-chieftain took his place" (361).

As time passed, these various groups found an economic niche in their local communities, which varied between groups. Nomadic Romanies practiced artisan work, horse trading, entertainment, and other skills suitable for nomads. Sedentary *jatis*[40] and communities also found a niche from manufacturing of items, blacksmithing, entertainment, and agricultural work. Certain extended family groups and clans followed traditional occupations. Some were musician and entertainer groups; others, metalworking groups; others, horse traders; down to those who were mere beggars and sharpeners of

augers, or simply straightened bent nails for resale. As in India, the various subgroups or *jatis* ranked higher or lower in the Romani caste system: musicians, horse traders, and coppersmiths were seen as higher in status than collectors of rags, or scavengers (forerunners of today's recyclers), and they were above the beggars who were still a step above the thieves. Skills changed along with the economies and advancing technology, and all Roma had more than one trade or skill they could turn to when another went into slump. Versatility and adaptability in self-employment enabled them to survive after the fury of the earlier persecutions had abated.[41] By the nineteenth century, they were accepted and tolerated, even if not fully welcomed, in most areas of Europe, excluding the German states.[42]

## ROMA ENTER THE MODERN ERA

When the Romani slaves were freed in 1864, many of those who were nomadic[43] on the estates of their owners, began to leave the Romanian provinces, heading for new opportunities away from the "Land of Pain."[44] They were photographed in Poland in 1865 (Ficowski photos 7–14), soon appeared in Hungary (Tamas), and later, in France by the late ninteenth century. By that time they had also arrived in the Americas in considerable numbers.[45] Today, they constitute the main Romani group from Canada through the United States to Mexico, Central America, and South America. Other groups of these Vlach-Roma remained in Europe, forming local populations that still continued to travel around as nomadic coppersmiths and horse traders. Those Roma who remained in Romania, now free like the former slaves in the United States after the Emancipation, remained at the bottom of the social scale.[46] Elsewhere in Europe, Roma had established a niche for themselves, which was soon to be shattered by World War I. After 1918, the old empires with their vast territories, with freedom for Roma to travel widely, were replaced by new, fiercely nationalistic states formed from the debris of these empires, while communism had replaced the Tsarist empire in the new Soviet Union. Now there were more borders and more restrictions for travel.[47] Sedentary Roma found themselves under pressure to conform to the new nation states in language, customs, and lifestyle. Technology began to demand new work skills for many artisan groups and sedentary jatis who had traditionally manufactured various items

now outmoded. Technology forced them to adapt to the new conditions. This readaptation might have happened in Europe the way it did in the Americas, where Roma were left alone to adapt to changing conditions,[48] but yet another European war was looming on the horizon.

## THE "NOBLE SAVAGES"

During this period, the literary Gypsy, earlier presented by Cervantes (*La Gitanilla*), Victor Hugo (*Notre-Dame de Paris*), and other pioneers, was expanded by Victorian novelists, mostly from the leisured and educated members of the dilettante and idle upper class in a large number of novels, augmented by plays, short stories, operas, and other artistic creations. Orientalists and others, such as amateur linguists and sociologists, who lamented the passing of "arcadian" rural life as the Industrial Revolution forced working people into city slums to work long hours to support them, discovered the Gypsies in Britain and romanticized them in their literary creations as "noble savages,"[49] obviously influenced by previous novels about other "primitive" cultures from Native Americans to Indians in the British Raj.[50]

This mythical "Gypsy" stereotype took on a life of its own and the same hackneyed clichés were used over and over again. Like some Star Wars, science fiction, alien, people-consuming, sponge-like creature, the Victorian and post-Victorian novelists fed on previous works and their own fertile minds to create a composite "Gypsy" in their works of fiction, combining bits and pieces of many unrelated Romani groups and cultures—the colorful caravans of the English Romanies, the fiddles of the Hungarian *Romungere*, the costumes of the Romanian Vlach-Romani women, the soulful flamenco guitar, *cante jondo* (deep song) and dancing of the Spanish Romanies—until this ludicrous, composite creation replaced the genuine Romanies in the minds of the reading public.[51] A universal Romani language also appears in these novels, originally lifted from Borrow's *Romano Lavo Lil*,[52] augmented by words and phrases copied from many differing European dialects found in novels, travelogues and nonfiction, and, sometimes, scholarly articles in the old British *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*. Others, lured by the stereotype of "Gypsy magic," searched in vain for this unattainable Holy Grail (Leland). Many authors also delighted in mentioning that Romanies had "stolen" words from many other languages to create Romani. All languages

have batteries of loan words from other languages and would die out without acquiring more. English retains only 20 percent of its vocabulary that is Anglo Saxon (McCrum et al 47), while infected Romani dialects can trace around 65 percent of their core root elements (words[53]) to Indian languages our ancestors spoke when they left India![54] In the twentieth century, concocters of the Gypsy myth inspired by George Borrow, such as Charles Godfrey Leland, Irving Brown, Konrad Bercovici, Walter Starkie, Jean Paul Clébert, Jan Yoors (*Crossings*; *The Gypsies*), Bart McDowell, Franv√ßois Vaux de Foletier, Anne Sophie Tiberghien, Roger Moreau, and Isabel Fonseca continued to "follow the Gypsy trail" to present a totally personalized, and often misleading, romanticized narrative of their odysseys into Gypsyology. When feature film moguls discovered commercial value in the Gypsies and put them on celluloid, Romani reality was doomed, as millions of captive viewers lapped up this "Gypsy pabulum" in films like *Golden Earrings*, *Hot Blood*, and *King of the Gypsies.* In Britain and Europe, Victorian and post-Victorian missionaries, who felt threatened by the mythical heathenism of the "noble savages," and were zealous to save lost Gypsy souls for the Lord and to rescue them from the clutches of Satan, went to Romani camps and settlements to restore these "lost children" to the bosom of Christ.[55]

## THE *BÁRO PORRAJMOS* AND COMMUNISM

There is no accurate total for the number of Roma and Sinti who died in the *Porrajmos* or Romani Holocaust. A conservative estimate might be one-and-a-half to as many as two million. Too many victims were killed without anything being recorded, and untold numbers were listed among the Jews, Serbs, Russians, partisans, and other victims both by the Nazis and their puppet regimes in Croatia, Hungary, Romania,[56] and elsewhere.[57] The impact this had on the survivors has not been fully documented. Among those who died of disease and malnutrition in the camps, it was the elderly, the custodians of culture and tradition, who succumbed more easily.[58] Roma in the camps were unable to follow their rules of cleanliness, could not avoid contamination, and became totally demoralized. Women were raped and otherwise abused, and the survivors never fully recovered their image of self-respect. Most refused to even discuss the details of their incarceration. Surviving communities were devastated. Some communities

were almost annihilated, such as the original Romani population in the Nazi Protectorates of Czechoslovakia who were first interned in the camps of Lety by Pisek, Hodonin, and lesser camps,[59] and later the survivors were sent directly to the death factories in Poland. The arrests and incarcereration of Roma in the protectorates were conducted by Czech Nazi puppets[60] who later were never arrested or charged as war criminals (Hovelson; Polansky; Armstrong 62–77; Kenrick and Puxon, *Gypsies under the Swastika*, 55–59; Lee, *The Romani Diaspora*). Former postwar German governments and some German apologists have attempted to deny that Sinti and Roma were selected, like the Jews, for racial reasons, but because they were asocials living lives unworthy of life and potential criminals by heredity (Lewy). This does not stand up to official Nazi documents, which prove the contrary. Immediately following the Holocaust was the impact of hard-line communism that spread over the countries that had the greatest Romani populations in Europe. While these communist countries differed somewhat in their treatment of Roma, excluding Yugoslavia, under Tito, and the Soviet Union, which had been communist since 1917, the other, newly established communist countries all had a common thread. The Roma were slated for total assimilation into the proletariat. Benevolent ethnocide had replaced brutal genocide. It was decided that the Roma were inbred, primitive, and backward, their culture was not worth preserving, except perhaps for music and dance,[61] and their language was defined as "gibberish," incapable of development and not worth preservation or respect (Kohn). They were to be trained in useful employment, removed from their settlements, and relocated in urban areas to be absorbed into the general work force, and while these grandiose plans were attempted, they did not fully achieve their goals. They did, however, shatter the economy, self-reliance, and culture of the Roma. In some countries, notably the former Czechoslovakia, sterilization of Romani women was promoted, often without the women knowing what had been done to them and without their consent. The Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceauşescu had the opposite idea. He wanted both Romanian and Romani women to bear as many children as possible, and incentives were offered, while birth control and abortion were outlawed. Ceauşescu's plan was to increase the population of Romanians and to provide them with a force of Gypsy helots who would do all the menial work, freeing the racially superior Vlachs to be educated and work for the glory of greater Romania and himself—reimposition

of Romani slavery under another guise. The result has been a massive number of orphans, of whom a large percentage is Roma, who are riddled with AIDS.[62]

In all communist countries, nomadism was outlawed, horses shot, and caravans without wheels turned into stationary shacks (Koudelka). Romani free enterprise was condemned as reactionary and capitalistic and criminalized, while travel was strictly curtailed, as it was for all the proletariat. The Roma were now deprived of their traditional economy and adaptability, and became wards of the state, much like the native peoples of the Americas. Beans and blankets instead of assistance to develop their own culture as a self-empowered legitimate ethnic or national minority within the communist system. "Big Brother" knew best what was good for them, and provided them with housing, education, employment, medical care, and the other benefits of communism, with the result that they became wholly dependent on the state. They were, however, protected from violence against them by racists under the communist laws. Massive discrimination existed, as it always had, and still does, but their lives were not in danger from murders and violence by non-Roma. Some nomadic Roma managed to escape from the communist countries and find refuge in Western Europe and the Americas,[63] but most remained.

Roma born after communism did not learn or practice the work skills of their parents that were now illegal. Work was provided since all citizens were guaranteed employment under the socialist system, while literacy also improved. Some were taught trades and skills, but most, especially in the rural areas, relied on semiskilled jobs and agricultural labor. In Hungary, rural Roma and *Romungere*[64] were brought to Budapest in "Black Trains," and housed in hostels to work as street cleaners and other menial tasks.[65]

Roma in Tito's Yugoslavia had a somewhat different history. Here, they were accepted as a national minority, many were educated, and an intellectual class developed, along with radio stations, newspapers in Romani, music and dance groups, sports groups, and other manifestations of culture. There were even Romani deputies in the Yugoslav government. Some did remain almost untouched by this in the rural regions, for instance, in settlements in Macedonia where there was also a "Romani town" called Suto Orizare, founded by Romani refugees from the Gypsy Quarter in Skopje after the disastrous earthquake destroyed the Romani *mahala* in 1963. In the ruins of the former Yugoslavia, it has now been reduced to a slum or shanty

town reminiscent of Bangladesh or Latin America. Many were able to travel to Western Europe as guest workers, earn money, and return to Suto Orizare or elsewhere and build houses or start the type of small business allowed under Tito. Some relocated in New York, where they now have a prosperous business community. A similar situation existed in the Soviet Union under Lenin, but was curtailed by Stalin, who frowned on ethnic organizations, and who, despite his murderous despotism,[66] was reportedly favorable toward traditional Roma and their culture. It was his successor, Nikita Khrushchev, who officially banned Romani nomadism in Russia in 1956 (Kenrick and Acton).

Now reduced to the level of a subproletariat in the eleven post-World War II communist states, some Romanies, especially Vlach-Roma in rural regions, found ways to survive under communism, augmenting their low salaries with the black market and illegal buying and selling (Stewart). Romani leaders of any description could only maintain their positions by joining the communist party and becoming minor functionaries dealing with the Romani community, mainly to organize cultural festivals and to become as corrupt as their non-Romani colleagues in the Party. The small, educated class could only survive by following the Party line. But conditions were different in different countries. The tight control exercised over the population in the towns and cities could not always be exercised in the rural areas, and in countries, or regions of countries, that were mainly agricultural, Roma shared in the communal farms along with non-Roma. Generally speaking, basic education, housing, and health care vastly improved, raising health standards; employment was provided; and they were protected against pogroms and assaults by non-Roma. In Romania and Albania, where no political system has ever seemed to work well, even communism was affected; and, throughout the communist era, some groups, like the Kalderash and related groups, managed to retain their traditional skills, which were useful in the new democracies.[67] The negative factors in this thinly disguised program of ethnocide were not always apparent to Roma: The nonrecognition of the Romani culture and language resulted in its slow destruction, while the outlawing of the traditional Romani economy of self-employment and free enterprise made Roma dependant on the State for self-sufficiency. They were becoming more and more dependent on the system for their basic needs, and less able to change anything on their own initiative because of the limiting and suffocating

bureaucracy[68] and its resulting mindset (Lee, *The Romani Diaspora*; "Roma Victimization").

## THE NEW DEMOCRACIES

The end of communism impacted heavily on the Roma. They fell from a subproletariat to a position at the bottom of the new order that gradually became worse as they lost their jobs, their state-run housing, and other benefits. Large numbers were gradually forced to return to the shanty towns and shelters they had left earlier, or relocate in slum ghettoes in the cities (Pogány; Scheffel). The laws protecting them from violence disappeared, and the new freedom allowed skinheads, neo-Nazis, right-wing national and white supremacist groups and politicians to emerge from the woodwork (Crowe; Guy). Murders of Roma, Gypsy bashing, and the burning of Romani homes became common in many countries. In Bosnia and Kosovo, untold numbers were murdered during the wars and ethnic cleansing, but listed among the Bosnians, Serbs, or Muslim Albanians (*Roma in the Kosovo Conflict*; *Until the Very Last "Gypsy"*) according to surviving Roma who arrived in Canada as refugees.

Education of children declined in quality as more and more children were shunted off to schools for slow learners and the mentally challenged. Instead of the communist paternalistic assimilation programs, Roma were now subsidized by welfare, which, for families with children, provided more income than the type of menial work they might be able to obtain, if lucky.[69] This is creating a welfare culture with the predictable loss of self-esteem, increase in alcoholism, drug abuse, family violence, petty crime, and other social problems. These social problems have been exacerbated as the Romani traditional values of the *Romaníya* (Lee "The Rom-Vlach Gypsies," 188–230), family respect, pride of work, and self-determination are replaced by the values of the "host cultures" along with exploitation by local non-Romani criminal gangs. On the positive side, communication with the outside world was opened, and Romani leaders and organizers could now travel and work with Romani organizations outside of the former communist world. Unfortunately, too many of them had been trained under communism and were unable to understand the democratic Romani organizations in the former noncommunist world, such as the International Romani Union.[70] New Romani organizations were

formed in the former communist countries and grew rapidly in number. Typical Romani organizations exist in the former Czechoslovakia, The World Romani Congress based in Germany, *Romani Criss* in Romania, the revamped Romani Union in Prague and many others. To date, these organizations have failed to form a common front and to agree on a defined course of action. On the other hand, some organizations, like the European Roma Rights Center (ERRC) in Budapest, have done, and continue to do, valuable work on behalf of Roma, as do many individual Romani and non-Romani figures connected with European organizations and academic institutions.

Funding from George Soros and other benefactors has allowed numerous NGOs to be formed, while national governments have created representation by toothless front organizations, mostly staffed by suites and stooges, who allegedly represent Romani interests, such as the Roma National Parliament in Hungary, and whose power, at best, is to offer suggestions to the national government. Their main aim was to create band-aid solutions that could prove to the European Union (EU) countries that they were ready to be included in this exclusive fraternity because they were meeting its requirements for equality of all national minorities,[71] without persecution of any. A large percentage of the allocated funds allegedly went into the pockets (through the expense accounts) of those running the NGOs, or into a self-consuming bureaucracy (offices, studies and surveys, and other seemingly impressive but nonproductive and expensive activities), while the conditions for the average Romanies grew steadily worse.[72] Most Romani refugees, now in Canada, constantly assert that: "Things were better for Roma under communism. Then we were people. Now we are Gypsies."[73] On the other hand, Romani refugees from these countries now in Canada have started businesses, found employment, and show, beyond any possible doubt, that the alleged laziness and inability of Roma to work and hold jobs is mythology.

After the establishment of the New Democracies, the EU countries were faced with a new problem; large numbers of Romani refugees seeking refugee status under the Geneva Convention on Refugees (Centre of International Studies). While the EU countries have been very vocal about Roma persecution in these would-be member countries, and about how these countries needed to clean up their act before they could be admitted, they have been equally unwilling to accept Romani refugees fleeing this intolerance they had so

vociferously condemned. These countries defined them as "economic refugees" and, thus, they became ineligible for admission under the Geneva Convention on Refugees.[74] No government among the new democracies actively or officially persecutes Roma, although many allow their national and municipal police to have a free hand when "investigating" Roma, often resulting in brutality and violations of civil and human rights (ERRC booklets 1–11; *Roma Rights Magazine* 1997–2006; ERRC reports 1996–2006; "Cases of Relevance to the United Nations Convention"; *Destroying Ethnic Identity*) as well as tolerating local mayors who evict Roma from their town or villages, like the Roma in Zamoly, Hungary.[75] It has been, and still is, the failure of all these New Democracies to provide protection for Roma against persecution and massive discrimination by the police, local authorities, and the local population (Open Society Institute). Under the Geneva Convention on Refugees, this is tantamount to official persecution, and allows Roma to seek refugee status in signatory countries. Little action is taken to prevent massive job discrimination in the workplace, housing, and public sectors. In Romania and elsewhere, employment ads in the local papers are allowed to state: "No Roma wanted" or words to this effect (Lee, *The Romani Diaspora*). Roma are, in effect, living in a state of apartheid in the new democracies (Urban). In the Czech Republic, signs appear in windows of discotheques, cinemas, and restaurants stating: "No dogs or Gypsies allowed!"

Now that Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria are EU members, it remains to be seen whether conditions will improve for the Roma or will the proposed improvements lauded by the EU as "significant" be endlessly delayed or even abandoned. If the evidence of the treatment of Roma in some of the long-established EU countries is any example—such as the deplorable refugee camps in Italy (Lee, Introduction), the campsite problems in Britain, and prejudice and actual persecution in Germany, Austria, France, Britain, Italy, and elsewhere—the future of Sinti and Roma in Europe is not all that promising. The problem is not so much one of ethnic or national rights of Roma as minorities where the present focus now lies, but of fundamental human rights as guaranteed under the United Nations Charter of Human Rights (Pogány 149–50).

"Chi avav tumênde te mangav manrro,
Avav tumênde te mangav pakiv."

I do not come to you asking for bread,
I come to you to ask for respect.
(Romani saying)

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## NOTES

1. From Greek *a* (not) and *thingano* (I touch), derived from the shibboleth of the *Athinggánoi*, which was said to be: "Touch me not for I am pure."
2. This is similar to the word "Gypsy," derived from the earlier Egyptian, in Britain, which was originally applied only to Romanies, but has now come to mean any nomadic person of "no fixed abode" and no longer implies any ethnic definition.

3. There were Indian traders, dancers, musicians, and ghulams soldiers in the former Arab Caliphate that was overthrown by the Turkish ghulams serving the Arabs in the tenth century. Firdawsi may well have been mixing an historical legend with the actual court of Mahmud which continued this tradition of employing Indian entertainers as well as ghulam troops.
4. It might be claimed that this earlier and long-accepted theory could be said to be based on Grellmann, but it has been repeated and expanded upon so often that it cannot be attributed to any one authority.
5. There is no such a group as Gypsies or Romanies in India. The Indian Gypsies were a creation of Victorian authors in the late nineteenth century to describe nomadic tribes or groups in India, based on the false assumption that they must be related to the wandering Gypsies of Europe. Even some Indian scholars (see, for example, Lal; Singh, *The Sikligars, The Sansis*; and Randhawa) fell victim to this myth and have attempted to link their own peripatetic peoples with European Roma. European Roma are not descended from any single Indian group, lifestyle, or population, but an amalgam of many Indians of the military castes (Rajputs) and their camp followers. Some input groups like certain *Banjara* tribes probably contributed to this mixed population of Indians that later became Romanies in Anatolia.
6. In written history, they are referred to as *mawali* (client soldiers) and were organized into *Qiqaniyya* regiments by the Ghaznavids (Ian Hancock, personal correspondence).
7. *Ghazi*, "defender of the frontiers of Islam."
8. It was the practice of all nomadic hordes from the Steppe, such as Huns, Mongols, Turks, etc., to drive defeated armies ahead of them, and to create large numbers of refugees, fleeing them with their cattle to disrupt an enemy army coming to meet them, and to inspire terror. Shock troops were used to raid the villages and nomadic herdsmen in front of the advancing invaders to create these conditions. The Indian troops could have been used in this way, like the later Ottoman *bashi-bazouks*.
9. This would have been eastern Armenia since the Armenian loan words in Romani exist in all European Romani dialects, and are thus unlikely to have been adopted in Western Armenia (Cilicia) since it is improbable that all migrating Romani groups passing through on their way westward would have adopted the same Armenian words. Furthermore, Lomavren—spoken by a group in Armenia claiming to be from India—has these same Armenian words that are missing in Domari, which has traces of a third gender indicating a much earlier exodus from India. Hancock theorizes that the Lomavren speakers might have been a branch of the original Hindu troops and camp followers in the Ghaznavid army who remained in Armenia and thus did not adopt the large battery of Greek found in dialects descended from those of the main group who went through Armenia into Greek-speaking Rûm. Unfortunately, modern Lomavren is a register of Armenian and has lost its original grammatical structure, like English or Spanish Romani registers, which makes conclusive comparison impossible (Ian Hancock, personal correspondence).
10. This area became a Seljuk Sultanate after the Battle of Manzikirt in 1071, where the Byzantines were soundly defeated and lost control of this region.
11. Mahmud Ghazni did not forcibly convert Indian troops to Islam. Instead, his policy was to have them retain their Hindu religion so their loyalty would be to him rather than to the surrounding Muslim populations where they were sent to serve as ghazi in Khurasan. As Hindus, they would be prohibited from learning Arabic in Ghazna or Khurasan since non-Muslims were not allowed to be taught the language of Allah. The same held true for Christian and Turkmen Pagan troops or Cumans in Mahmud's armies. Hindus were sent to garrison Muslim or Christian regions of his empire, and Muslim troops were sent to garrison Christian or Pagan areas of the empire. Christian

troops were sent to garrison areas where the people were non-Christians. In this way, these garrisons had no compunction when ordered to massacre rebellious populations of other religions, and their loyalty was to their protector, the ruler.

12. This theory maintains that the Indians became "Gypsies" in Rûm, where nomadism was the norm, and were not nomadic when they were taken out of India by Mahmud Ghazni. This nomadism was the result of adaptation to local conditions in Anatolia.
13. After the Battle of Ani, around 1080, a large Armenian population migrated en masse to Cilicia in Byzantine territory, which became known as "Lesser Armenia." This remained an Armenian kingdom until 1375, when it was conquered by the Mamluks from Egypt and came under Muslim rule. It was later incorporated into the Ottoman Empire.
14. A much more detailed account of this latest theory can be found in Lee's *The Romani Diaspora in Canada*, and in Hancock, "On Origins."
15. One important Armenian borrowing is Romani *grai/grast* (horse). In Armenian, *grai* means horse as a beast of burden. Romani has Indian *khuro*, now meaning colt, and it would seem likely that Romani horse trading began in Anatolia where horses as beasts of burden could be used and traded. In India, the beasts of burden were the ox or bullock, and for heavy work, the elephant, while camels were common in Ghazni. Horse trading could never have existed, even among *dom*, in India, since riding horses were imported from the Arabs by the rulers and the Rajputs. See Nicolle for horses in India (272), bullocks in India, and two-wheel bullock carts in Indian armies (273).
16. Some modern linguists have defined Romani as "A Balkanized Indian language."
17. While a connection between Dom and Rom seems tempting, it is not conclusive. Many linguists have pointed out that a certain "d" sound in Sanskrit became an "r" sound (usually written "rr" by many modern scholars) so that Dom became Lom in the Middle East and Rom in Europe. However, a study of Kalderash and other dialects reveals that the vast majority of words employing this "rr" sound are athematic items (loan words) from non-Indian languages, mostly European, such as *rrubízla* (gooseberry) or *rráta* (wheel).
18. Salleh, Anna. 6 Sept. 2004. http://www.abc.net.au/science/news/stories/s1191889.htm.
19. In modern Greek, a male Gypsy is called *tsiganos* or *gyiftos*, while a Muslim Gypsy is called *Túrko-Gyiftos*, which rank in descending order, *tsiganos* (Gypsy but Greek and like us, more or less), *gyiftos* (nomad Gypsy, potential trouble-maker"), and *túrko-gyiftos* (watch out for him, potential criminal).
20. This means Egyptian. There are records of established Egyptian communities in the Byzantine Empire who were confused with Roma.
21. Researchers are undecided as to whether this refers to Asia Minor, known as Little or Lesser Egypt to Europeans, or a region in Greece, in the Peloponnesus, called Modon, ruled by Venice, where there was a Romani community called *Romiti* (People of Rûm). The Middle East and Egypt had been ruled by Persia, then by the Eastern Roman Empire and Byzantium. After the Arab conquests, Egypt became part of the Arab Caliphate, which included the Middle East. This was continued under the Abbasid Caliphate, then the Tilundid Emirate, reverting to the Abbasid Caliphate and then to the Fatamid Caliphate until conquered by the Seljuk Turks. By the thirteenth century, it was included in the Ayyubid Sultanate and the following Mamluk Sultanate. During all of this period, the regions of the Middle East, especially Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan, etc., were part of an area ruled from Egypt, excluding the short-lived crusader kingdoms established briefly in the Middle East. This probably accounts for the European practice of describing this region as "lesser" or "minor" Egypt.

22. During the nomadic era in Canada and the United States, Romanies, both Kalderash and British Romanichals, would stage Gypsy marriages complete with colorful ceremonies performed by "Gypsy kings" in rural towns and villages where the locals would pay admission to see these and be sold items, have their fortunes told, and be otherwise used as a source of income. The same young couple would be married over and over again by the "Gypsy king" in impressive ceremonies eagerly gobbled up by the local press. In modern, urban areas in the United States and Canada, the police will approach the local "big man" and ask him to do something about a family or families who are suspected of practicing swindles in their reader-advisor parlors. He will then tell the police that he will deal with this. Usually he warns the troublemakers to desist. If they continue, he will run them out of town, not so much to help the police, but to prevent the rest of the *kumpaníya* (a work alliance of colleagues, or family members, or members of unrelated Romani groups) from being harassed, or risk having the local municipality pass a new bylaw making reader-advising illegal. Rather than having absolute power, this local leader is simply applying the rules laid down by the local tribunal of Roma in the *kumpaníya* with regards to work strategies. The police, however, usually consider him to be a powerful leader.
23. Sometimes a local "big man" will attempt to set himself up as "king of all the Gypsies," like the notorious Tinya Bimbo in the United States who was feared by other Roma because of his reputed gangster-type methods of attempted control. Thousands of American Roma flocked to his funeral, not because they wanted to pay respect, but to assure themselves that he was really dead. Comic opera "kings," like the late Ion Cioabă in Romania from "Royal Romani dynasties" are simply figureheads patronized by the Romanian government and presented on TV as examples of the illiteracy and "primitiveness" of the Gypsies, much like some professional native leaders in Canada. Some educated Romanies do manage to be interviewed in Romania, like educated native people in Canada, but these are usually radio talk shows or TV interviews that take place early in the morning, like Canada AM when most people are still asleep or battling along the freeway to get to work, or later on minor TV channels or boring, dull channels such as the CBC in Canada or its equivalent in Romania. The "Gypsy kings" and Native "Chieftains" are interviewed on the major channels or during national news features, as was the case in Romania during the uproar about the "primitive Gypsy custom" of marrying underage girls which attracted worldwide attention. However, the much earlier murders of three Roma and the looting and burning of an entire community of Romani houses in Hădăreni, Transylvania, by a Romanian mob, received no coverage whatsoever in Canada or the United States. While the "king" defended teenage marriage, the comments of educated Romani women were ignored.
24. This is a bi-color flag, blue above and green below, with a red wheel or chakra in the center. It was adopted in 1971 at the First Romani Congress in London, United Kingdom, on April 8, 1971, along with the Romani anthem *Opre Roma* (*Arise, Roma*), also called *Djelem Djelem* after a popular Serbian Romani song popularized by the Yugoslavian feature film, *Skupliace Perja* of 1965, which was aired in Canada as *J'ai aussi rencontré les Tsiganes Hereux* (I have even met happy Gypsies).
25. Since traditional Romani groups still follow this exclusive culture today, it is obvious that it was followed in this period.
26. Of course, at the Biblical date of the Crucifixion, the ancestors of the Romanies were still in India.
27. Neither did the nobility and the Vatican who enforced these beliefs on the peasants. They attended Mass but apart from this, ate and drank well, wore expensive clothing and jewelry, slept in comfortable beds, and enjoyed life to the fullest. The excesses of the Vatican and the high-ranking officials of Catholicism was one of the causes of the

Protestant Reformation, led by former priests, like Martin Luther and others, who became disgusted with these excesses.

28. Not much has been recorded as to what this music was or what instruments were employed. There are some records of Gypsy women dancing to entertain the nobility, even Kings, as for James I in Scotland, and the use of small hand drums is mentioned. Drumming, however, except for military purposes, was frowned upon by the medieval church. Some non-Roma in Christian Europe also used drums, frame drums, and tambourines in folk music—such as the Basques and in Moorish Spain—and drums came back into use in folk music by the latter Renaissance. Drums, of course, were widespread in the Ottoman Empire and in Asia. Some attempt has been made to prove that Roma brought Indian instruments to Europe, but solid evidence for this is lacking. Many modern Western musical instruments had their origin in the East. How they got to Europe cannot be determined.
29. The darker skins of the Roma would appear as "dirty," and are frequently mentioned in these early accounts, while their Indian features would be alien to Caucasian peasants unfamiliar with peoples of the Middle East and Asia.
30. Romanies were the obvious scapegoats; somebody toward whom the rage of the peasants could be directed with no fear of repercussions from their social superiors and the church, who were exploiting them on a scale far more massive than that of the Romanies.
31. This was especially true in Poland/Lithuania at this period. See Ficowski's *The Gypsies in Poland: History and Customs* (15–22) for a summary of leadership among Polish Roma of various groups. For the Ottoman Empire, see Marushiakova and Popov, *The Gypsies of Bulgaria*, and especially *Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire*, 27–29.
32. The conquest of Grenada and the expulsion of the Moors and Jews robbed Spain of its cultured and businessmen class, while the opposition to "heretical" new ideas limited scientific advancement. Toledo steel was famous throughout Europe, but not much else in Spanish technology after 1492. The cultural leadership of the Renaissance belonged to Italy, and the technology to Britain, France, the Netherlands, Scandinavia, and the German lands. Gold and silver from the new colonies could not sustain Spain as an equal power in this race, and it fell to a third-rate power in the seventeenth century.
33. These were members of the local populations who wandered the country begging, engaging in artisan work, tree-felling and selling firewood, and other nomadic activities. Their way of life was seen as unacceptable, and they were persecuted, whipped, and ordered to find gainful employment as apprentices to masters, or find some other acceptable niche in respectable society. They predated the arrival of the Romani groups in their countries of origin and, as time passed, there was admixture of these groups and the Romanies, which formed hybrid groups. One possible reason for this mixture might have been the simple fact that so many Romani men were executed or transported that their widows would have been forced to marry these nomadic non-Roma to survive with their fatherless children in countries like Britain, France, Scandinavia, Spain, etc., in Western Europe.
34. These two histories of Romanies in the Western Europe, where they were forced to become nomadic, and Central/Eastern Europe, where they developed settlements and ethnic *jatis*, is vitally important in understanding the different evolution of the two groups.
35. Unlike Roma in Central and Eastern Europe, who often had no language in common other than Romani, British, and other Western European, Roma now isolated in one country, such as England or Spain, all spoke the language of the country as well as Romani. Romanies in Wales also spoke Welsh and Scottish Romanies in the Highlands would have known Gaelic, as well as English.

36. As an example of these registers, I might offer English Romani as follows: *Chavi*, will you *jol* and *pukker* to your *dadus* that the *Romanichals* has *welled acoi*, or, "Lad, will you go and tell your father than the Romanies have arrived" (recorded in England, 1970, from Fred Wood at Leatherhead camp site, Surrey). Some linguists see this as a gradual decay of the language, like Yiddish words used among Jews in American English, while others see it as fairly rapid, as the local Romani population began to speak more and more English with one another. Still others see its origin in a contact speech between Romanies and non-Romani itinerants, which eventually became the language of the entire Romani population in the region or country. Matras discusses para-Romani dialects (registers) in his study *Romani: A Linguistic Introduction* (242–48).
37. There are exceptions to this. In Wales, inflected Romani was still spoken into the twentieth century, but this dialect is now believed to be extinct. The Sinti groups also preserved inflected Romani dialects in Germany, France, Italy, and elsewhere in Western Europe until today. These dialects belong to the Northern-Romani groups of dialects of the First Wave, those who appeared in Western and Northern Europe from around 1400 to 1600. Inflected Romani dialects were preserved better in Central Europe, Eastern Europe, and in the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans.
38. *Slobuzhénya* (freedom/emancipation), Romani from Slavic.
39. For example, galley slavery in maritime countries that had galley fleets, such as France and Spain; plantation and bond slaves in the British colonies and the West Indies; and slaves in Brazil and Spanish America.
40. *Jati*, while an Indian word, is not used in Romani. It was applied to sedentary and nomadic Romani groups who followed a certain trade or work strategy that set them apart from other groups of jatis following different trades or skills, exactly as in India where the castes are divided into *jatis* within the same caste according to the Laws of Manu. It was introduced into Romani studies by the late Milena Hubschmannová. Its closest equivalent in Kalderash Romani might be *nátsiya*, meaning a subdivision of a larger group, since some *nátsiyi* are named after occupations followed or once followed by the clan as a group, such as *Kalderásha* (coppermiths), *Lovára* (horse traders), *Churára* (makers of sieves), and *Tsolára* (sellers of rugs and carpets).
41. Except in the German states, and later in Germany, where severe laws were enforced against Roma that led to eventual incarceration and extermination under the Nazi regime.
42. Here, persecution had been ongoing since the "heathens" arrived in the fifteenth century. It reached its pinnacle during the Nazi Holocaust.
43. This refers to the so-called *Layishi*, who were allowed to travel on the estates of their owners to practice artisan trades. They were under the control of overseers who made sure that the owners received the lion's share of the income derived from this activity. Since they had horses and vehicles, tents, tools, and other essentials, they were able to leave Romania after the emancipation. The house slaves and sedentary slaves on the estates were unable to do this.
44. This expression was coined by Ian Hancock, and was the title of his original manuscript that was published as *The Pariah Syndrome*. It refers to "Romania" then existing only in the two provinces of Moldavia and Wallachia during the period of Romani slavery.
45. Not all Vlach-Roma of this migration were former slaves from the Romanian provinces. Some were from Transylvania, Bulgaria, and Vlach-Romani communities located elsewhere outside the Romanian Principalities who were searching for new opportunities elsewhere.
46. While Romani slavery has vanished from the Romanian history books, its existence has resulted in the widespread fear of Roma in Romania. People cannot enslave others whom they consider their equals. Slaves must be dehumanized and portrayed as dangerous,

savage brutes that must be controlled. This same parallel existed in the United States after the emancipation of the African slaves, giving rise to white attitudes toward free African Americans.

47. Oral accounts from elderly Kalderash in Canada, some of who had come from Europe, mentioned huge areas of travel, from Central Europe or the Balkans to Siberia and from Canada through Latin America before the World War I. In 2001, one elderly *Chergari* (tent-dweller group) coppersmith Rom from Sarajevo, whom I met in a refugee camp near Rome, mentioned to me that he had traveled throughout the Americas and all over Europe, as a child with his family in the 1930s and as an adult, after World War II. Such widespread migrations of *Kalderasha*, *Lovara*, *Chergari* and other groups were common.
48. Roma in the Americas were also spared from the Holocaust and communism, both of which devastated European Romani communities. In many ways, they have retained much more of the traditional Romani culture that suffered from the nationalistic, and often fascist, nation states, the Holocaust, and communism in Europe. When horse trading died out as a viable means of support for the group as a whole, American and Canadian Roma soon learned how to repair, buy, and sell used automobiles as the family car and business truck replaced the horse and wagon. This is now one of the main work strategies for the men, along with buying and selling surplus goods, dealing in gold, jewelry and diamonds, and even real estate. Others have branched out and renovate engines for power-driven pleasure craft, and many own property like amusement parks and small, traveling carnivals in the United States and Mexico. Much the same happened in Central and South America. Roma in Central and Eastern Europe were prevented from developing new strategies by communism and massive discrimination by the local populations and the often-repeated European myth touted by "experts" on Roma who blame the victims. It was the Holocaust which shattered their communities and left the survivors destitute, then communism which outlawed Romani free enterprise that are to blame, not the adaptability of the Roma. Communism reduced them to unskilled former members of the sub-proletariat, unable to earn a living in the new democracies and thus, be forced to rely on welfare.
49. This was a boon to such people. Why risk shipwreck, tropical diseases, cannibalism, and other dangers to study some faraway culture when right up the "Blitherington Lane" in "Mumper's Dingle," were "noble savages" who could be studied during one afternoon's leisurely walk with a notebook? And there was even the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* who might publish this "lore!"
50. Even Canada's Robertson Davies (*The Rebel Angels Trilogy*) and Charles de Lint (*Mulengro*) have succumbed to this Victorian mythology in their novels published in the twentieth century.
51. A similar composite "Indian," a victim of more pragmatic attitudes, appeared in Western novels and Hollywood films, with trappings from many different native cultures similar to Hollywood's composite or generic African.
52. The first lexicon of English Romani appeared in print in 1874.
53. The number of "words" in any language, especially inflected languages, is meaningless. A root element in Romani like *bash-* (make noise, bang, clang, play music, etc.) can be inflected into dozens of words.
54. Another cliché often repeated by too many writers is that Romani lacks original words for "agriculture," "duty," and "possession." English did not have these words originally, either, since these three words, among thousands of others, have been "stolen" from French and Latin. Like modern English, Romani dialects have adopted them from elsewhere.
55. Because of this policy, many Romani children were taken from their parents and raised in Christian orphanages where they lost their family connections and cultural heritage.

Thousands of native children in Canada suffered the same fate, but were also sexually abused by their Christian caregivers. A large number of lawsuits by adult native people who suffered this fate are now in progress.

56. Antonescu shipped thousands of Romanian Roma to the River Bug in Transnistria. Many died on the way there or after their arrival from brutality, malnutrition, disease, or were shot while attempting to escape, and from other causes. The total number of victims can only be estimated. I have recorded accounts of massacres relatives of the victims, but I have not found much evidence of such atrocities in books dealing with the Romani Holocaust.
57. It was a common practice of Nazi troops, that when hostages were to be rounded up and shot in reprisal for acts of resistance, Jews and Roma were taken to fill the quota of a town or village whenever possible. The executed hostages were then listed as French, Polish, Czechs, etc.
58. They would also have been liquidated on arrival in extermination or work camps along with the sick and the children because of their inability to perform any useful labor for the Nazis.
59. These camps were created in 1940 and run by Czechs. They were not extermination camps, per se, but thousands of Czech Roma died there from brutality, malnutrition, disease, hypothermia, and other causes. In 1942, they became concentration camps, and in 1943, Czech Roma were shipped from there directly to Auschwitz and elsewhere by the Germans.
60. The current Romani population of the Czech Republic is mostly of Slovak-Romani origin that went there or was brought to the Czech region during the communist era.
61. Communist countries sponsored Romani music and dance troupes, like *Roma* in Poland, which toured the world, and in Canada, the Quebec government and Hungary signed an agreement where Romani musicians would be contracted to perform in Hungarian restaurants in Quebec as employees of the communist Hungarian government. They were housed and fed by the restaurant owner, and most of their earnings went toward this and to the communist home government. They were able to make a lot of money in tips from nostalgic expatriate Hungarians and with this, they bought jeans, western boots, watches, and other items that they took or shipped back to relatives in Hungary, which were then sold in the black market. The local Hungarian Romani musicians, who had fled the Russian invasion of 1956 and were now citizens of Canada, complained about this since these interlopers were not in the Canadian musicians' union and were depriving them of unionized work, but nothing that could be done at that time had any effect.
62. This was mainly the result of Ceauşescu's "brilliant" idea of collecting blood from sailors on merchant ships in the port of Constanta. Many were from third world countries and were infected with AIDS.
63. A considerable number arrived in Canada during this period and were helped by the Canadian Roma. Many Hungarian Roma arrived after the Russian invasion and later, considerable numbers of Polish and Romanian Roma, the latter fleeing Ceausescu's regime. These Roma, however, entered Canada as nationals of their respective countries, along with fellow non-Roma who were fleeing communism, not as Roma.
64. *Romungere*, Hungarian Roma, is the largest group of Romanies in Hungary, constituting about 60 to 65 percent of the Romani population. They generally do not speak Romani. Romani-speaking Vlach-Roma and Romanian-speaking *Beyash* also exist in Hungary, along with an unknown number of *Sinti*.
65. This is based on accounts of older Romani refugees to Canada after 1990, especially in Toronto from 1997 to the present. Part of my work in Toronto was, and is, to help them prepare their case histories for their applications—called Personal Information Forms (PIFs)—for convention-refugee status.

66. Many critics of Stalin have maintained that he acted more like the worst of the tsars, for example, Ivan the Terrible, than many other communist heads of state.
67. While the majority of Roma in the former communist countries have been reduced to the level of third world conditions, Kalderash and other groups in Romania and elsewhere who managed to retain their work skills and self-reliance have become wealthy in the new democracies.
68. It has been my experience working with sedentary Romani refugees from the Czech Republic and Hungary that they expected the government to do everything for them, and initially exhibited apathy until they began to realize that Canada offered them the freedom and opportunity to make their own decisions and to work toward obtaining them. They are now adapting to the Canadian system, but it took time for most of them to rid themselves of their previous mindset, the legacy of communism.
69. This welfare trap is also seen in other countries, especially the United States, and to some extent in Canada.
70. This organization was officially registered in 1979 as an NGO Third Class of the United Nations with consultative status. It continued as such until its headquarters were transferred from Geneva to Prague. In 2006, the current leadership allowed its annual dues to lapse and lost the NGO status with the United Nations. This makes it no longer international but European, which is the main thrust of the organization in Europe, ignoring the estimated three million or so Roma located in the Americas and elsewhere outside of Europe.
71. Roma are not even given the status of a national minority in the new democracies, but are considered to be an ethnic minority because they do not have a national state in Europe like Romanians in Hungary or Hungarians in Romania, and are said not to have a common language after centuries of attempts by these countries to eliminate their Romani dialects.
72. To any student of the situation, this seems obvious, and is supported by large numbers of Romani refugees now in Canada and by many critics of the situation in Europe.
73. In Canada, I have collected a battery of new terms in their Romani that are nonexistent in my own North American Kalderash dialect, such as *skini* (skinhead), *persekútsiya* (persecution), *anti-tsiganísmo* (anti-Gypsyism), *azilánturya* (refugees), *fashísmo* (fascism), *shingalo* (border or immigration police), *phandayimos* (detention by immigration authorities), and many more. They also exhibit a paranoid fear of the police.
74. The question that might be raised here is the following: if massive discrimination exists in the labor market of a country that prevents Roma from obtaining employment, are refugees seeking a better life and jobs fleeing persecution, or are they simply coming to find better jobs when most of them were unable to find any work in their countries of origin where their rate of unemployment is often as high as 60 percent or more?
75. In the summer of 2000, forty-six Romani adults were evicted from their homes in Zamoly, Hungary by the mayor on the insistence of his electorate. Jozsef Krasznai, an independent Romani activist in Hungary, free of government financial support and puppet strings, led the families to Strasbourg, where they requested the French government and the European High Court to grant them refugee status. By the summer of 2001, thirty-six of them had obtained refugee status. A Reuter report issued on April 19, 2001 quoted Jeno Kaltenbach, then Ombudsman for National Minorities in Hungary, where he admitted that: "The flight of a group of Roma from Hungary who sought refugee status in France could have been prevented if Hungary had an anti-discriminatory law." He was also quoted as saying that Hungary had no such law and no mechanism to prevent a local mayor from evicting Roma from their homes.

# Introduction

*Valentina Glajar*

> *All the representations, or faces, of the Gypsy are in one way real: Gypsies are who the writer or speaker thinks they are. All have meanings, all have boundaries, and all have labels and images. Gypsies are who you want them to be in the sense that confirmation can be found in various sources for the definition which best suits a purpose. Moreover, if the purpose changes and the ground shifts, then definitions can be, and have been, changed. However, it is precisely this apparent legitimacy of each of the Gypsy identities that is the cause of considerable controversy and which has such an important bearing on how Gypsies are situated in the dominant, non-Gypsy society.*
>
> Mayall, *Gypsy Identities 1500–2000*

A joke is circulating through Eastern Europe that, like so many other jokes, intends to portray Romanies as the laughing stock of the majority population. As it goes, a rich Romani dressed in an Armani suit, surrounded by bodyguards and chauffeurs, decides to go fishing. After a while, he catches a small fish. As he is about to throw it back into the water, the fish speaks to him: "Don't throw me back. I'm the golden fish with the three wishes." To this, the Romani replies, "Okay. What do you want?" The joke obviously addresses the new stratum of poorly educated Romanies who have achieved great wealth. In the eyes of Eastern Europeans, such prosperity is invalidated by the fact that these Romanies lack an awareness of "European" culture. So, in spite of an impressive lifestyle, money will never buy their way into the circle of "cultured Europeans." Jokes, therefore, are an important popular medium because they serve to channel the attitudes and perceptions of some people toward Romanies and others who are considered outsiders as well (Freud; Morreall). For the

most part, popular humor reflects the state of current events and takes the pulse of a given society. A joke's superficiality does not allow for a rebuttal, and it circulates like wildfire, encouraged by those who find it funny and agree with the content. The fact that the ridiculed people have their own culture seems to be of no concern to the majority. The fact that the jokers are ignorant about the history and culture of Romanies does not matter. The fact that the Romani protagonist in the joke is ready to give rather than ask for something does not interest anyone. What is important to those responsible for spreading these jokes is the Romanies' lack of education and assimilation into the host society.

A popular perception holds that, as long as Romanies behave in a "civilized" manner, they will be embraced as full members of society and become immune to further discrimination. To prove this theory, a Romanian journalist took it upon herself to show the world that "well-behaved" Romanies are treated the same as other Romanians. In her article, "Ţigancă pentru o zi" ("Gypsy for a day"), which was published in a mainstream national newspaper in 2002, Laura Lica describes her experiences as a "Gypsy" in the capital of Romania. Together with three Romanies, including an educated one, as Lica eagerly points out, they strolled through Bucharest. In the first store they entered, the customers avoided them and clung to their purses. The store security monitored the Romani group closely as they moved from one department to another, although, according to Lica, the sales people interacted with them politely. Next, they went to a beauty shop where the two women of the group were showered with compliments about their beauty and cleanliness, and about the way they spoke and smelled. The cosmeticians concluded that the two women must be Romani princesses. They even suggested they join a program for young Romani women in order to become nurses. The last episode of the unusual day in the life of Laura Lica occurs at her apartment building, where, spying Lica dressed in Romani attire, a neighbor expresses his fear that "Gypsies" have moved into the building.

Although there is scant commentary in Lica's article, her conclusion is that if one is clean, polite, and knows how to smile, he or she will be treated normally and fairly by the majority. It is problematic that this journalist exposes a series of stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes while nonetheless finding the Romanies were treated "normally." Poverty obviously played no role in Lica's experiment, as the staged situation depicts educated Romanies and a fake Romani who

shop at Steilmann and enjoy the services of an equally expensive beauty salon. The astonishment of the cosmeticians at the appearance, smell, and politeness of the two Romani women reflects expectations and perceptions of Romanies at odds with these made-up characters, and leads them to fantasize about exotic Romani princesses. The neighbor's closing remark jeopardizes Lica's theory, as he is not interested in how the alleged Romani woman smells or smiles; for him, the fact that "Gypsies" might have moved into the apartment building is a clear concern that exposes discriminatory practices based on centuries-old prejudicial stereotypes.

The examples taken from popular media exemplify two key issues regarding the relationship between Roma and the host societies: (a) the majority's ignorance about Romani culture and history and (b) the assumption that assimilation eradicates discrimination. The more "they" become like "us," the fewer problems there will be. However, as Sander L. Gilman claims in his study, *Jewish Self-Hatred*, this statement reflects what he calls the "liberal fantasy" (2), which is countered by the "conservative curse":

> The more you are like me, the more I know the true value of my power, which you wish to share, and the more I am aware that you are but a shoddy counterfeit, an outsider. . . . And yet it is not merely an artifact of marginality, for the privileged group, that group defined by the outsider as a reference for his or her own identity, wishes both to integrate the outsider (and remove the image of its own potential loss of power) and to distance him or her (and preserve the reification of its power through the presence of the powerless. (2)

This double-bind predicament can give rise to "internalized stigma," as Delia Grigore calls the situation of those Romanies who appropriate the prejudices of non-Roma. Grigore, the only female Roma academic in Romania, views this "self-hatred" as the gravest danger: "I have seen Roma myself who told me: 'I cannot go to school, I am a Gypsy. What do you expect of me?' This happens with many Roma, this self-marginalization, because they are so excluded by society. They begin to think [of] themselves in this way" (al Yafai 18). One way out of this predicament is, as Delia Grigore claims, through role modeling: for example, educated Roma who affirm their ethnicity openly and proudly. Grigore, who holds a PhD from the University of Bucharest in Romani anthropology and wears traditional Romani clothes to her classes, projects an image that clashes with the prejudicial

stereotypes widely associated with Roma people.

The continued marginalization and discrimination of Romanies in most European countries, especially in the former communist states, is, for the most part, a result of centuries-long persecution, as Ronald Lee's introduction to Roma history in Europe shows. Viorel Achim, a Romanian historian, regards today's situation of Romanian Roma, the largest Roma minority in Europe, estimated at approximately two million people, through the prism of their history: "The inferior social status of the Gypsies today can be explained by the perpetuation of their marginality" (6). The abolition of slavery in the nineteenth century did not necessarily bring about sweeping changes (see Hancock, *The Pariah Syndrome*). As Achim explains, the emancipation of the Romanies did not also mean the granting of land (5). Most Romanies maintained their trades even after becoming sedentary. Those, however, who did engage in agriculture as a profession or who acquired their own piece of land became assimilated and lost their Roma identity (Achim 5).

World War II brought about the Nazis' plans for extermination of the European Romani population (Fings, Heuss, and Sparing; Zimmermann) and Marshal Antonescu's deportation of tens of thousands of Romanian Roma to Transnistria (Ioanid) in order to cleanse Europe, respectively Romania, of unwanted Gypsies. Unfortunately, Romanies were denied the right to consider themselves Holocaust victims for decades after the Holocaust (Milton; Tyrnauer; Margalit). In Romania, only after 1989 and more recently, during the discussions of Romania's entry into the European Union, have Romanians begun to come to terms with the Holocaust in Romania and to explore the decades-long silence. While German Sinti, a subgroup of Romanies, organized themselves in the 1980s and now have a stronger influence in German society and politics, Eastern European Roma are just now finding their voice and are still fighting a great deal of discrimination. As Achim claims, deprived of education and taking on the worst paid jobs in Romania, "the Gypsies have occupied and continue to occupy almost en masse the lowest level of society" (6).

While history might explain, in part, the way Romanies are treated and perceived today, literature, film, and other media have their own share in perpetuating stereotypes to this day. The "Gypsy" is often represented in literature as an exotic nomad, a "child of nature" aloof from settled society and subsisting by petty theft and fortune-telling. The lack of texts written by Romanies left the way open for much

imaginative interpretation in works of fiction and, as Hancock shows in his article, in scholarly treatments as well. As Judith Oakley explains, "exoticization might appear harmless and aesthetically enriching when found in poetry, painting, opera and fiction, but the imagery lives on and may be used as a device to reject most if not all living Travelers and Gypsies. Once perceived as exotic beings, the circumstances are ripe for dividing dream from reality, phantom from person" (qtd. in Belton 179). Indeed, from Great Britain to Russia, writers, artists, composers, and filmmakers have been fascinated with the wandering, exotic, and dark "Gypsy" and have construed images of Romanies that range from idealized free spirits to mere criminals. These representations spring from an essentialist understanding of European identity as white and mostly Christian that has denied the Romanies their right to European or national identity. Their depictions as black outsiders represent strategies of exclusion and exoticization that have led to their continued marginalization and persecution.

*"Gypsies" in European Literature and Culture* investigates portrayals of Romanies in West and East European literatures and cultures, and examines the roles they play in nineteenth and twentieth century Europe. While Romani activists and scholars try to define Romani ethnicity within the larger (transnational) European context (see Gheorghe; Mayall; Belton; Bancroft), this volume explores patterns of "Gypsy" representations in literature and films. These studies emphasize the heterogeneity of the Romani experience and representation in the European cultural context and challenge an easy reliance on models of exclusion or assimilation. Canonical texts, travel writings, Holocaust survivor literature, and other accounts present a kaleidoscope of Romani images that speak of alterity, exoticization, and idealization, and also of enmity, persecution, and human rights violations.

The Roma images created by writers, filmmakers, artists, and journalists have shaped the individual and collective perception of people across Europe for centuries. In her ground-breaking article, "The Time of the Gypsies: A 'People without History' in the Narratives of the West," Katie Trumpener claims that the perpetuation of stereotypical depictions of Romanies "is not only ignorance, a failure to realize that the Gypsies are a real and sizable population living as a still-threatening minority in Europe and North America, but also a refusal to give up a powerful set of cultural myths for their own sake" (749). Similarly, in her analysis of Christoph Hein's novel, *Horns Ende* (1985), Sara Friedrichsmeyer asserts that Romanies "are perhaps the

last people whose depiction remains unswayed even by considerations of political correctness. The images with which they have long been associated continue to be perpetuated in a way no longer acceptable regarding other minority cultures" (282). As Brigitte Mihok eloquently discusses in her article, "Von stereotypen Bildkonstruktionen zur Ausgrenzung ethnischer Minderheiten—Roma in Rumänien," the consequence of such depictions and their perpetuation is the fact that *Fremdbilder* (images of alterity) can easily transform into *Feindbilder* (images of enmity) (95). The indoctrination and fixation of certain stereotypical constructions leads to marginalization and self-marginalization. Whether admired or denigrated, Romanies have been portrayed and perceived as ominous outsiders with a mysterious language and unfamiliar customs, supernatural abilities, no history, questionable character, and exceptional musical abilities.

Recent studies have explored "Gypsies" as literary tropes in national literatures of Western Europe. The first study to ever discuss the depiction of Romanies in Western literature was Frank Timothy Dougherty's pioneering work in 1980 that remained an unpublished dissertation and probably inspired, years later, other scholars to pursue this overlooked and understudied field from various angles in different disciplines (Trumpener; Malvinni). In Germany, scholars followed suit and began to study Roma and Sinti issues most diligently by exploring themes such as *Ortlosigkeit* (the state of being homeless, without a place) (Breger), *Kunst-Zigeuner* (artist Gypsies) (Kugler), Romani women in literature (Niemandt; Hille) and "Gypsies" in German children and youth literatures (Awosusi). In Great Britain, Susan Tebbutt edited *Sinti and Roma: Gypsies in German-speaking Society and Literature* (1998) and coedited with Nicholas Saul *The Role of the Romanies* (2004)—two important studies that include articles on Romani representations and self-representations. Most recently, Deborah Epstein Nord has published *Gyspies in the British Imagination* (2006).

While these studies make significant contributions to both Romani studies and the study of the respective West European literatures, still very little has been achieved in the study of Romanies in the East European context (Lemon), and comparative studies that pursue the "Gypsy" trope in both Western and Eastern cultures are almost nonexistent (Patrut). Moreover, the diversity of the Romani people requires a wider investigation that also addresses the specific situation of Roma from East European countries and does not treat them as a

homogenous ethnic group. Very few steps toward acknowledging the marginalization and misrepresentation of Romanies in national East European cultures have been undertaken by East European scholars (Ionescu). On the other hand, the lack of interest on the part of East European scholars reflects larger social and political issues that cannot be ignored in the cultural analysis of Roma representations. Quite often, the social, cultural, and historical position of Romanies in East European societies, and the unresolved relationship between Roma and *gadjé* (non-Roma), are reflected in the way Romanies are represented in these cultures. The debated social topics raised questions about the willingness of Romanies to improve their situation versus the role of the host society in assisting them. Finally, the European Union and the World Bank implemented various concrete programs in order to address the severe poverty and exclusion of Roma at the national and European levels (Ringold, Orenstein, and Wilkens).

The essays of this volume discuss representations of Romanies across cultures (British, French, Italian, German, Finnish, Polish, Romanian, Serbian, and Russian) and are thematically divided into three parts. The first part of the volume, "Nationalism, Nature, Property, and 'Gypsies' in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century Literature," analyzes the roles that Romanies played in the imagination of various writers by exposing representations of the exotic nonnational and "non-European" "Gypsy" that helped to define and strengthen nationalistic paradigms. As Philip Landon's and Agnieszka Nance's essays show, the image of Romanies found in acclaimed Finnish and, respectively, Polish texts uncover nationalistic trends that allow Finns and Poles to draw distinctions between themselves and the "black Gypsy," while at the same time presenting more informed and inclusive representations of Romani culture. Landon's "Bohemian Philosophers: Nationalism, Nature and 'Gypsies' in Nineteenth-Century European Literature" examines the representation of "Gypsies" in relation to nationalism and nature. He finds broad similarities between British, Russian, and Finnish authors, who all define "Gypsies" as outsiders. However, Landon contends that, unlike Wordsworth, Pushkin, and Arnold, for whom "Gypsies" represent little more than a pretext for airing nationalistic preoccupations, the novel *Seven Brothers* (1870) by Finnish writer Aleksis Kivi is more inclusive, providing details about the professions pursued by "Gypsies," and depicting tensions between the itinerant minority and the settled majority population. As Landon argues, the highly ambivalent

role of "Gypsies" in this much-studied novel has been almost completely ignored by nationalist critics. Similarly, Nance's analysis of Józef Ignacy Kraszewski's *Chata za Wsią* (The Cottage beyond the Village) shows how this 1852 novel shaped the image of "Gypsies" for Polish readers from the nineteenth century onward, as it appeals to the readers for a true understanding of Romani culture in a positive way, presenting Roma as equals to Poles. However, as Nance explains, the arrival of Romanian Roma after 1989 revived the Poles' discriminatory attitudes toward Romanies, as the Romanian Roma seemed to embody all the stereotypes associated with "Gypsies."

In her article, Marilyn Schwinn Smith reads the "Gypsy" imagery in Vsevolod Garshin's "Medvedi" ("The Bears") as profoundly implicated in Russian self-identity and nationalism. As she claims, the romanticized portrayal of the "Gypsies" in "Medvedi" corresponds, in part, to the idealized image propagated throughout European national literatures of the nineteenth century, but has to be carefully analyzed in the specific context of the multiethnic, multinational, and multireligious Russian Empire. Similar to Pushkin's "The Gypsies," Garshin's "Medvedi" relies on "Gypsy" themes such as space, alienation, time, and freedom that help to define a lost understanding of "Russianness."

Abby Bardi focuses on the role of "Gypsies" in undermining the traditional understanding of property and primogeniture in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* and Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*. As she contends, ever since their arrival in the British Isles, Romanies were the foci of multiple anxieties manifested in numerous anti-Roma statutes attempting to control their perceived threat to property. By the nineteenth century, the "Gypsy" was a well-established trope via which these anxieties were understood. In *Orlando* and *Wuthering Heights*, Gypsy figures function as markers for the destabilization of property. In her paper, Bardi argues that by reading Woolf's Gypsies—who accompany Orlando during his or her period of gender transition—in terms of this destabilizing function, we may better understand the similar role of Gypsies and faux-Gypsies as they operate in *Wuthering Heights* to overturn primogeniture.

While "Gypsies" are perceived as markers of alterity in the first part of the volume, the second part shows how images of alterity can easily transform into images of enmity (Mihok 95). One cannot explore "Gypsy" figures in literature and culture without addressing the persecution of Roma and Sinti during World War II, which is discussed in

the second part of this volume. In the last decade, the literary and artistic accounts of deportations and extermination in concentration camps have finally emerged in autobiographical texts by Roma survivors from Austria (the Stojka siblings) and Germany (Winter). The experiences related in these texts not only resemble those in more famous writings by Jewish survivors (Wiesel; Levi), but they also draw attention to the plight of Romanies that has been largely ignored in Holocaust studies. Historically, it was not until the 1980s that the Romani people were officially acknowledged as victims of National Socialism. The resistance to this overdue recognition has shown a perpetuation of prejudicial stereotypes that rendered Roma and Sinti as deserving perpetrators rather than innocent victims. The struggle of the Roma minority for their recognition as victims of fascism took place amid a society that barely changed its attitude toward Roma and Sinti since 1945. If the Holocaust has become a "universal trope" of suffering and persecution (Huyssen 14) in the global age of memory culture, as Andreas Huyssen contends, one has to wonder about the place of Romanies in the historical narratives of genocide, suffering, and persecution. While others have appropriated this metaphor to explain hatred and genocide in other times and places, the Romanies and their stories were ignored for almost four decades.

After reviewing the events that led to the recognition of Romanies as victims of the Holocaust on racial grounds, Glajar analyzes aspects of trauma, guilt, and revenge in Stefan Kanfer's novel *The Eighth Sin*—the first English-language literary account of the *Porrajmos* (Romani Holocaust) published in 1978. Glajar's essay addresses the main criticism of the novel, which relates to the representation of the Holocaust in fictional accounts and the "Gypsyness" of the main character, and examines the different levels of narration that intertwine factual and fictional accounts in the tradition of Holocaust docu-novels (Young). As she explains, Kanfer's novel calls attention to *Porrajmos* in an unprecedented way by 1978, and has a special place in the literary history of Holocaust representations. It opened new venues for regarding the complexity of Holocaust stories and renders Romanies as a specific group of victims by focusing on the historical and cultural aspects of their persecution.

Ferdâ Asya's essay implements the theories of Peter Kropotkin and Murray Bookchin to explore the Roma's anarchist character and lifestyle in Walter Winter's *Winter Time: Memoirs of a German Sinto who Survived Auschwitz*. Asya claims that, under the guise of inferior

racial origin and asocial conduct, the Nazis aimed to destroy the tradition of communist and ecological anarchism embedded in the Romani people's historical resistance to submitting to the rule of nation-states and governments. According to Asya, this resistance and reluctance to join in the institutions of governments were the real motives for the Nazi's intent to annihilate Romanies. Moreover, this discrimination continues today, as many Roma people continue to maintain their way of life against the constraints of governments and borders.

Turning to the Holocaust in Romania, Lucia Cherciu explores the historical context of Zaharia Stancu's novel, *The Gypsy Tribe*, in order to expose the still contested persecution of Romanies in Romania during World War II. The essay demonstrates that Zaharia Stancu uses myth as a strategy of appropriation, whereby the majority projects its own wishes of assimilation onto the minority. While the novel claims to offer a critique of the conditions and the destiny of the Romanies sent to Transnistria, Cherciu shows, in her analysis, that Stancu's text perpetuates stereotypes and thus reinforces the prejudices against the Roma minority. By questioning the social responsibility of writers when depicting the Romani Holocaust, Cherciu seems to agree with Michael Krausnick, who claims that the intentions of the author, the effect on the reader, and the consequences for the minority are often worlds apart (111).

The third part of this volume, "Transnational Romani Roles: Gender and Performance," discusses depictions of "Gypsy" women in literature and the most recent trends of portraying Roma in films. Exploring the overt sexualization of Romani women in literature and history, Ian Hancock's paper provides an overview of gender and racial stereotypes associated with Romanies, and especially with Romani women, since their arrival in Europe. Drawing on existing postcolonial studies that discuss the treatment of black women in Western culture, Hancock establishes a lucrative parallel between African/African American and Romani women on the basis of their common historical experience of slavery and racial discrimination. Approaching these Romani representations in a critical manner, Hancock calls attention to the difference between literary "Gypsies" and actual Romanies, and to the consequences of such stereotypical depictions that require further examination. In the end, Hancock reminds us that "[w]e don't want to say goodbye to Carmen and Esmeralda

and their fictional sisters, but we should recognize them for who and what they really are" (189).

Radulescu's study explores the negotiations of freedom and the subversion of traditional female roles in theater, through performances of, or disguises as, "Gypsy" females. Radulescu analyzes the significance of "the role" of the female "Gypsy" as compared to the actresses of commedia dell'arte, and the disguise as a "Gypsy" female in plays by Renaissance artists and the twentieth-century playwright Franca Rame. Radulescu engages in a comparative analysis of the representation of the female "Gypsy" in light of common places about Romani culture such as "the passionate" and "fiery" woman, and the use of disguise as a "Gypsy" woman in ways that explode stereotypes about Romani culture by creating contrasting images and a venue of social criticism of the condition of women in society. In such plays, as Radulescu shows, the "Gypsy" disguise acquires the significance of a means of liberation from the constraints of gender and ethnic stereotypes.

By analyzing aspects of theater, spectacle, and subculture, Aimee Kilbane's essay focuses on the best-known "Gypsy" in European literature—Esmeralda in Victor Hugo's novel *Notre-Dame de Paris* (1831). Kilbane analyzes "la bohémienne" Esmeralda, "the traditional European image of the Gypsy" (217), an exotic and fascinating outsider, and Pierre Gringoire, an artist who chooses to live among the Gypsies, as mediators between two worlds: the bourgeois world and the *Cour des Miracles*. As Kilbane argues, the contact between the foreign and the domestic worlds becomes the spectacle—"a substitute for actual contact with a perceived threat" (221). However, as the fate of Esmeralda illustrates, mediating between two different worlds has tragic consequences in this novel, and the spectacle reveals its inadequacy as substitute for the contact with the foreign as embodied by the figure of the Gypsy.

Finally, Dina Iordanova looks at recent representations of "Gypsies" in filmic accounts in her article "Welcome Pictures, Unwanted Bodies: 'Gypsy' Representations in New Europe's Cinema." In her analysis, Iordanova identifies two recent trends in cinematic representations of Romanies: the rough realist trend as seen in Želimir Žilnik's 2003 documentary *Kenedi Returns Home*, and the trend of "politically correct Gypsy passion films," represented by Robert-Adrian Pejo's 2004 feature *Dallas Pashamende*. Žilnik's documentary exposes the deportation of Romanies from Germany to Serbia in an

attempt, as Iordanova claims, to get them out of Europe proper. As the title of Iordanova's article suggests, "Gypsies" are welcome as metaphorical presences in films, but the actual "arrival" of Romanies in Europe due to the European Union enlargement is feared, and considered an invasion. Pejo's feature film, on the other side, while regarded as politically correct, perpetuates and exploits exoticized and romanticized "Gypsy" images. The "Gypsyness" this movie projects, as Iordanova shows, "is manipulative and improbable; the people in the frame are calculatedly filthy and precociously oversexualised" (239). According to Iordanova, the all-consuming "Gypsy" passion in movies such as Pejo's has more to do "with the trouble that inhibited 'white' Western sexuality experiences in accommodating its own 'dark' passions than with the real Romani culture" (239).

This study hopes to inspire future comparative studies that cover both East and West European cultures and address specific Romani themes and issues from various angles and through different prisms. This would benefit further Romani and European studies and contribute to understanding Romani culture and history in the larger European context. As the essays in this collection show, the analyses of "Gypsy" tropes have strong anchors to the cultural, social, historical, and political contexts to distinguish clearly screen and literary "Gypsies" from actual Romanies. In the end, this volume is as much about Romanies and their stereotypical portrayals as it is about understanding European society, its insiders and internal outsiders, its fears and fascination, and about a new, more diversified, definition of Europeans.

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# Part 1

# Nationalism, Nature, Property, and "Gypsies" in Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century European Literature

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# Chapter 1

# Bohemian Philosophers

## Nature, Nationalism, and "Gypsies" in Nineteenth-Century European Literature[1]

*Philip Landon*

The European Gypsy stereotype is a monstrous self-contradiction.[2] Idealized, the Gypsy is an innocent child of the universe leading a carefree life under the open sky, a living symbol of freedom in nature. Vilified, the same Gypsy becomes a primitive who has failed to rise out of nature: a lying, thieving, dirty, work-shy, promiscuous savage who abducts children and even engages in cannibalism. Both caricatures identify Gypsies with nature, conceived as a realm of antisocial self-interest irrevocably at odds with civilization. To understand the political implications of the link between the Gypsy and nature, it is necessary to recognize the role that nature plays in post-Enlightenment ideology. Between 1651, when Thomas Hobbes published the English version of *Leviathan*, and 1874, the year of the utilitarian philosopher John Stuart Mill's posthumous essay "Nature," European political thought detached itself from religion and was placed on a material footing. Secular nature became the new God: at once a

source of terrible negative sanctions and a giver of consolation. In political theory, the negative image dominated. For Hobbes, in the state of nature, "every man is enemy to every man . . . and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (113). For Mill, "All Praise of Civilization . . . is so much dispraise of Nature" ("Nature," 21). "Utilitarianism," a word coined by Jeremy Bentham, is the name that Mill and others used for their pragmatic social theory based on an understanding of nature as an amoral force, and of human nature as a malleable, fallible thing—the raw matter that had to be shaped by civilization.[3] The harrowing vision of dystopian nature also elicited nostalgia for a more nurturing sense of the natural world, as imagined by Rousseau and the immensely popular genre of Romantic nature poetry. The two facets of nature were of a piece. Mill himself famously responded to the nature poetry of Wordsworth;[4] and Rousseau, while launching the Romantic quest for individual consolation in nature, conceived of society in fiercely antinatural terms.[5]

The rise of this rationalistic political philosophy coincided with the advent of the modern nation state, which, early on, turned hostile toward the Gypsies.[6] Theories of nationalism abound, testifying to its ability to draw on a range of discourses. For example, Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, and Eric Hobsbawm stress, respectively, the functional, imaginary, and broadly organic quality of nationalism. For Gellner, nationalism forges a homogeneous population where industrial society needs one (32–38); for Anderson, nationalism imagines a community where none exists (25–27); and for Hobsbawm, nationalism fabricates itself out of heterogeneous tradition, nourishing itself on a rich array of compelling symbols derived from the religious and dynastic ideology it supersedes (49–73). However, nationalism also draws legitimacy from the hard, rationalistic thinking of the utilitarians. The nation claims to inaugurate civilized, egalitarian modernity, and in doing so, it draws on primitive nature as its enabling "other." As a putative fulfillment of the utilitarian mass rescue of humans from nature, nationalism markets itself as a self-legitimating regime based on known facts about human fate in a secular universe. To establish its own ideological neutrality, it requires ideologically neutral, "generic" representations of humans. The European Gypsy stereotype—half ideal, half monster—serves this need: it maps onto the post-Enlightenment nature dualism and brings it to life. A hybrid amalgamating Hobbes's nightmare with Rousseau's daydream, the Gypsy-in-nature is no less imaginary than the surgically manufactured

creature in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), a novel Jonathan Bate describes as "English literature's primary myth of how the spirit of the Enlightenment or modernity creates an image of the natural man as a sign of its own alienation" (49).

If the Gypsy figures Western cultural and political preoccupations adhering to the concept of nature after the Enlightenment, we can begin to understand why there are so many Gypsy poems with no Gypsies in them. To take a relatively mild example of the negative stereotype, William Wordsworth's poem "Gipsies" (1809) berates its "torpid" subjects for not embracing the purposive life in which the poem's speaker claims to participate vigorously: "Twelve hours, twelve bounteous hours are gone, while I / Have been a traveller under open sky, / Much witnessing of change and cheer, / Yet as I left I find them here!" (153). Revolted by the "unbroken knot / Of human beings" (152), Wordsworth rejects the primitive Gypsy community as a social alternative, underlining the universal causes of their failed socialization: "In scorn I speak not; they are what their birth / And breeding suffer them to be; / Wild outcasts of society!" (153). As many commentators have observed, Wordsworth's castigation of Gypsy sloth has a hypocritical ring, given that the poet himself had made his career out of loitering in nature.[7] William Hazlitt wondered "What had [Wordsworth] himself been doing in these four and twenty hours? Had he been admiring a flower or writing a sonnet?" ("On Manner," 46, n. 2). Taking the poet to task for his joyless utilitarian values, Hazlitt continues:

> We hate the doctrine of utility, even in a philosopher, and much more in a poet: for the only real utility is that which leads to enjoyment, and the end is, in all cases, better than the means. A friend of ours from the North of England proposed to make Stonehenge of some use, by building houses with it. Mr. W's quarrel with the gypsies is an improvement on this extravagance, for the gypsies are the only living monuments of the first ages of society. They are an everlasting source of thought and reflection on the advantages and disadvantages of the progress of civilization: they are a better answer to the cotton manufactories than Mr. W. has given in the *Excursion*. "They are a grotesque ornament to the civil order." We should be sorry to part with Mr. Wordsworth's poetry, because it amuses and interests us; we should be still sorrier to part with the tents of our old friends, the Bohemian philosophers, because they interest and amuse us more. (46, n. 2)

Where Wordsworth affirms the negative stereotype, Hazlitt prefers the sentimental one. His jocular tone flags up the whimsical, purely speculative quality of nineteenth-century romanticizations about Gypsies: even to a sympathetic observer, they figure "the first ages of society," a primitive state that cannot be regained—barring a disastrous social regression.

Writing a few decades later, at the height of Victorian British power, a disillusioned Matthew Arnold rehearses Hazlitt's pastoral stereotype, flirting with the idea that a Gypsy life might be preferable to the life on offer to a mid-Victorian English agnostic. However, in his long poem "The Scholar Gypsy" (1853), not a single Gypsy appears, and the closest we get is "Bagley Wood—/ Where most the gipsies by the turf-edged way / Pitch their smoked tents" (362). By Arnold's own account, "The Scholar Gypsy" celebrates his own youth "at Oxford, the freest and most delightful part, perhaps, of my life, when . . . I shook off all the bonds and formalities of the place, and enjoyed the spring of life and that unforgotten Oxfordshire and Berkshire country. . . . "The Scholar Gypsy" . . . was meant to fix the remembrance of those delightful wanderings of ours in the Cumner Hills" (356). In fact, the elusive Gypsy of the title is not a Gypsy at all, but a poor student at Oxford described in Joseph Glanvill's *Vanity of Dogmatizing* (1661), who, in the words of Arnold's poem, "One summer-morn forsook / His friends, and went to learn the gipsy-lore, / And roamed the world with that wild brotherhood, / And came, as most men deemed, to little good" (359). Steering clear of the modern-day Gypsy camp, Arnold imagines the scholar still roaming the countryside in quest of occult Gypsy knowledge. As Deborah Epstein Nord has shown, the attitudes expressed in Wordsworth's poem are repudiated by Arnold, for whom "Retreat from 'civilization' may be preferable, even if it means disappearing among peoples presumed to be benighted" (66). It must be added, however, that the founding premise of Arnold's poem and the source of its exquisite, melancholy idiom is the knowledge that such a retreat is impossible. He contrasts a purely fanciful and nostalgic dream of Gypsy spirituality with the urgent predicament of Victorian alienation, "this strange disease of modern life" (203) to which Gypsy lore offers no cure: it is the utter absence of pastoral reassurance on the nineteenth-century horizon that impels Arnold's escapism.

The almost complete lack of social detail in these poems and many others like them suggests that nineteenth-century authors are

uninterested in the Gypsy as a social or cultural minority. Instead, the Gypsy-in-nature provides a pretext for the poets to reflect on their own, advanced communities. For both Wordsworth and Arnold, the Gypsy is a window onto nature and, thus, their own ontological concerns.[8] The negative and positive stereotypes work to similar effect, casting the Gypsy as an eternal outsider. Whether nefariously mired in nature or naively slumbering in it, the Gypsy represents an imaginary alternative, an exotic, whose way of life is not an option for the normative citizen. Hence, the widespread impulse to cross the barrier and to "become" a Gypsy should not be taken at face value.

Alexander Pushkin's narrative poem *The Gypsies* (1824) depicts a tragic romance between Zemfira, a Bessarabian Gypsy girl, and Aleko, a Russian exile. Aleko, the hero of the poem, is brought to the itinerant Gypsy camp by Zemfira and has a child with her.[9] When she cools to him and takes up with a new lover, a young Gypsy, Aleko murders them both. Aleko is banished by Zemfira's father, the "Old Gypsy," who describes how he himself was abandoned by Zemfira's mother, and urges Aleko to accept the transience of love and the fickleness of the female heart. In the epilogue, Pushkin universalizes this desolation: "But there is no happiness, even among you / Nature's poor sons! . . . Passions are fatal everywhere / And there is no protection from destiny" (22). The poem transforms its male subjects' abandonment by women into a generalized vision of nature's indifference: expulsion from the Gypsy camp inflicts a second, deeper alienation upon the protagonist already exiled to Russia's colonial periphery. Lost from sight in these philosophical reflections is the fact that the Gypsy population of Bessarabia, far from enjoying supreme freedom, had been enslaved for centuries when the Russians arrived, and remained so under Russian rule (see Crowe, 65–66). Despite Pushkin's subversive politics, which led to his own expulsion from the Russian capital, and no doubt fuelled his fascination with the Romantic notion of Gypsy freedom, as Alaina Lemon has emphasized, the poem's closing evocation of the "double-headed eagle" enforces the iconography of the Russian empire and a concomitant, colonizing national identity, Bessarabia (Moldova) having been annexed by Russia in 1812 (Lemon 40). As far as the Gypsy stereotype goes, the crucial point is that Pushkin defines Russian identity, not against Gypsies as foreigners, but through them, against nature.

Decades after its author's death, Pushkin's poem became even more deeply implicated in Russian nationalism, precisely by virtue of

its generalizing bent. As Lemon notes, *The Gypsies* was lauded by Dostoevsky in his famous Pushkin Speech, delivered in June 1880, to mark the recent unveiling of a statue of the poet in Moscow. This patriotic oration, which Dostoevsky later expanded in a special number of his periodical *The Journal of an Author* published in August the same year, celebrates Aleko as a personification of Russian empathy, and proof of the millennial destiny of the Russian people:

> These homeless Russian wanderers are wandering still, and the time will be long before they disappear. If they in our day no longer go to gipsy camps to seek their universal ideals in the wild life of the gypsies and their consolation away from the confused and pointless life of our Russian intellectuals, in the bosom of nature, they launch into Socialism, which did not exist in Aleko's day, they march with a new faith into another field, and there work zealously, believing, like Aleko, that they will by their fantastic occupations obtain their aims and happiness, not for themselves alone, but for all mankind. (44)

Pushkin's exceptional capacity for cross-cultural empathy makes him "a great national writer" on a par with "a Shakespeare, a Cervantes, a Schiller" (52). Peerless even in this company, he has, according to Dostoevsky, an even greater "capacity for universal sympathy. . . . This capacity, the pre-eminent capacity of our nation, he shares with our nation, and by that above all he is our national poet" (55). Dostoevsky also intuits the insidiousness of political abstractions: He denounces social relativism, or "mere utilitarianism" (57), and urges Russia upon a path of mystical Christianity and "universal brotherhood" instead (93).

However, as far as the representation of Gypsies is concerned, Dostoevsky himself perpetuates the occlusion of Roma experience twice over: through a historically uninformed endorsement of Pushkin's empathy with a supposedly free Gypsy community, a fantasy location in nature to which one might "run away," and also through his own generalizing reflections praising "universal sympathy." Indeed, Dostoevsky's antiutilitarian plea for a morally uplifting goal for the Russian nation rests on the utilitarian premise: "When the moral and religious idea of a nationality is spent, there is always revealed a panic and cowardly desire for union, whose sole purpose is 'to save men's bellies'—there are no other purposes left for a civic union" (85). This impatience with naked self-interest in the state of nature leads Dostoevsky seriously astray when he warns of an impending social apocalypse: "All these parliamentarianisms, all the social theories nowadays

professed, banks, science, Jews—all will be annihilated in a single instance and leave no trace, except perhaps the Jews, who will even then devise a method of action by which the work of destruction may be profitable to them" (86). The ease with which Dostoevsky's dreams of universal brotherhood collapse into bigotry is a stark reminder of the inability of idealized generalizations to protect the particular. The stereotype of the usurious urban Jew has a rural counterpart in the Gypsy-in-nature, and, as the genocidal horrors of the *Porrajmos* would show a few decades later, the image left Europe's Roma vulnerable to scapegoating.

Clearly, the problem is not that Gypsies are unrepresented in European nationalist discourse, but that there is a surfeit of representations in which cardboard Gypsies stand in for nature—"the outside" and adversary of the utilitarian nation. How can we avoid these damaging generalizations? By attending to the particular, by seeking to recover the specific historical experience obscured behind the stereotype, and by favoring more nuanced representations. A seminal text such as Prosper Mérimée's *Carmen* (1845), which reiterates the tragic love plot of Pushkin's poem, continues to shape the popular notion of the Gypsy through the operatic and cinematic repertoire.[10] However, Mérimée's version casts doubt on Pushkin's stereotype. A Frenchman writing about Spanish Gypsies in an urban context, in the light of in-depth research, Mérimée does not simply rehearse the caricature of uncontainable Gypsy passion. His novella also sees the Gypsies as a group with a social relation to the community in which they live, pursuing a range of occupations as fortune-tellers, veterinarians, and artisans. Unlike any of the texts previously cited, *Carmen* reproduces words and sentences in the Roma language, which Mérimée had studied extensively. Indeed, Mérimée speaks of the Gypsy "nation" (56, 123), a race-based usage that highlights the ambiguity of the very concept of nationality: "In general, it may be said that their principal virtue is patriotism," Mérimée reports in the quasi-anthropological closing essay that concludes the novella (125).[11] It is no surprise to Mérimée that Gypsies should be unsuperstitious, for they "live off the credulity of others" (126). Such ironies grant the Gypsies parity with national communities as a people with its own interests.

*Seven Brothers* (1870), by the Finnish novelist Aleksis Kivi, is credited with almost single-handedly defining the national identity of the Finns, yet it also accommodates the Gypsies as a social group, rejects sentimental and antipathetic clichés in favor of irony, and highlights

the socioeconomic factors that determined Gypsy professions in northern Europe. The Roma presence in the sparsely populated "Finnish" territory on the northeastern periphery of Europe between Sweden and Russia dates back to at least 1580,[12] centuries before Finland became an independent country in 1917. Between these dates, the social roles of Finnish peasants and Finnish Roma alike were largely determined by the harsh northern climate and the agrarian economy. Although itinerant, the Roma did not lead a camp life, but found indoor shelter on the farms of the settled population, especially in winter. They pursued trades that catered to the local peasantry, selling horses, producing handicrafts, and doing farm work.[13] Although the Roma certainly met with discrimination in Finland under Swedish and Russian rule, and after, it was less severe compared with the treatment they suffered, for example, in Norway (Ollikainen 66–80; Pulma 111–13). However, their situation deteriorated in connection with the modernization process that accompanied the creation of Finland as a separate country. As the central administration developed and the population inhabiting Finnish territory came under the intensive control associated with the nation state, Gypsies became a target of segregation. In 1863, a special Gypsy census was undertaken; the same year, an antivagrancy law originally enacted in 1812 was amended so that, instead of being consigned to forced labor in Helsinki's Viapori fortress like other "vagrants," Gypsy men were put in prison in Hämeenlinna, a garrison town and centre of Häme, the region in which Aleksis Kivi set *Seven Brothers* (Grönfors, 33–34; Pulma 49).

Kivi had been raised in close contact with illiterate Finnish peasants and wrote about them with affection. Gypsies, too, are prominently represented in *Seven Brothers*, the very first novel written in the Finnish vernacular. Like Mérimée, Kivi was familiar with Gypsy stereotypes, yet conscious of the symbiotic social roles of itinerant Gypsies and settled populations. First printed in serial form by the Finnish Literature Society (hereafter, "the Society") in 1870, the novel provoked a now notorious attack by August Ahlqvist, Professor of Finnish Language and Literature at the Imperial Alexander University in Helsinki, who called it "a shameful blot in Finnish literature and a mean insult to the common people" (quoted in Sihvo 220). A central element of the process of Finnish nation-building was the struggle to forge a national literature on a par with the European canon, and to claim cultural prestige for the vernacular, as Kivi's

beloved Shakespeare, Cervantes, and Schiller had done before him. After a bitter debate, *Seven Brothers* was rehabilitated by Kivi's supporters among the cultural élite, who praised it on moral grounds, *pace* Ahlqvist, and endorsed its representation of the Finnish people. A bound edition finally appeared in 1873, once more under the Society's imprint, together with a foreword containing an apologia signed by three of the Society's members, who praised Kivi's portrayal of the wild brothers' spontaneous rise to civilization.[14] Three months before, Kivi himself had died, a broken man, with no inkling that his novel was about to become the unrivalled centerpiece of the Finnish prose tradition and the seminal text of national self-representation.[15]

The brothers of Kivi's title are work-shy rogues who brawl, steal, blaspheme, and get drunk. Defying ecclesiastical and civil authority, they escape into the forest, where they spend their days hunting and having fun. After many adventures and hardships during a decade of self-imposed exile, they redeem themselves and return, in triumph, to their farm, having been disciplined by nature's hand, as was already clear to Kivi's earliest and most influential critic, the Hegelian philosopher, newspaper publisher, and statesman Johan Vilhelm Snellman, who contributed anonymously to the "Foreword": "Not one of the seven brothers has [Kivi] let meet his end on the gallows. An ending that was more in keeping with his poetic nature was that they should, through their own experience and reflections, come to see the value of civilization, and that they should use their own efforts to wrest themselves out of the wild and cruel forest life and into civilization and manners suitable to humans. To bring them there, he uses no external instruments, only the unbounded freedom of the wilderness" (Cygnaeus *et al.* 11; see also Lyytikäinen 163). For decades to follow, Finnish critics endorsed Snellman's reading, welcoming the moral transformation of the brothers into model citizens. However, recent Finnish critics have begun to reveal the ways in which *Seven Brothers* also contests nationalist ideology. Matti Kuusi stresses that Finnish nationalist pressure clearly forced Kivi's hand when he gave the novel its implausibly tidy ending (26). For Pirjo Lyytikäinen, *Seven Brothers* is a transgressive novel, and she shows that the nationalist readings have forcibly packaged the novel as a *Bildungsroman*, or "education novel," merely on the strength of its didactic conclusion, ignoring the rich ironies, ambivalence, and sheer carnivalesque energy of the narrative (223–60). She demonstrates that *Seven Brothers* subverts the classicism and the class ideology of the patriotic Finnish poet J. L. Runeberg,

and that the social inclusiveness of the novel is a political counterpart of its ragbag form (130, 139).[16]

A more traditional reader, Aarne Kinnunen, appears to have been the first critic to notice that Kivi draws an explicit parallel between the seven brothers and another itinerant group that weaves into view at the beginning and the end of the novel. As they set out for a life in the wilds, the brothers meet and quarrel with a family of seven Gypsies. When the brothers return to their community a decade later, they meet the Gypsies once more, and invite them to their homecoming feast. At this merry scene of reconciliation, the Gypsy father, Mikko, plays the fiddle, and the mother, Kaisa, reads the brothers their fortunes from coffee grounds.

Insofar as the novel celebrates the maturation of its protagonists into citizens of the emerging Finnish nation, the Gypsies mainly function as a source of contrast. They are static, whereas the brothers develop, as Kinnunen observes (28). "Let outlaws[17] and Gypsies grovel like this under the open sky!" (20), one of the brothers exclaims, airing the stereotype already before their first run-in with the traveling Gypsies.[18] The encounter coincides with the brothers' rejection of civilization, coming immediately after their escape from the parish clerk, who is unsuccessfully trying to teach them to read:

> Simeoni: But hush, hush! There are people coming!
>
> Juhani: Humans? Take a closer look and you'll see a pack of Gypsies. You'll see the Rajamäki Regiment.
>
> The party that was approaching was a certain itinerant family from a small cottage . . . in the Rajamäki forest. (80)

Juhani's crude dismissal of the "regiment"[19] of Gypsies as a subhuman group turns attention to the question mark that civilized society has placed over the brothers themselves. "I'll give you the devil, you outlaws," says Mikko (81), himself a law-abiding man. The immature brothers retort by singing a defamatory ballad mocking Kaisa, the mother of the Gypsy family, and ridiculing her work as a cupper (a slow bloodletter). She, too, is ready with a reply: "Know this, you darned lot: we always travel honorably, whereas you, you wander about in people's forests like robbers and goring beasts. I let blood, I do, creating health; Mikko castrates, he does, making fat barrows,[20]

massive bulls, and handsome geldings for kings of kings to ride; know this, you devils" (82). We are far from the Gypsy stereotype here: it is the brothers, and not the Gypsies, who have lapsed into nature, renouncing productive rural work.

The motif of the outlaw community in *Seven Brothers* is based on Friedrich Schiller's tragedy *The Robbers* (1780), a play not normally read as a Gypsy text. However, when Schiller's subversive protagonists retreat to "the forests of Bohemia," they choose a region long associated with Gypsies, and synonymous with them in French (hence, also, Hazlitt's "Bohemian philosophers"). Indeed, Schiller's play is said to have been inspired by accounts of eighteenth-century Gypsy bandits whom Louis IX, Prince of Hesse-Darmstadt, hired to prey on villages near the Black Forest (Asséo, 44–45). Schiller turns Bohemia into a political paradigm. As so often with European literature, Gypsies are a stimulant to the political imagination, not a subject in their own right.[21] A breathlessly energetic text, *The Robbers* gives voice to high-flown republican ideals of loyalty and brotherhood, but the outcome fully bears out the Hobbesian dread of the state of nature, as the band indulges in anarchic brutality, raping nuns and murdering children.

Having put themselves outside of society, Kivi's brothers are also forced to found a polity of their own, conceived on Hobbesian grounds as a contractual arrangement, and policed by a code of total loyalty and honor among thieves. Just like Schiller's robbers, the brothers find civilization hard to sustain in the wilderness, as their homespun republican discipline keeps breaking down (Hyvärinen, 214–17). Juhani—the eldest, although not the wisest—is appointed leader, and it is agreed that recalcitrants are to be punished with banishment from the fraternal nation. Disaster is predicted by the upstanding Gypsy wife, Kaisa, a formidable character who menaces the brothers with forlorn prospects: "Your sauna will burn down and so will your cottage. In a sorry state, you will take to wandering the woods, swamps and bogs, seeking shelter for your freezing body. O! yet will you have to fight, bloodily, against humans as well as beasts of the forest, and then, panting like a dying rabbit, rest that cursed head of yours in a bush" (83–84). Instead of personifying nature, Kivi's Gypsy fortune-teller—almost certainly modeled on Meg Merrilies in Walter Scott's *Guy Mannering*[22] (1815)—sounds the utilitarian warning against the state of nature that the roaming brothers ignore at their peril. While retaining Schiller's focus on the Hobbesian basis of political philosophy, Kivi thus severs the stereotypical link between

Gypsies and the state of nature in revolutionary Bohemia: it is the land-owning Finnish brothers who mount a challenge against authority, and the hard-working Gypsies are called upon to restore discipline and to set a model for behavior. Kivi's most recent biographer recalls that the author's native parish, Nurmijärvi, had been notorious for its bandits in the 1820s and 1830s. The robberies and burglaries committed by the "Nurmijärvi robbers" were still a living memory when Kivi was writing; indeed, his own great uncle Matts Stenvall was a delinquent who, at one time, teamed up with a "Gypsy" called Elias Fredriksson Lindeman (Sihvo 21, 59; Rahikainen 24–25, 34). Kivi could not afford to disown those who felt the brunt of the law, whether they be Gypsies or not, and far from accepting the stereotype of the antisocial Gypsy, he offers extensive detail about Gypsy occupations in the rural economy, and a snapshot of the prejudiced attitudes of the settled population.

Most of the socioeconomic detail in the novel is conveyed through the defamatory ballad sung by the brothers.[23] A vernacular genre in wide use across Europe, whose concise format lends itself to performance and memorization by an illiterate public, the ballad helped to mediate the changing attitudes of majority populations toward Roma in Finland and elsewhere. As Christine Cartwright has shown, for example, eighteenth-century Scottish versions of the ballad "The Gypsy Laddie" show a married woman of high standing absconding under the spell of an itinerant Gypsy, whereas later American versions tone down the suggestion of sexual transgression and condone the idea of alliances leading to departure from one's home, in keeping with the pioneer ethic (319–25). According to Liisi Huhtala, in Finland, popular texts of this genre, widely disseminated as printed "broadside ballads," helped to reinforce class boundaries and to shape social roles. Though never brought under systematic official control, they furthered "the nineteenth-century modernization process" by "laying emphasis on love as the foundation of the new, free person and democratic society" (248).[24] Apparently based on a vernacular original,[25] the ballad in *Seven Brothers* contains practical information about the professional services provided to the settled peasantry by itinerant Roma: gelding, cupping, musicianship, fortune-telling and the sale of pitch.

On the other hand, the ballad also depicts the Gypsies in a stereotypical vein, mocking their poor family discipline, showing Mikko shaking his fist at his children and Kaisa going at them with a whip,

stamping her foot, shouting: "Trolls! Gypsies!" (280). When the Gypsies arrive at a village, gates swing, children run away to hide, crying, and dogs bark in distress. A child "has been threatened with Mikko's knife. / Hence the racket of the dogs / Hence the children's dread" (279). The ballad suggests that the fear of Gypsies is well entrenched in the community, and so does Kivi's narrative: the arrival of the Rajamäki Gypsies at the brothers' family farm provokes the terrified reactions in dogs and children. Yet the narrator never shows Mikko threatening the children of the Finnish peasants or, indeed, his own. In other words, the attitude voiced in the hostile ballad is not fully endorsed by the novel. Indeed, the ballad itself contains a crucial ambiguity. Who does the threatening? Is it Mikko himself, or do parents use the Gypsy as their bogeyman?

Kivi's novel also accentuates the chameleon quality of Gypsy identity. Forced to perform to make a living, Kaisa makes savvy use of her role as a fortune-teller, ready to flatter or scare the client, depending on the situation. As Ian Hancock has observed, Gypsy fortune-telling has traditionally served both "as a means of livelihood" and "a means of protective control" (5).[26] Mikko, besides playing the fiddle, castrating farm animals, and hawking pitch, also knows how to divine water and to stop bleeding. He has official backing for his veterinary expertise, having "gelded the provincial governor's stallion over a clean sheet, without shedding so much as a drop of blood, a feat for which he received a written license that not even the emperor of Rome can violate" (83). But Mikko, too, is a seasoned performer. Hired to play at the reconciliation feast, he wearily exhorts the assembled peasants to dance, and instead of springing spontaneously from the Romantic Gypsy soul, the pieces he plays are drawn from a cosmopolitan repertoire: a Polish march (405) and "a truly marvelous Swedish quadrille" (410).[27] At first sight, the celebration seems to bring the Gypsies and the peasants onto an equal footing: "And still the fire gladly shone, and still Mikko's fiddle gladly scraped and squeaked so that the ceiling and the soot-covered timbers trembled. The foaming beer went round from man to man, and the steaming coffee went from woman to woman, and from the coffee-grinds did Kaisa of Rajamäki fortune forth happy days until the grave" (412). However, the reader knows that both Kaisa and Mikko are performing to order and therefore detached from the collective euphoria.

From now on, the novel makes no mention of the productive agrarian work performed by the Gypsies. Where the brothers flower

into idiosyncrasy as fully rounded characters, so that we might easily forget that they include two sets of twins,[28] the Gypsies become generic, so that we find it normal that the family's "pair of twins" (405) should not even be named. Where they once were painfully conspicuous, by the end of the feast the Gypsies have become invisible to the eldest brother's eyes. Engaged, at last, to the woman who snubbed him at the beginning of the book, Juhani is overcome with emotion. He steps outside to check on the new young horses grazing in the field, which he "sees, yet does not see" (405). "This day is wonderful to him" (405). At the sound of Mikko's fiddle, his "mouth suddenly twists awry, a tear wets his eye, which he dries with his mighty fist, and he feels as though he were in heavenly bliss. Stepping into the yard, *he does not see* the Rajamäki twins before him, who are riding their hobbyhorses at a quick trot on the bare ground; *nor do his eyes see* Mikko's lastborn, a plump little stump with a bottle-cart on the front step of the house. He strides in proudly and in his looks can be seen the secret glow of self-assurance, eternal truth" (405, emphasis added). Here, at the emotional climax of the novel, the miscreant turned model farmer recovers his pride by submitting to the hegemonic civic identity that sustains his rightful status as a wealthy, marriageable peasant. Wise where he once was foolish, Juhani sees everything more clearly than ever before. Yet, at this very moment, Kivi's narrator splits Juhani's perspective off from ours, and allows us to see what Juhani misses. The Gypsies are present; indeed, the Gypsy musician is fuelling Juhani's emotions with his foreign music, and the youngest Gypsy children are right before Juhani's eyes. But he does not see them, or the hobbyhorses that pathetically substitute for the real horses that the Gypsies cannot afford. Nor does he see the bottle-cart drawn by the youngest of another family of seven, a family so poor that they must grasp at any work they can get, even if it means entertaining a family that makes a habit of racially insulting them.

Perhaps the most menacing facet of the European Gypsy stereotype is the allegation that Gypsies steal children.[29] Like the accusations of promiscuity and lack of hygiene, this belief gives immediacy to the idea that Gypsies are "savages," hopelessly controlled by nature, a threat to family life and, thus, to the very foundation of national community. A constellation of such anxieties is also present in *Seven Brothers*, and the specter of Gypsy misrule resurfaces in the closing chapter that audits the brothers' belated success on the marriage market.[30] As Satu Apo has shown, the brothers subscribe to a Germanic ideal of

female beauty, favoring well-built blondes with blue eyes and rosy complexions, although some have to content themselves with short brunettes (36–37). A famous paragraph devoted to young Eero compares the Finnish landscape to a "friendly mother's face," then gives a glimpse of the progressive future that Eero will help bring into being: "By Eero's noble, tireless efforts, a decent elementary school was built in the parish, one of the first in Finland" (451). Eero's marriage to a highly strung, spiritually oriented blonde, Anna Seunala, is singled out for solemn description that culminates in a lullaby, Kivi's well-loved lyric poem, "The Song of My Heart" (454; for an English translation, see *Odes*, 45). A paragon of maternal devotion, Anna is a fitting partner in Eero's exalted mission to nurture the next generation of citizens. His brother Timo, however, looks forward to a less idyllic family life, and there is no suggestion that he will do much good for the nation. When Timo returns from an extended drinking binge, his wife flies into a rage and tears his hair, crying: "Why don't you stay home nicely, you strange man, when you know perfectly well I am a hot-tempered Gypsy-Kaisa?" (448).

Having tentatively placed the Gypsies on a par with the protagonists, *Seven Brothers* eventually resettles them in a lurid margin that provides diversion and contrast to the normative national identity to which the novel bequeaths its comically idealized future. Optimistic about national education, yet mindful of the exclusion of Gypsy children from its closing celebrations, *Seven Brothers* makes visible the construction of a homogenizing culture that appreciates Gypsy entertainment, but cannot tolerate Gypsy procreation. As such national currency goes into circulation, one side of the coin might be a policy of systematic institutionalization of Roma children; the other, an astonishing contribution made by Roma performers to a nation's musical life. In Finland, the "Gypsy problem" was delegated to a Christian organization—the "Gypsy Mission," founded in 1906 and influential for decades thereafter—which developed a policy of forced assimilation to tackle the assumed perfidiousness of Roma parents. It is estimated that "10–20 per cent of all Roma children since the sixties have lived in one of the Gypsy Mission's institutions at some stage in their lives" (Grönfors 36–39). Of the many Finnish musicians of Roma extraction, Andy McCoy, guitarist with the group Hanoi Rocks, is best known internationally. Others include Remu Aaltonen, Markus Allan, Anneli Sari, and the opera bass Marko Putkonen, who has also sung in the Finnish Roma band Hortto Kaalo.

In representing Finnish peasants and Gypsies together, Kivi endorses nationalist ideology, but also resists it, no doubt drawing on his own fractured identity and checkered, odd-jobbing experience as the son of a peasant-artisan, a lapsed candidate for the Lutheran priesthood, huntsman, philosopher, amateur folklorist, drinker, and literary pioneer—a Finnish bohemian, let us say. By recognizing the spuriousness of his novel's nationalist resolution, it is also possible to break the spell of its allocation of identities and to see them as performances instead. After all, it is far from clear where sincere roles end and parodies begin. Does Kaisa's final prophecy confirm the narrator's closing promise of a happy ending, or are both performing to order—camping it up for their audience, and uttering what the national occasion demands? A prophecy of good fortune is what the brothers have explicitly commissioned from Kaisa when inviting her to their home, eager to erase the trauma of her earlier, painfully accurate predictions: "Come and tell us our fortunes once again, and we hope your eyes will see brighter pictures" (391). Kivi gives the reader every reason to dismiss superstitious notions of the Gypsies' occult knowledge and to see them, instead, as consummate ironists parrying the assaults of rural dummkopfs. Despite its investment in homogenizing utilitarian nationalism, *Seven Brothers* also debunks facile generalizations about Gypsies and nature.

As an aspiring Finnish writer, Kivi was himself the target of racist attitudes (see Lyytikäinen 14 and Kemiläinen 96). Like the Gypsies, the nineteenth-century Finns had inherited an identity sustained by oral tradition and barely represented in written form before Kivi's day. The oral tradition was being mined for folklore with a view to nation-building, but the full legitimacy of Finnish as a national language remained a very distant prospect indeed during Kivi's lifetime. Perhaps this is why, at the first encounter with the Gypsies, Timo and Eero address them in mock Russian and mock Swedish, the two state languages against which Finnish was defining itself through the work of the cultural establishment that sponsored, sought to control, and interpreted pioneering national authors such as Kivi himself (81). Thus the novel is complicit with what Thomas Acton has called "the most extraordinary problem about the European reaction to Gypsies: the denial . . . that Gypsies have a language of their own" (106). However, the author of *Seven Brothers* clearly had artistic aspirations and a social sensitivity that went beyond the nationalist project. The son of a humble village tailor, Kivi had to join the Swedish-speaking élite in

Helsinki in order to receive higher education, and the economic and social conditions in which he produced his fiction were not so different from those in which Mikko produces his music. Always broke, Kivi was compelled to move from house to house, and he certainly felt the pressure to make artistic compromises to satisfy the tastes of a cultural élite that despised him one day, and idolized him the next.

At any rate, Kivi was less naïve about stereotypes than his readers have been, particularly those keen to promote Finnish national culture. In 1997, the Finnish Literature Society published a collection of Aleksis Kivi's poetry for an international audience, selected and translated into English by Keith Bosley. "I think he did nothing better than 'The Rajamäki Regiment,'" Bosley surprisingly states (11), and prints a full-length English version of the derisory broadside ballad about Gypsies. Unfortunately, Kivi's countervailing ironies are lost and the references to rural Gypsy occupations make little sense when the "poem" is thus removed from its context. A crucial ambiguity also disappears in the English translation, which seems to reinforce the most dangerous Gypsy stereotype: where the Finnish text has a singular object and a passive verb—a child "has been threatened" with Mikko's knife—the translation opts for the active and the plural: "And Mick has threatened with his knife / Many a curd-mouthed child."[31] In other words, it is not the villagers but "Mick" who does the threatening.[32] Where Kivi crafted a nuanced representation, the excerpt offered to English-speaking readers reverts to the Gypsy stereotype.

To conclude, the imaginative ostracism of Gypsies through stereotyping in European literature cannot be explained as the xenophobic reflex of nationalists confronted with foreigners. On the contrary, the notion of the Gypsy-in-nature is integral to nationalism itself. For the post-Enlightenment imagination, the Gypsy-in-nature is the embodiment of a more primitive form of human identity that the modern nation has left behind. The negative and positive versions of the stereotype are equally harmful, insofar as they both deny the Gypsy's capacity for socialization. Resisting the positive stereotype is especially difficult: even the scholars and aficionados who championed Roma rights in Britain under the aegis of the Gypsy Lore Society in the first half of the twentieth century were liable to romanticize Gypsy life.[33] Nord remarks on the startling ill-chosen quotation that appears in the English Gypsy-lorist Dora Yates's essay "Nazi Persecution of the Gypsies": "The Gypsy represents Nature before Civilization. He is the wanderer whom all of us who are poets or love the wind are summed

up in. He does what we dream. He is the last romance left in the world. His is the only free race" (quoted in Nord 156). The rousing words come from the well-known essay by Arthur Symons, "In Praise of Gypsies" (1908), and Nord rightly wonders how Yates, writing in 1949, "could still think of freedom as the distinguishing feature of Romany existence" (155). Like so many authors of the century before, Yates wanted to see Gypsies as nature's people, distinct, yet universal; exotic, yet familiar to the point of being typically human. However, to indulge in such fantasies is to deny the historical specificity of the Roma in order to manufacture a heightened idea of one's own human—and national—identity (see also Nord, 23). There is no doubt that Gypsy stereotypes have sustained racist attitudes toward the Roma, paving the way for harmful social policies against them, and worse. Dehumanized caricatures and sentimental idealizations project the Gypsies outside the nation, into nature, and in this respect, the positive stereotype may be just as dangerous as the negative one. After all, even the rabidly nationalistic culture that set about exterminating Europe's Gypsies in the 1940s also entertained a sentimental liking for them. "Himmler's initial plans for the Gypsies," Katie Trumpener remarks, involved "the simultaneous incarceration and sterilization of 'mixed' Gypsies and the group resettlement and species preservation of 'pure' Gypsies on special protected preserves" (855).

Exact figures are unknown, but it has been estimated that at least half a million Roma were killed under the Nazis (see Kenrick and Puxon 150; and Lewy 221–22). No wonder the representation of Gypsies remains a fraught subject, even among contemporary advocates of the Roma cause, some of whom consider that the very notion of a Gypsy is a racist invention, while others prefer to salvage aspects of the Gypsy tradition in an attempt to assert Roma identity.[34] The issue of the representation of Gypsies continues to have urgent practical relevance, given that the old stereotypes remain in circulation, legitimating the oppression of the Roma across Europe and beyond. Still routinely branded as eternal social outsiders, the Roma continue to be poorly served by the ideology of the nation. In the context of resurgent nationalism in some of the countries of the former Soviet Bloc, overt persecution has been seen, and even violence; in the long-established democracies of the West, violence may be rare, but discrimination and bigotry are endemic. Not surprisingly, the most hopeful initiatives for improving the situation of the Roma have been supranational in nature. They include antiracism legislation enacted

within the framework of the European Union, and the creation of a European Roma and Travellers Forum, a long overdue platform for self-representation.[35]

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## NOTES

1. I would like to thank Pirjo Lyytikäinen, Deborah Weiner and Edward Wilson for providing helpful comments and suggestions while I was preparing this essay. I am responsible for the shortcomings that remain.
2. See Clark 228–38; Hancock 5–6; Mayall 71–93 and Trumpener 849–84.
3. The main texts spelling out the utilitarian philosophy are Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651); Jeremy Bentham's *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1780), *Deontology* (1834, arranged and edited from Bentham's manuscripts by John Bowring), and John Stuart Mill's *Utilitarianism* (1861).
4. See Mill's *Autobiography* (1873), 114.
5. As C. E. Vaughan has shown, Rousseau's social theory is analogous to that of Hobbes, who posited the social contract precisely as a means to rescue the citizen from the "state of nature" (lx).
6. See Acton, 106.
7. See, for example, Nord, 50–56 and Simpson, 156.
8. Recent critical commentary on Wordsworth's "Gipsies" has delved into the ideological subtext of the poem, which expresses Wordsworth's own anxieties. See Simpson.
9. The reason for Aleko's exile is never clarified—Zemfira merely states that "He wants to become a Gypsy like us / He is pursued by the law" (2). (Translations from the poem are my own.)

10. Pushkin's poem directly influenced both Mérimée's novella and the libretto of Bizet's *Carmen* (1875) (see Wood, xxvi). The Carmen story has been filmed by several directors, including, most recently, Otto Preminger (1954), Carlos Saura (1983), Peter Brook (1983) and Francesco Rosi (1984).
11. Translations from *Carmen* are my own.
12. In the Åland Islands, a Swedish-speaking territory placed under Finnish administration in 1921, the presence of Roma is recorded even earlier, in 1559. See Grönfors 1: 29 and Ollikainen 66.
13. See Grönfors 1: 34; Ollikainen, 74; and Weckman, 4.
14. See "Foreword" 11, Rahikainen 268 and 275–76.
15. By 1920, the brothers depicted in the book had "undergone a transformation from caricatures of the common people into ideal Finns" (Vaittinen 177).
16. When Kivi wrote his novel, a patriotic portrait of the Finnish people already existed in Runeberg's *Tales of Ensign Ståhl* (1848, 1860), written in Swedish. It celebrates the Finnish heroes of the war in 1809 between Sweden and Russia, when the Finns fought for the Swedish king. Written in a classical vein, *The Tales* idealize the willing self-sacrifices of soldiers representing all social classes, from vagrants and peasants to aristocrats and patrician officers. No Gypsies are included. However, an earlier poem by Runeberg, "The Gypsy" (1833), is filled with generalized speculations about the ultimate "brotherhood" between Gypsies and non-Gypsies. In the poem, a shackled Gypsy convict is freed by his wife, who wounds the guard with a knife. The Gypsy spares the life of the guard, who soon betrays him. Surrounded by captors, the disillusioned Gypsy stabs the guard to death, calling him "a robber who has plundered his brother" (240, my translation). As in Wordsworth, Arnold, Pushkin and Dostoevsky, a sentimental notion of universal "brotherhood" obscures the existence of Roma as a social group.
17. The Finnish word is "*sissi*."
18. Translations from *Seven Brothers* and all other texts in Finnish are my own unless otherwise stated. Alex Matson and Richard Impola have published full-length English translations of the novel, which are listed in the bibliography.
19. The military nickname may not be coincidental: under Swedish rule, Finnish Roma were able to find a measure of protection by joining the army; a military passport would allow a soldier and his family to travel freely while on leave. This option was curtailed in 1809, when Finland came under Russian rule and the local army was disbanded. See Pulma, 28 and 48.
20. A "barrow" is a castrated pig.
21. Lesley Sharpe writes: "Schiller never experienced nature, as Herder and Goethe did, as a living organism of which he was a part. When Karl Moor (the protagonist of *The Robbers*) talks of nature, nature is an idea, indeed more of a moral idea than a vital experience" (12).
22. I am indebted to Pirjo Lyytikäinen for this observation. Nord considers *Guy Mannering* to be "the single most important literary influence on the nineteenth-century fascination with Gypsies" (25).
23. In Kivi's day, the peasantry neither produced nor read the "higher" forms of literature. *Seven Brothers*, though a trailblazing attempt to represent the peasantry, was addressed to the educated élite in the capital. Nineteenth-century Finnish peasants did, however, compose and consume broadside ballads. See Laine 221.
24. In the nineteenth century, broadside ballads praising the industrious peasant become a staple of the genre, along with romantic ballads expressing an individualistic notion of romantic love. See Huhtala 243, 246–47.
25. The narrator attributes "the long and mocking song" to some anonymous "wag" (81), and Finnish critics have detected similarities with a broadside ballad about an itinerant

cobbler recorded by the amateur folklorist Juhana Fredrik Granlund. See Sihvo 30 and Kohtamäki 151–52.

26. See also Mayall, 50 and 53.
27. At the time Kivi was writing, Gypsy performance became an organized economic activity in metropolises of nearby Russia (see Lemon 36–37). As Thomas Acton observes, mounting professional performances offered a means of self-representation: "In the nineteenth century, however, while the direct contribution of the Roma to the written record remained small, there was an increasing professionalization of Romani self-representation in Europe, in the sense that musicians, fortune-tellers and hosts of Gypsy balls and spectacles were able to charge *gadjé* for attending at their own representations of Romani life, thus obliging the *gadjé* experts to include this Gypsy self-representation" (100).
28. Tuomas and Aapo, and Timo and Lauri.
29. See Cartwright 321; Grönfors 1: 24; Mayall 82; Nord 23–4; and Trumpener 846.
30. According to Apo, Tuomas's wife personifies this ideal, and the Kuokkala twins married by Lauri and Timo are furthest from it: "short, brown-skinned, dark-eyed and ill-natured" (Apo 36).
31. The original Finnish reads: "Uhattu on Mikon veitsell / lasta piimäpartaist" (279).
32. "Mick"—British slang for an Irishman—also has unfortunate connotations in this context.
33. See Nord 125–55 and Mayall 71–75.
34. See Acton, 100 and 105.
35. For an overview of the developments in different European countries, see the European Commission's *Situation of Roma in an Enlarged European Union* (2004). Supported by President Tarja Halonen of Finland, the European Roma and Travellers Forum was created in 2004. (See the Council of Europe's Web site: http://www.coe.int/T/DG3/RomaTravellers/FERV/default_en.asp).

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# Chapter 2

# The Story of Love, Human Conditions, and the "Gypsy" Lifestyle in Józef Ignacy Kraszewski's *Chata za Wsią* (*The Cottage beyond the Village*)

*Agnieszka Nance*

When two publications about Romanies appeared on the Polish book market in 2000—*Cygan to Cygan* (*A Gypsy Is a Gypsy*) by Lidia Ostałowska and *Cyganie. Z obu stron Karpat* (*Gypsies: From Both Sides of the Carpathian Mountains*) by Piotr Wójcik—the Poles' fascination with Romani culture unexpectedly blossomed into open discussion and public talks throughout Polish society. In newspapers, galleries, and private venues, the "Gypsy" issue became a hot topic. Both nonfiction works were aimed at eradicating the mutual stereotypes and prejudices cultivated between the Poles and the Roma, and were published to "wide acclaim."[1] Ryszard Kapuściński, the preeminent writer among Polish reporters, stated that Piotr Wójcik possesses an extreme "wrażliwość malarską i profesjonalne mistrzostwo" (a painter's sensitivity and professional mastery), and Ostałowska's reportages are written "z pasją i humanizmem" (with passion and humanism), revealing

"zagadkową i fascynującą rzeczywistość" (a mysterious and fascinating reality).[2]

Yet, the topic of Gypsies is anything but new in Polish culture. As in other European cultures, the tone of its representations ranges from one of hatred and fear to one of fascination and curiosity. As Ficowski, in his study *Cyganie w Polsce*, argues: "Among the ethnic groups living in Poland for centuries, Roma are an element that is most exotic and intriguing, and yet the least known" (7). Perhaps it is the fear embodied in the stereotype of evil and dark Roma that discouraged the Poles from wanting to know the Romanies, and from becoming acquainted with their culture. In surveying Polish canonical literature, however, a careful reader would likely encounter another, already recognized novel dealing with the topic of Gypsies, their nature, and their image in Polish society. In fact, this particular text, *Chata za wsią* (*The Cottage beyond the Village*) (1854) by Józef Ignacy Kraszewski (1812–87), placed among Polish "classics" in the literary canon, has retained its popularity, despite its outdated setting, old-fashioned language, and a complete change in the sociopolitical and historical situation of Polish readership. At the same time that Kraszewski's Gypsy novel was being planned, written, and published, Poland was divided between Russia, Prussia, and the Habsburg Empire, and ceased to exist as a nation state. Significantly, in 1884, the author himself was banned from the Prussian part of Poland by the Prussian authorities for his cooperation with the political and intellectual élite in France, who were working to reestablish an independent Polish state. Kraszewski's political engagement, although significant for the literary development of the author, will not be discussed in detail in this article. Instead, the focal point will be here Kraszewski's portrayal of the Roma people in nineteenth-century Polish-Russian territory, with special emphasis on the modern approach the author undertook in his presentation of Romanies and their coexistence—or rather underexistence—with the Poles.

To this day, Kraszewski ranks among the most prolific of Polish artists, almost in a renaissance manner. His prose works encompass historical novels, his specialty, as well as studies on culture and folklore. In addition to his writings, one must also reckon with his musical scores and paintings. Such a vast and varied portfolio may lead one to question the quality of the works. How can so many novels, his many other works aside, meet the high standards of taste, writer's workmanship, and the canon? To allay doubt, this article will focus on

one novel, the relatively brief *Chata za wsią*, to illuminate his talents as a writer and observer of life.

This novel entails distinct literary tendencies, as well as social musings, specifically in regard to Kresy, the eastern part of the nonexistent Polish Commonwealth in 1854, when it was under Russian rule. While it follows the traditional pattern of a didactical novel, this work is also innovative—personal digressions and author's comments are intertwined into the plot to present Kraszewski's own opinions on social and moral issues. The modern character of the novel, however, is, in terms of literary heritage, combined with the "old" literary heritage. As such, *Chata za Wsią* could exemplify a late trace of sentimentalism or a romantic notion of folklore as the wellspring of a nation's culture. Indeed, Kraszewski's idea was to strengthen and rebuild Polish culture, and, thereby, the nation, in times when the nation-state had ceased to exist, Polish history (which resulted in numerous historical novels such as *Bruehl* and the cycle *Dzieje Polski*). The result of his fascination with Kresy (specifically the Volhynia, Lithuania, and Polesie regions), its legends, and folklore takes shape in 1839 in *Wspomnienia z Wołynia, Polesia i Litwy* (Memories from Volhynia, Polesie, and Lithuania), a collection of studies, drawings, and descriptions of local natural treasures. As Stanisław Burkot recalls:

> Following the advice of his grandmother, Zofia Maleska, after the difficult adventures of 1830, after being arrested and sentenced for "soldaty" [exile in Siberia – AN] from which he was saved by his family's long endeavors, he began to collect materials for a history of Vilna and Lithuania. Still in his Vilna years, he collected materials and notes, excerpts from chronicles, and also copied archival documents and wrote down fragments of rare books, nowadays often unreachable. This material that grew with years was used later on to write two historical books *Vilna from the Beginning to 1750* and *Antique Lithuania*. So, when he set off on his first travel to Polesie and Volhynia, he already possessed substantial knowledge about the past of these regions, their culture and customs. (ii)

Interestingly, among the scenes taken from the life of local peasants, sketches and literary descriptions of Gypsies are included in this volume, if only sporadically. For a reader of that period not accustomed to such portrayals, the choice of Gypsy themes, not to mention an entire novel devoted to Gypsy characters, must have felt uncomfortable, perhaps even shocking.

Nevertheless, Kraszewski boldly approached his chosen topic—having completed a broad study of Kresy, not only was he aware of the local settings and nuances, but he was also competent to face the issue of popular superstition vis-à-vis Gypsies. Adam Bednorz, in his article "Od mitu do rzeczywistości. Rozważania wokół głównego motywu Chaty za wsią J. I Kraszewskiego" (From Myth to Reality. Thoughts on the Main Motif in *Chata za Wsia* by J. I. Kraszewski), argues that Kraszewski's novel was "pierwszą poważna próbą na polskim gruncie przełamania fałszywego stereotypu Cygana" (the first serious attempt on Polish ground to break the false Gypsy stereotype). Indeed, although Kraszewski does not escape painting a stereotypical portrait of Gypsies, he adds a new dimension to their portrayal. Therefore, in this analysis of that novel, the primary focus will be to reveal the characteristics of Kraszewski's protagonists, the typical and atypical elements of the story that will shed light on the "traditional"—that is, predominant—perception of Roma by a Polish reader of the nineteenth century, as well as for a Pole of the twenty-first century.

Since their arrival in Poland, the Romani people were considered evil, dangerous, and unworthy, and, as such, suffered persecution fueled by the suspicions and hatred their otherness engendered among the Poles.[3] Their misunderstood nomadic lifestyle, increased crime, and distinctive looks (dark skin and eyes, and wearing colorful clothes) led to disapproval of anything related to the Gypsies among the majority of Poles throughout the centuries. Yet, a significant change in the perception of Gypsies occurred during the Romantic era. Romantics, such as Mickiewicz and Zan,[4] developed an idealized image of Gypsies that hinged on their magical and fascinating aura, their independent spirit: "Roma—as a collective protagonist— in the idealized romantic imagination became *in extenso* an embodiment of a literary protagonist of that era. This protagonist, alone, noble, against all injustice and the scruples societal order, led a tragic fight to change the reality. Gypsies—as an ethic group, alone in regard to other nations of Europe, brave in their stubbornness since they did not let themselves be subjects or they refuse to settle—were for the first time in European culture put on a pedestal in an ethically moral sense, even worthy of a specific moral example" (Bednorz). In this context, Kraszewski's *Chata za wsią* could be viewed as homage paid by the author to his literary predecessors, as well as his Romantic heritage, still celebrated and highly regarded in Poland and literary circles generally.

Turning now to the novel, the events of *Chata za wsią* take place in the small village of Stawisko, located in the easternmost part of what was, at that time, the nonexistent Polish Commonwealth. A reader aware of Kraszewski's involvement in the independence movement and his political engagement would wonder at his conscious omission of any political references in his work, concentrating rather on the social issues and human aspects of the story. This thorough understanding of the region's social structure resulted in detailed descriptions of the lifestyles and mentality of the villagers, the landowner, and, foremost, the Gypsies. In his novel, Kraszewski opted for a didactical approach. This is not to say that *Chatą za wsią* is a *Bildungsroman*, per se, as in the German tradition. Yet, the work incorporates all the elements of human mental and emotional development, as it shows the growth and determination of an individual in times of difficulty and hardship. Opting for a new type of art form, Kraszewski refused to follow the dominant and popular standard of the time, the salon-novel. In so doing, he made a conscious decision to expose the poverty of peasants and Gypsies, as he claims: "To, cośmy przywykli zwać społecznością wyższą, jest kosmopolitycznym amalgamem prawie wszędzie i zawsze, na którym się więcej odbija barwa uprzywilejowanych stolic mody, niżeli kraju, z którego łona powstaje" (what we were used to calling a higher society is a cosmopolitan amalgamate in which are reflected mostly the colors of fashion capitals rather than colors of the country from which womb it arrives), adding that "wszystkie nasze obrazy społeczności są niepełne i kulawe, że im brakuje jednej strony i żeśmy wzięli część za całość i odjęli wszelką ważność temu, co w istocie jest może najważniejszym" (all of our pictures of society are crippled and imperfect; they miss one side, and we took a part as a whole and removed all the importance from what might be in its essence most important) (8–9).

Despite his unquestioned achievement in revealing the obscure life of Polish villagers, Kraszewski's prose lacks artistic mastery. The plot of *Chata za wsią* is developed linearly, and circles around three geographical locations: the village, the mansion, and the cottage outside of the village. Although, as mentioned before, the novel was discovered and cherished by hordes of readers, its events are poorly developed. Furthermore, the structure of the book is underdeveloped, and most of the characters, perhaps with the exception of the protagonists, are superficially and often stereotypically rendered (that is, the beggar Rataj, and the village quack). The full picture of the book is

schematically conceived as a cycle of single scenes and skizzes that contrast with one another as being either lyrical or gruesome. In general, *Chata* tells the story of the intertwined relationships among village peasants, Gypsies, and the decadent landowner. Carefully chosen protagonists Aza, Tumry, and Motruna share a common heritage: in their veins flow the Gypsy blood, which, according to Kraszewski, could be a blessing or a curse. Tumry, a half-Gypsy, belongs to the Roma tabor, travels with them as part of their family, and works as a blacksmith. After arriving in Stawisko, Tumry falls in love with Motruna, a local girl from Stawisko, whose father, himself a Gypsy adopted as a child by locals, strongly opposes the relationship. Yet, through the intervention of the landowners, after the departure of the Gypsy tabor, Tumry and Motruna marry, angering not only the father of the bride but, most importantly, the entire community. The young couple is forced to settle in a hut outside the village, and their lives are changed forever: Tumry cannot find work as a blacksmith, and Motruna is cursed by her father and abandoned by her entire family. Alone, rejected by the local community, and without any means to make a living, Tumry and Motruna begin their life in a self-built hut. The inhuman conditions, however, weaken Motruna's faith and love, despite her husband's determination to survive. Soon, the woman finds out that she is expecting a child. With the help of a local fool, Motruna is able to take care of the child and the hut, while Tumry travels to the surrounding villages pursuing any work opportunities. Not satisfied with letting the reader simply sympathize with the unfortunate couple, Kraszewski complicates his characters' lives further with the arrival of the Gypsies. Without explaining Tumry's motivation, Kraszewski describes his longing for the community, an invisible bond between the half-Gypsy and the tabor. Furthermore, an old passion for Aza, the beautiful and strong Gypsy femme fatale, returns, and Tumry approaches his destined demise. His weakness and blind jealousy lead him to suicide, despite his responsibilities as a father and husband. Motruna finds herself alone, though with a daughter she adores. In despair over Tumry's death, as well as their tragic circumstances, and still excluded from society, the two women depend on themselves for survival. To deepen the tragedy, Kraszewski lets Motruna die, and leaves Marysia, her not yet teenage daughter, to struggle alone. Finally, however, it is Marysia who achieves a better life for herself. Drawn for a moment to her Gypsy heritage, she is kidnapped by the tabor, but realizes that her place is among the villagers,

and willingly accepts a marriage proposal from the son of a wealthy peasant. Thus, Kraszewski's *Chata za wsią*, despite its pervading themes of evil, tragedy, and human injustice, ends on a positive and optimistic note.

The opening statement of the *Chata za wsią* sets the focal point for the reader and the narration. Here, the narrator establishes that not the mansion, but rather the hut/cottage beyond the village, will host the story's key happenings and tragic evens. In so doing, Kraszewski prepares his readers to deal with a protagonist from the lower social classes—in fact, from the lowest levels of society. Indeed, this protagonist—or, rather, these protagonists—will embody the ultimate outsider: ignored by landowners and peasants alike.

To emphasize his commitment to an honest portrayal of life in Stawisko, the novel's first key event takes place when a group of Gypsies arrives in the village, as they do every year in their nomadic fashion:

> A gaggle of Gypsies whose leader as usual was working as a blacksmith, his cousins were his assistants, and the rest of the family stole and read cards [arrived]. Because already at that time rare were the pilgrimages of these enigmatic drifters whose heritage and language are still covered with a thick mystery, therefore the entire available part of the population came running to take a look at the incomers. After hundreds of years, they still were wearing on their foreheads a mark of their heritage some time ago from the tawny East or South. (14)

In this quote, we see a narrator taking the position of a voyeur, while, at the same time, indicating that he knows more than the casual observer or reader, and is perhaps even knowledgeable about Gypsy heritage. In this brief description, Kraszewski denotes a few significant characteristics associated with Gypsies: their nomadic lifestyle, magic, strange language, and, most of all, dark skin. These components combined to create the aura of otherness and strangeness that ultimately separated the Gypsies from the rest of this society. The dark skin had, for centuries, existed as a constant marker, a symbol of sorts, of the alleged evil nature of the Gypsies; it was deeply rooted in the Christian doctrine of war between light and dark, good and evil. Thus, the blackness/darkness of the Gypsies' skin was associated with inferiority, with Satan, and with satanic forces (Kenrick and Puxton 19). Additionally, the connection between the Gypsies and the devil was deepened by their mysterious behavior and their talent for black magic (Tarot cards and so on). It is, then, not surprising that the local peasants

kept their distance, despite their curiosity and an undeniable interest in the incoming group: "Wszystkie baby powyłaziły wiodąc ciekawe a przestraszone dzieci za ręce i trzymając je silnie w obawie, żeby je Cyganie nie porwali" (all women came out, holding their curious yet scared children by the hand and holding them strongly fearing that they might be kidnapped by the Gypsies) (14). Additionally, the Gypsies' nomadic lifestyle—the fact that the travelers did not posses any strong connection to any land or any country—intensified the mistrust in the minds of the locals, and was an important factor in their demotion.

In *Chata za wsia*, Kraszewski does not hesitate to emphasize the clash between the two cultures—the Gypsies and the peasants—which resulted, on the one hand, from the lack of knowledge and the ingrained bias, and on the other, from the Gypsies' hermetic nature and aversion to assimilation. In so doing, according to the positive thought of that era, he distances himself from groups, condemning at the same time the prejudice and hostility toward the Roma. For his readers, this is a lesson that aligns itself with some of the rhetoric of that day that opposes the condescending view relegating all things Gypsy to the categories of undesirability and filth. Yet, the author of *Chata* seeks to explore the deeply rooted spite toward Roma. In the following passage, he reveals the allusions of the commoners to conjecture about the heritage of the "strange," dark-skinned peoples.

> The peasants . . . could not comprehend what was happening under the tent of the wandering Tuhal-Kain. The conversations of the strangers were fiery, lively, and fast, and *they* went on in an inscrutable language, which was not yet well understood by anybody, not accounted for. This language changes with purpose, just like a snake is changing its colors or like a snake is slithering under leaves and grass away from people. Who knows how many countries, centuries, people, and memories built this speech, weaved from the strangest sounds! Maybe it in there is a sound of words of the workers that yelled from the top of the Babel tower; maybe there is a sound of an incantation of Brahma's or Osiris' priests, maybe. (23f)

In this passage, in a concise and practiced literary manner, Kraszewski reveals, in detail, the common belief of the genesis of the Gypsies. According to the peasants, this group's ethnicity consisted of a strange mix of ancient cultures, reaching back to Egypt and Babylon. To comprehend this complexity, and to justify their own bias, they

resorted to distorted biblical motifs such as the one of Tuhal-Kain, the first blacksmith in the book of Genesis. Folk etymology perceived Tuhal-Kain as Cain's offspring, hence, equally doomed and punished by God. It followed, then, at least in the peasants' skewed worldview, that the Gypsies' nomadic lifestyle remained part of the biblical curse and punishment for the initial sin of Cain.

Interestingly, among the arriving Gypsy strangers, one female receives the most attention from both the locals and the narration, adding a new dimension to the novel. Aza is the unquestioned leader of the group, feared and respected by the others. In 1852, in fact, Kraszewski made this woman the strongest character, not necessarily as a result of her physical attributes but, rather, because of her calculating, intelligent mind and her ability to "cast a spell" on the novel's other characters, which corresponded to the myth of Gypsies having "dark" powers. In contrast to the common apprehension of beauty, Kraszewski describes Aza, at first, as "originalnie ładna" (curiously/originally pretty) (22), only to expand on that description:

> Aside from the charm of fresh youth, she possessed this beauty that is not ours, wild, strange, fiery, examples of which we can see in Indian statues. . . . In her crib on her forehead, mouth, and whole posture, Satan wrote: You will reign! . . . and yet her beauty was not common and not everyone would even notice her, very few would be enchanted by her. . . . You can laugh as much as you will; the rabble considered her as a relatively ugly young Gypsy, yet a poet would follow her like a wonderful phenomenon. (22)

The archetype of the domineering and seductive woman, independent and cruel femme fatale, was typical and popular in opera at the turn of the century (that is, Carmen in Bizet's *Carmen*), though not so much in Polish literature.

In initially describing Aza, Kraszewski continues to shed light on the Gypsy stereotypes that existed in this society. Most significantly, the magical attributes of Gypsies were associated with satanic practices, far away from Christian tradition and customs. Kraszewski places these opinions in the mouths of local peasants: "Co to za lud? . . . Cały świat jak zapowietrzony od nich ucieka: złodzieje, zbójnicy, czarowniki i gorzej, i gorzej jeszcze: poganie, nechresty!" (what peoples are they? . . . The whole world runs from them like from plague: thieves, bandits, magicians, and even worse, much worse: heathens, antichrists) (293). Yet, Kraszewski does not allow the reader to blindly

follow the vox populi and perpetuate the negative portrayal of Roma. Instead, his presentation departs from the mainstream stereotypical perception of a Gypsy by weaving personal comments into the main plot. Theft was, by far, the crime with which Gypsies were most often accused. In *Chata*, Kraszewski deliberately includes only one secondary character, an old Gypsy woman Jaga, who steals without any scruples, even from the poorest. Yet, Jaga does not steal because of her Gypsy nature. By no means is her heritage indicative of her tendencies—instead, her habit is a causal result of poverty and old age, as would be the case with anyone, despite her ethnicity. "Nie dziwujmy się starej Jadze: w naszym świecie iluż to starców zbiera, dusi, chwyta jak ona! Ilu innych, wykształceńszych, obraca ten popęd w jakąś manię kolekcji, w zapalczywą chęć pieniędzy i mienia" (Let us not be surprised by the old Jaga's behavior: how many old men in our world collect and grab things. How many, even better educated, swivel this urge into a mania of collecting, into an impetuous desire for money and possessions) (155). This explanation pointedly demonstrates the equality of Gypsies with other peoples, struggling with addictions, needs, and greed.

As in the case of Jaga, Kraszewski often emphasizes issues of equality, of standing on the same footing, between the Gypsies and the Polish peasants. The Gypsies, however, are, by their ethnicity, destined to differ from the rest of society in their desires, troubles, and feelings. The author of *Chata* appeals to his readers for further understanding of the Roma people. At some point, Kraszewski decided to become a preacher, sharing with his readers the Christian way of perceiving the Gypsies. To do so, he employs the figure of Marysia, the daughter of Motruna. This naïve, guiltless, and unfortunate child suffers from the same persecutions as her parents—without any support from her distant relatives, lacking money and a means to live, she survives, despite the Gypsy stigma. In the society at that time, her heritage was clear. Although only partially Roma, the girl was considered a true Gypsy, with all the negative attributes one would wrongly impute this ethic group. As Kenrick and Puxon argue, Gypsies were initially disliked because they were black and ugly; now it is because many of their children are fair and blue-eyed. Exclusiveness causes hostility and suspicion; assimilation brings denigration (30). In this vein, Kraszewski's novel, and the lives of his protagonists, bear out this statement. At least from the peasants' point of view, the fact Marysia must remain separated carries with it all the negative associations the

peasants hold against Gypsies: "Chłopaki i dziewczyny ledwie ją zobaczywszy szeptali: doczka czarownicy! Cygańskie dziecko! I rozpierzchali się po jarach" (all boys and girls when they only noticed Marysia whispered: the witches' daughter! A Gypsy child! And they disappeared in ravines) (207). Kraszewski, however, does not allow the reader to embrace the assumption that this innocent woman-child will share the destiny of her Gypsy forefathers. Instead, he once more summons the romantic notion of the writer as moral compass for the nation, of being the leader who shows the ethical and just way of acting. In almost biblical language, he chooses to glorify the naiveté and purity of Marysia, placing her on an equal footing with all other children, regardless of their ethnic status: "We see sometimes on a dry rock, in a fist full of dry sand, how a plant brawly grows, being fed only by the Heavenly Father. . . . So grew that little orphan, blossomed and luxuriated, even though nothing was helping her. . . . You know though how the village children are brought up? Like birds in the sky, like flowers on the ground, like everything that God takes care of through the hands of His angels" (206). It is not surprising, then, that it is Marysia who ultimately overcomes the negative bias of the village and marries a local boy after a turbulent relationship and a kidnapping attempt by the tabor. Kraszewski leaves the reader his occasionally preachy plea for a humane solution to the Gypsy controversy among the Poles.

Even a cursory study of Kraszewski's novel uncovers the complexity of discourse between those who oppose the multiethnic vision of Poland, and those embracing cultural diversity and the desire to overcome the fundamental differences between the Roma and the Slavs. In this context, the prejudice against Gypsies cannot be easily dismissed. Instead, Kraszewski decides to take the high road and educate through examples. In his view, a more nuanced reading is not required to comprehend the basic truths of peoples' equality and backwardness in the Gypsy treatment, which reveals itself in concepts of the Gypsies' magical powers and satanic practices.

Although not a literary first, the Gypsy motifs in Polish literature and culture are used sporadically. Interestingly, however, *Chata za wsią* evoked an echo in both the Polish readership (the book enjoyed popularity and eventually became standard reading in schools) and other artists of that and later eras. For instance, following Kraszewski's bold attempt to present the complicated relationship between the Gypsies and all others, and to fight against the existing bias, Ignacy

Jan Paderewski takes the main theme from *Chata za wsią* for his first opera *Manru* (1900) (libretto was written by Nossig). In regard to its musical form, it is also natural to notice similarities between Paderewski's work and George Bizet's and Prospero Mérimée's *Carmen*. Whereas for George Bizet and Prospero Mérimée the personality of Carmen was the central issue of the opera, Paderewski was more interested in the Gypsy mentality, the sense of freedom, and the desire for wandering, passions also close to the heart of the virtuoso. It is worth noting that such a presentation of the issues in Paderewski's *Manru* was not copied outright from Kraszewski's novel, which provided the source for the libretto. The setting was moved to the Tatra Mountains, between Galicia and Hungary, allowing the composer to add elements of the local culture, the *góralski* (mountaineer) folklore. Despite the change of names, one of the novel's conflicts remains the same: the love triangle between Ulana (Motruna), Manru (Tumry), and the femme fatale Asa. In the focal point, Paderewski situates Manru, who, living among peasants with Ulana, has already begun to tire of his exile and longs for the old roving life of the Gypsies.

While Paderewski and Nossig concentrated on the issue of freedom and passion, Kraszewski's purpose was to describe the doomed fate of a man aware of his dual ethnic belonging, a man condemned by fate from the beginning. The author of *Chata za wsią* also emphasized the phenomenon of ethnic intolerance to a much larger degree than Paderewski or Nossig. According to Kraszewski, such intolerance was brutal, degrading, and murderous in its final result. In a society dominated by non-Gypsy citizens, such as this one in a Volhynian village (Stawisko), they were determined to become the "others." For Paderewski, the Gypsy folklore, elements of music, and simple human faith were the dominating elements in his opera. Manru's premiere performance took place on May 29, 1901 in Dresden, followed by performances in Lviv in 1901, and Prague, Zurich, and New York (1902), to rave reviews and popular acceptance. Paderewski's major achievement was to musically present the quintessence of his own people (Polish folklore), as well as the effective use of another rich source of material: the strange sounding music of the Gypsy tabors. The composer chose a story that was well suited for musical expression, continually painting the inner life of the characters.

Twenty-six years after the first stage presentation of Paderewski's opera, Polish audiences accepted, once more, Kraszewski's protagonists and setting, this time on the big screen in a film adaptation of

*Chata za wsia*, entitled *Cyganka Aza* (1926), directed by Artur Twardyjewicz.[5] This film was true to its literary prototype/original. Significantly, the type of media—moving pictures—subjected the audience to a visual, close-up style experience of the exotic Gypsy.

In conclusion, it is necessary to emphasize that Kraszewski's novel, Paderewski's opera, and Twardyjewicz's film version share one distinctive element: all three emphasize the otherness of the Gypsy culture while shedding light on their author's fascination with the Roma. In reality, the "otherness" of the Polish Roma led to either fear of them and persecution, or, on the other hand, to a fascination of their lifestyles, traditions, and talents.

This ambivalence of approaching the Romanies is visible on all levels of cultural, linguistic, and political life in Poland, spanning the centuries and continuing into the current day. For instance, on the level of language, Poles use, if not overuse, ethnically charged phrases and words, echoing the deeply rooted antagonism toward the Roma, as well as misconceptions about their lifestyle. The popular "*cyganić*" (from *Cygan*, meaning "Gypsy") became synonymous with lying, prevaricating, and cheating—words with a highly pejorative connotation and meaning. On the other hand, words with the same etymology shed light on the other side of the spectrum, at the fascination with the literary "Gypsies" and their freedom and independence. This time, the other stereotype—the free and brave, talented, and sensitive Gypsy—becomes the source for "*cyganeria*" (bohemians). Interestingly, despite the initial negative undertone, the phrase "the artistic bohéme" emphasizes the artists' prestige, their nonconformism, originality, and creativity.

On the official political and social levels, the Romani population in Poland is estimated to be smaller than that of many Central and East European countries, both numerically and proportionally. In the first half of the 1990s, however, after lifting visa requirements for Romanian citizens visiting Poland, a new group of Romanian Roma began arriving in the country. Although visible mainly in large urban areas of Warsaw, Wrocław, or Katowice, public reaction was far from welcoming. This "type" of Gypsy corresponded in peoples' minds with the stereotypical Gypsy from earlier who was allegedly lying, stealing, lacking in hygiene and basic means to live. Yet, Zoltan Barany, in his *The East European Gypsies*, underscores that "relative absence of interethnic violence and the determination of state authorities not to allow such incidents" occurred in only one East European country,

namely, in Poland (317). Unfortunately, according to the newest polls (Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej), the Roma people are still regarded as one of the least favorable ethnic groups in Poland. Poles remain fascinated with the cultural diversity and otherness of the Roma, with their music and dances. Starting with the 1970s, popular musicians reached for the Gypsy motifs, adding them into their musical performances. Hence, the vision of the Gypsy as a lonesome, poetic wanderer and talented artist remains fixed in the Polish psyche, building a constant *topos* for Polish culture, reflecting the opinion: "Dziś prawdziwych Cyganów już nie ma" (There are no true Gypsies any more):

| | |
|---|---|
| Dawne życie poszło w dal, | The old life is gone away |
| dziś na zimę ciepły szal, | Today, a warm scarf for the winter, |
| tylko koni, tylko koni, tylko koni żal. | The only regret are the horses |
| Dawne życie poszło w dal, | The old life is gone away, |
| dziś pierogi, dzisiaj bal, | Today pierogis, today a blast, |
| tylko koni, tylko koni, tylko koni żal. | The only regret are the horses.[6] |

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## NOTES

1. Wojtek Kość, "Discovering a New Element."
2. Ryszard Kapuściński's statements are quoted on the covers of both publications, respectively.
3. See, for instance, Ficowski, *Cyganie na polskich drogach* (*Gypsies on Polish Roads*).
4. More information on Tomasz Zan (1796–1855) and Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855) in Miłosz, *The History of Polish Literature*: 208–32.
5. According to http://www.filmpolski.com, *Cyganka Aza* (*The Gypsy Woman Aza*) was premiered in 1926, directed by Artur Twardyjewicz.
6. Text of a popular song, author: Agnieszka Osiecka, performed by Maryla Rodowicz.

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# Chapter 3

# Vsevolod Garshin's "Medvedi" ("The Bears")

## "Gypsies" and Russian Imperial Boundaries

*Marilyn Schwinn Smith*

> *Innocent of nationalism, here as in Europe, the gypsies are the great disintegrating force in the frontier lines. Into the family of nations they come, riding in motorized caravans, with bedding, phrenology charts, pots and pans, silks, lace and exotic human freight. With disarming boldness they pierce all barriers.*
>
> Ruth Gruber, "Brooklyn Slum Aided"

The author of this 1934 image, a Brooklyn native, had just returned from a year in Cologne, Germany, an eye-opening year for a precocious young woman, alive to adventure, with a thirst for experience, and a witness to early Nazi rallies. Her portrait is drawn from a sketch positing the clearly demarcated ethnic neighborhoods of Brooklyn's slums as a microcosm of "the great social problems of the world—nationalism, economic rivalry, petty jealousies." It crystallizes two

related notions—nationality and borders—at the base of European Gypsy experience, in actuality and as a literary trope.

Nationality and borders are constant subjects in discussions of Romani experience and ubiquitous in the cultural critique of Gypsies, which bridges the fields of history and literary criticism.[1] Recurrent waves of nationalism run through the cultural construction of Gypsies in the Western imagination.[2] Indeed, the emergence of the literary Gypsy as a significant figure parallels the rise of modern nationalisms. Scholarship on the literary Gypsy must inevitably decipher the nationalist ideology played out in depictions of the stateless Gypsy.

The constructed figure of the Gypsy has served as a cipher for a number of themes over the course of its literary career. Gypsies were not the only population whose marginal or peripheral status rendered them fertile territory on which to play out the ambiguities and tensions inherent to nation building. The nineteenth-century literary Gypsy of Europe has much in common with the Native American in the literature of the United States, or with the Cossack on the periphery of the expanding Russian empire. The twin Romantic themes of liberation from political or social constraint, and escape from the corrupting force of civilization, were projected onto populations across the border, apparently beyond the reach of constraint or corruption. Vsevolod Garshin's 1883 story, "Medvedi" ("The Bears"), fits squarely into this paradigm, yet with all the qualifications that must be made for the particulars of the author and the particulars of Russia.

Relative isolation from Western Europe during periods of its history was only one factor in the differing course of Russian nationalism. Geography, religion, and politics set Russia distinctly apart from nations to the west whose development into nation states is often taken as the norm. The conditions that facilitated the inculcation of national identity in other European states, such as England, France, or Spain, were not present in the Russian empire. The fact of Russia's being a multiethnic, multireligious and multinational empire, governed by an autocrat, cannot be overemphasized. Or that it remained so throughout the nineteenth century, until the revolutions of 1917.[3]

The questions related to overseas colonies in European empires were, for Russia, questions related to populations within its expanding continental borders. The Russian Empire had never been and could not easily be converted into a cohesive society grounded in common ethnicity, language, or religion, as was the pattern in western states whose development is taken to be normative. Indeed, ethnic, Russian

speakers constituted a minority population within the nineteenth-century empire. Gypsies numbered among the empire's majority population, if counted among nonethnic Russians. What set them apart was their distinctive life-style, untouched by Enlightenment notions of human progress, nor easily accommodated by the imperative of the empire's vast administrative bureaucracy to catalogue and characterize its "foreign" (*inorodtsy*), yet settled, peoples. Inhabiting the European borders of the empire, neither did they fall within the categories created to accommodate nomads of the Asiatic steppe. Gypsies remain unremarked in the numerous histories of imperial policy toward its many nationalities.[4] Yet, they were available as cipher in the debates surrounding the creation of a Russian national identity, which increasingly occupied state functionaries, the press, and the *intelligentsia* during the closing decades of tsarist rule.

Domnica Radulescu notes that idealized, nomadic Gypsies serve the "interests of nation-states, as the traveling of Roma often functions in literature about Gypsies as a device for 'mapping' out national boundaries" (6). In "1875," Russian short story master Vsevolod Garshin (1855–88) gathered in, from their peaceable and harmonious wanderings, the Gypsies of four neighboring districts whence, on annual tours through the Ukrainian countryside, on the near margins of an expanding Russian empire, Gypsies plied their traditional skills as smiths, healers, and fortune-tellers.

Garshin's were far from the first Russian literary Gypsies. David Crowe reviews the vogue of Russian Gypsy literature in response to Alexander Pushkin's (1799–1837) narrative poem, "The Gypsies" (1824). The initial rash of poems was succeeded later in the century with prose, as well as poetry, continuing into the twentieth century (Crowe 165–69). While employing the basic elements of "Gypsy" literature,[5] "Medvedi" is fiercely polemical, attempting an idiosyncratic intervention in national issues of the day.

Garshin's Gypsy idyll has been labeled a tribute to a great poet, a reference to Pushkin's poem (Henry 144). Pushkin's "The Gypsies" is so central to the Russian tradition that reference is inevitable.[6] The erotic (and exotic) elements, which stimulated much of the poem's Western European and Russian progeny, are wholly absent from Garshin's story. There is little in the plot structure of the story to commend a comparison, beyond the presence in both story and poem, of an eloquent Gypsy elder. Garshin's story is, however, stylistically stitched together with thematic imagery profoundly implicated

in Russian self-identity, a Russian national identity retrospectively attributed to Pushkin and to his treatment of the Gypsy *topos*. Among the principal *topoi* of "Russianness," taken up by both Pushkin and Garshin in their use of the Gypsy theme, are: space, alienation, time, and freedom.

"Medvedi" opens with the vista across the south Russian steppe, reminiscent of Pushkin's Moldovan setting for "The Gypsies," to an expanse of "forty *versts* all around" (Garshin, "Medvedi" 200).[7] The boundless expanse of the Russian steppe has paradoxically constituted the border on which Russian identity has repeatedly been forged. The steppe and its nomadic peoples captured the Russian literary imagination early in its history. Elena Hellberg-Hirn notes the role of the steppe in Kievan folk epics (*byliny*), where the hero "always rides out into the steppe to fight the pagan intruders and defend the Orthodox Russian Land" (61). The primary text of Russian national identity, the eleventh-century epic of Kievan Rus', *The Song of Igor's Campaign*, recounts the internecine battles of its princes, together with their nomad allies and against their nomad enemies. *The Song* was repeatedly reprinted and translated into modern Russian in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and experienced another renaissance among both émigrés and Soviets after the postrevolutionary, civil war. The twentieth-century poetry of Aleksander Blok ("The Scythians," 1918), Boris Pasternak ("The Book of the Steppe," "The Steppe," 1918), and Marina Tsvetaeva ("Perekop," 1929) returns to this special landscape, its peoples, and the theme of Russia's destiny.

The steppe is home to Russian *Volia*. Folk heroes of epic song set out into open space, *shiroko pole*. Obeying the aesthetics of folk poetry, "these words are constantly rhymed with *privoliie*, *razdoliie*, and *volia*—three synonymous expressions for freedom, which is also understood as *prostor*: space that is wide-open for unheeded movement and unlimited possibilities" (Hellberg-Hirn 61). *Volia*, the quality celebrated in the Pushkinian figure of the Gypsy, "breathes through images of movement, and . . . is often expressed in proximity to tropes of space: expanse (*razmax*) and open vistas (*prostor*)" (Lemon 33). This entwined trope—freedom (*volia*) and expansive space (*razmax* and *prostor*)—is commonly evoked as what distinguishes the Russian from western Europeans.[8] "Medvedi" narrates the threat to this quintessential quality of Russia and Russianness, allegorized in the destruction of the nomadic "Gypsy." Straight ahead in Garshin's vista, to the east, the steppe rises utterly level. Only the eye

accustomed to this landscape can make out—at some indeterminate distance—an ancient tumulus, plowed over and sinking back into the earth, deprived of its ancient stone, female idol, which, perhaps—in the capacity of a Scythian monument—now adorns the courtyard of the university in Kharkov, or perhaps, has been hauled away by some peasant and set in the wall of his cattle shed.

This opening paragraph casts the reader far out into endless space, into timeless prehistory, evoking the nomads who once peopled the landscape. The subtle irony of the idol's fate foretells the fate of the steppe's current nomads. The idol, removed from its organic setting, appropriated by an "advanced," settled civilization as an artifact for academic study, or as a mere decorative item in an outbuilding, has, in either case, entered history as a dead object. Like the vitalism of a once circulating population, or a plant growing in the soil, the idol has been cut off from its life force.

With the panoramic sweep of an introductory cinematic scene, the opening narrative of "Medvedi" touches down, but momentarily, onto a specific, human vantage point. The omniscient narrative in this first of six sections is broken only once, midway through the first paragraph, by a first-person voice: "that hill from which we are looking" (200). "We": an anonymous guide-*cum*-teller of tales, together with "we," his audience, the readers, invited into this precisely depicted space, to travel with him, and witness for ourselves, what is about to unfold. The implicit invitation to the reader—so subtly proposed by the nearly invisible, yet startling, insertion of the pronoun "we"—intimates that the story is about "us," the Russians.

The cinematic eye of the second paragraph draws back from the limitless expanse of the steppe toward the determinate, defined, bounded world; specifically, to the provincial town of Bel'sk.[9] These two opening paragraphs establish a governing duality: boundlessness and boundedness. The narrative's guiding eye leads us from that high river bank, from which we had first gazed north, then south, then east across the steppe, now toward the west to arrive, at last, in the town named in the story's opening sentence.

The next two paragraphs of this first section paint a satirical portrait of Bel'sk, reminiscent of Nikolai Gogol's (1809–52) village portraits in *Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka* (1831–32), *Mirgorod* (1835), and *Dead Souls* (1842). Everyone is out on the streets, abuzz with excitement. At the suggestion of the town's "leading lady," a transplant from St. Petersburg, all the inhabitants drive to the outskirts of

town—picnic baskets in tow—and line the near riverbank to view a rare spectacle. On the far bank of the river bordering the town, Gypsies from the surrounding steppe are gathering.

The town's common pasture (*vygon*) is being transformed into a Gypsy camp (*tabor*). The pastureland fills with the sights and sounds of families pitching tents and tending their animals. An organic community takes shape. The activity within the camp is in sharp contrast to the idle gossip among the spectators. As "spectators" (or audience, *zriteli*), the enervated townspeople are cut off by the river running between them from the potentially vitalizing Gypsies. The river is crossable. The cultural divide is not. The attention of Bel'sk is directed outward, rather than inward toward the earth. The town's culture emanates from the distance, and betokens alienation from its physical location. Bel'sk's citizens wear fashion imported, like their "leading lady," from urban centers: men in suits of duck cloth or raw silk, women with parasols and hoop skirts extending the width of the streets, local dandies in grey overcoats with black velvet collars, canes, and straw hats. The ultimately foreign provenance of the town's fashion is underscored at town entertainments, where the town's communal cement, its purveyors of the latest news, the Isotov brothers with cosmopolitan bravura call out during quadrilles, "*grandron*" (grand round) and "*orebur*" (au rebours). The Gypsy camp is viewed by the citizens of Bel'sk from the same alienated, uncomprehending position as the stone idol is viewed in the university courtyard. The potential of this liminal space, *vygon*-cum-*tabor*, which brings the sedentary, artificial town culture into tenuous contact with the nomadic steppe culture, is to remain unrealized.

Composed during Pushkin's term of exile in the recently acquired southern hinterlands, "The Gypsies" has been read as a romantic meditation on the gulf between natural man—represented in the Gypsy camp—and the alienation induced by a decadent, urban civilization. Situated at the border of empire, Pushkin's Gypsies were literally, as well as metaphorically, distant from those centers of power and constraint from which the young romantics sought escape.[10] Six decades lie between "The Gypsies" and "The Bears." A lot had changed. The specter, or promise, of the French Revolution was no longer so urgent. Memory of the Napoleonic invasion of Russia (1812) had receded, but the aftershocks of the Crimean War (1853–56) were yet to subside. The Polish revolt of 1863 had stimulated the nascent

nationalist discourse that led, in no small measure, to the Russo-Turkish war of 1877–78.

The nationalist debates emerging toward midcentury, roughly divided between "Westernizers" and "Slavophiles," engaged the dilemma: on what basis could (and should) a cohesive social body be created?[11] The most widely known movement circulating within the *intelligentsia* of the 1860s and 1870s was the radical "Going to the People" (*Narodniki*). Descendents of the Slavophiles, the *narodniki* were committed to bridging the gap between the "two nations." Garshin, never a member of any group, is most closely associated with the *narodniki*,[12] and "Medvedi" takes up the question: "Who and what are the Russians?"[13]

Over the course of those six decades, esteem for Pushkin had steadily risen. The 1880 unveiling of the Pushkin monument in Moscow, and attendant celebrations, definitely established his status as "national" poet.[14] Dostoevsky's hugely influential Pushkin speech caused a sensation. Elaborating Pushkin's creation of national types, Dostoevsky cited, first, "The Gypsies." The attention Dostoevsky drew to the poem moved it from what may have remained a peripheral position among the poet's considerable output to a special position in the establishment of Pushkin as the "national" poet.

As journalist and novelist, Dostoevsky was a leading proponent and publicizer of the "cult of the soil" (*pochvennost'*). Looking back through time, Dostoevsky argued in his Pushkin speech that the Russian upper classes (exemplified in Aleko, the alienated protagonist of "The Gypsies") were in a state of extreme malaise.[15] The "cure" lay in a return to a Russian, national essence. Dostoevsky's messianic vision asserted that Russians existed naturally in a state of humility and love, a condition embodied in the common people who lived in connection with the earth. If Russians were to return to this natural, "national" condition, a rootedness in the land (*pochvennost'*), they would possess the capacity to understand and connect with all people, a capacity Dostoevsky identifies in Pushkin's rendering of Gypsies. Pushkin's Gypsies, living on the expanse of the southern steppe, in a natural state of freedom (Russian *volia*) and in harmony with nature and their fellow men, model in their very "otherness" an idealized "Russianness."[16]

While, perhaps, paying homage to Pushkin's poem, Garshin elaborates a more complex social portrait, painting his Gypsy idyll against the peasant and bourgeois societies through which his Gypsies travel.

Binoculars in hand, Bel'sk's "leading lady" rhapsodizes on the appearance of a young Gypsy—an "Adonis." A sober gentleman requests the binoculars to see for himself. Turning back to the aesthetically inclined admirer, he states with a "heavy sigh": "Well yes, Olga Pavlovna, he's an Adonis all right. But I suggest to you that this Adonis will become a fine horse thief" (203). The section concludes as this same gentleman interrupts the idle chatter to inquire: "And when, after all, is the bears' execution set to take place?" (204). The choice of word, execution (*kazn'*), is deliberate. It establishes the allegorical status of the story and sets the emotional charge. With startling laconism, the question explains the unprecedented excitement among the townspeople, the unusual encampment of Gypsies at the town's border, and the gentleman's prediction.

Garshin's career is divided into two periods: 1877–80 and 1883–88. Sharing an idealist populism characteristic of the *narodniki*, Garshin had volunteered in the Russo-Turkish war, eager to liberate brother Slavs and to participate in the experience of the ordinary Russian. Like other liberal *intelligents* of his generation who had gone to war on a wave of "brotherly" feeling, he was radically disillusioned. Wounded in an early battle, Garshin was invalided back to Russia, where he composed and quickly published the story that brought him immediate celebrity and international renown.[17]

"Four Days" (1877) follows the consciousness of a wounded infantryman as he lies dying on a battlefield with only the corpse of an enemy soldier for company. Over the course of four days, observing the decomposition of the man he had killed, whose flask of water keeps him alive, the soldier undergoes a transformation.[18] He had volunteered, "blinded by an idea." Listing all that he has undergone since the beginning of the campaign, he wonders, why? "[J]ust so that this poor wretch should stop living? How have I furthered our cause in any way, except by committing this murder" ("Four Days" 31).

Garshin's antiwar literature was immediately recognized as a new development of what Tolstoy had begun with "Tales of Sevastopol" and *War and Peace*, and Garshin's early stories became the model for later masters in the genre of war literature, Leonid Andreev and Isaac Babel (Henry 51–52). A master of verbal economy, Garshin pioneered the Russian impressionist style.[19] The narrow psychological focus and intensity of emotion of the early stories were designed to shock their readers, presumably into the kind of transformation experienced by the narrator of "Four Days." These features—allegorical

status and emotional charge—were to remain characteristic of stories belonging to Garshin's second period, to which "Medvedi" belongs. "Medvedi" echoes moments of "Four Days," extending their significance beyond the senselessness of war to the implicit critique of any arbitrary exercise of violence by a distant authority.[20]

The structural complexity of "Medvedi" also replicates that of Garshin's early stories, but is expanded from a primarily internal narrative to one embracing both external and mythic worlds. Garshin constructed "Medvedi" with a complex narrative moving freely, seemingly randomly, among times and voices. The narrative slides unannounced among times or moments: a prehistoric past, a timeless past, the time of the story (September 1875), and the indeterminate 'time of telling.' The story moves, as well, among different narrative voices, belonging to the different times: omniscient narrative, pre-story narrator-child, post-story narrator-commentator, voices within moments of the story. The narrative travels back and forth traversing a border, much like the landscape's river delineating the worlds of settled and nomadic peoples, lying between infinite and finite time. The story's Gypsies move through them all: "with disarming boldness they pierce all barriers" (Gruber).

The precision of geographical orientation in the opening description of the steppe signals the structural importance of relationships. Narrative time in the second section mirrors the visual motion of the first. From the expanse across the steppe, the eye had been focused onto a particular spot. Now, from the static and dated gathering at Bel'sk, we travel to find ourselves in the "dream of historylessness."[21] Through a series of temporal frames, the narrative departs from the extraordinary historical moment in Bel'sk to enter the recurring, seasonal cycles of the preindustrial world as we observe the annual and ordinary Gypsy visits to the surrounding estates and villages. After briefly dwelling in a specific moment, the narrative leaps directly into mythic time, then to return through the frames to Bel'sk, September 1875.

The opening of the second section explains the circumstances that have brought the citizens of Bel'sk and the itinerant Gypsies to face each other across the dividing river: a government order that all Gypsies execute their tame bears is, at last, to be enforced. The townspeople await the arrival of all the Gypsies that the "great execution" (*bol'shaia kazn'*) can be conducted at one time (205).

From the "now" of Bel'sk, the narrative returns to the countryside, to its boundlessness and timelessness. The phrase, "for the last time," recurs throughout the second section as an emphatic refrain, punctuating the narrative with an apocalyptic undertone. "For the last time"—evoking the Last Supper, the final gathering of the disciples and subsequent catastrophe—foreshadows the imminent execution. The phrase is a narrative hinge, shifting the story away from the gathering at Bel'sk toward the many previous gatherings in the surrounding countryside. It holds, within, a temporal duality: the singular ("last") event and an indeterminate number of predecessors stretching, like the steppe, boundlessly.

"For the last time," the Gypsies begin their customary peregrinations among far-flung villages, the timeless, Gypsy *pokhod po derevniam*. *Pokhod* denotes either a walking tour or the long march of an army to battle. In this instance, *pokhod* may carry the connotation of a royal progression—the sovereign's tour of the domain, bestowing privilege by his mere presence. The first paragraph of this second temporal frame notes the crowds of children who first see the approaching Gypsies, and run out to greet them. The "festival" begins: performance, healing, trade and barter, fortune-telling, horseshoeing, cart repair.

The contrast between town and countryside is stark. Led by their "leading lady," transplanted from the imperial center, the townspeople had set themselves up as spectators: the object of their prurient curiosity—the impending execution. They remained to observe the Gypsy camp retire for the night, picnicking on their side of the separating river, sounds of quickly stifled squeals emanating from the bushes where a coachman and maid are lighting the samovar. Led by children, the villagers mingle with the Gypsies in a mutually beneficial, life-sustaining economy. Like the citizens of Bel'sk, the villagers remain after the festivities subside at night, and the Gypsies retire to their tents or the open ground. Unlike the townspeople, they draw in a circle around the camp, no river separating them.

The romanticized portrait of Gypsy wandering in "Medvedi" conforms to the idealized image propagated throughout European national literatures of the nineteenth century, appealing to nostalgic longing for a simpler, remembered past—washed clean of reality. It has the feel of childhood memory when, sheltered from adult tensions, disagreements, disappointments, life itself seems an endless round of pleasures. While the origin of these Gypsies' wanderings is

grounded in the author's childhood imagination, Garshin's recitation of the Gypsy idyll lies embedded in a sophisticated narrative.

As the villagers stand around the camp, a first-person voice suddenly erupts for only the second time in the story: "'Well, it's time to go,' my father says to me, a small child. 'Just a little longer, just a little longer!'" (205). This historical, yet indeterminate, moment is embedded concentrically within the portrait of the "time of the Gypsies." While located specifically in the narrator's childhood, the voice comes almost from beyond time. The narrative then spirals lyrically through the sounds of nature out onto the nighttime steppe, whose sounds merge with a song from the Gypsy camp.[22] "No one knows when it was composed, which steppes, forests and mountains gave it birth; it remained a live witness to an antiquity forgotten even by the one who sings it now under an alien sky burning with stars, in alien steppes" (206).

This "nostalgic core" of the story marks the birth of the artist.[23] "'Papa, does anyone know how to speak Gypsy? . . . I would like to learn'. . . . We returned home and I lie under my blanket, but my imagination is still hard at work creating strange images in my small head, already laid on the pillow" (206). Where the *vygon*-cum-*tabor* fails, the *pomeshchich'ia usadba*-cum-*tabor* (landowner's farmstead-*cum*-camp) succeeds. Situated far out on the steppe, this point of contact between two cultures is fruitful.[24]

From that moment of artistic birth, the narrative leaps directly to the "time of telling," sometime after the fateful September day in 1875: "Now, they don't lead bears among the villages" (206). The absence of bears signals the absence of Gypsies. Gypsies are to be found, in appearance reminiscent of that "bygone picture of the free (*vol'nyi*, from *volia*) Gypsy camp." But now, at the "time of telling," settled on the outskirts of towns, still working their trades, the Gypsies are somehow changed.

Hearing the clang of steel, the narrator glances into a booth: "I watched him work for a while and noted that this was no longer the former Gypsy-smith, but an ordinary factory-hand, taking orders" (207). The Gypsy of the narrator's childhood, possessing a precious measure of *volia*, had been a living link to the natural order. The post-slaughter Gypsy has been reduced to an industrial automaton. In the chain of "civilizing" development, the traveling (*vol'nyi*) Gypsy represented what the "Russian" had once been. Imperial legislation, seeking everywhere to settle and constrain the Gypsies, would obliterate

Gypsy difference and render them similar to the enserfed, or settled, or industrialized peasantry. In the logic of Garshin's narrative, the destruction of Gypsy *volia* was the destruction of the peasants' last link to their essential, free nature—the destruction of "Russianness."

From the vision of Gypsy-smith as hired labor (proletariat?), the narrative retraces its movement through the frames, returning to that "last time" to detail the bears' many contributions on the Gypsy *poxhod*:

> For the last time the old men and old women came to the Gypsies to be cured by tried and true methods, which consisted of lying on the earth beneath a bear, who laid down on the patient on his stomach, having spread wide in all directions his paws on the earth, and lay there until the Gypsy considered the séance sufficiently long. For the last time they were led into peasant huts, where, if the bear voluntarily agreed to enter, they led him into the holy corner (*perednii ugol*) and sat him there, and rejoiced at his consent as a sign of good fortune; but if, despite petting and all attempts to persuade him, he did not step across the threshold, then the inhabitants were sad. (207–8)[25]

The section closes by a return to the exterior time frame and the Gypsies' final approach to Bel'sk. Traveling from the west, the greater part of the Gypsies must descend toward the riverside town. Thus seeing their destination and knowing what will occur there, the women begin to wail, the children to cry, and the bears, sensing or knowing—"who knows?"—join in the lamentation (208).

The Gypsies make a final attempt to obtain a reprieve. Section three opens with a contingent of Gypsy men at the gates of the police chief. They have brought money, to grease his hand, if necessary. The Gypsy elder, Ivan, speaks: "Our youth will become horse thieves: there is nowhere else to turn, your Excellency. I speak as before God, not hiding myself: a great evil was done both to us and to all good people, the bears taken from us. Perhaps you will help us; God will send you something for this, good sir!" But everyone is powerless before the government edict. The official refuses the money, asserting: "It is the law. . . . Really, what could be done?" (209).

"God will send you something for this," echoes a plea Garshin himself once made. In 1880, Garshin had attempted to prevent the execution of a young terrorist for an attempted political assassination. Distraught by both the terrorism of the radical "The People's Will," and the government's repressive response, Garshin sought to sway the

assassin's target, Count Loris-Melikov, chairman of the newly established Supreme Administrative Commission, to commute the death sentence. The logic of Garshin's appeal was as follows: "Oppose the idea of violence with the idea of all-forgiveness" (Henry 109). Garshin personally delivered his letter to Loris-Melikov during the night before the execution, assuring him of God's reward, then returned home in the early hours believing he had accomplished his mission. The terrorist was executed the following morning.

After a hiatus occasioned by a mental breakdown and institutionalization following the meeting with Loris-Melikov, Garshin returned to writing. In 1883, Garshin wrote and published "The Red Flower," "The Bears," and "From the Reminiscences of Private Ivanov." "I am not allowed to write about them hanging people, so I'll write about them shooting bears,' Garshin is alleged to have said when 'The Bears' was published" (Henry 141).

The appointed day arrives, overcast, cold, a light rain. Part four, the "artistic core" of the story, focuses on the Gypsy Elder and his ancient bear. Ivan requests permission to shoot his bear before the general slaughter. In a Gogolian mythic voice,[26] the Elder addresses his bear, listing the manifold ways Potap has served him, and begs forgiveness by prostrating himself at the bear's feet.[27] His address is modeled on the poetic speech of the folktale (*skazka* or *bylina*) at moments of emotional intensity. In a reprise of "Four Days," when the soldier questioned the point of battle: "just so that this poor wretch should stop living" (31), the Elder concludes: "And now I must kill you. They have ordered me, an old man, to shoot you with my own hand; that you may no longer live in this world. For what?" (213).

When, at last, the moment comes, the Elder cannot pull the trigger. His grandson, that "Adonis" of the first section, we now realize, seizes the gun and fires: "'Let it be!,' he cried in a wild, frenzied voice, his eyes blazing. 'Enough! Shoot, brothers, it's the only way!'" (214). Like the soldier of "Four Days," he is able to follow orders, and, like the soldier, acts as agent of his own destruction. In one more parallel with "Four Days," the bear's corpse resembles the hapless Turk's. On the third day, "when I opened my eyes to look at him, I was appalled. His face was gone. It had slid off the bones. His frightful, bony smile, his eternal smile, struck me as more revolting, more awful than ever. . . . 'This is war,' I thought, 'this is how it looks.'" ("Four Days" 33). "The bear crashed down a lifeless mass;

only his paws convulsively flinched, and his mouth opened as though yawning" ("*Medvedi*" 214).

Garshin's indebtedness to Pushkin is limited to an idealized depiction of the Gypsies with their eloquent elders and to the reach of empire far into the timeless, unbounded steppe, an empire drawing into its orbit the Gypsies, avatars of the steppe's ancient peoples. "Medvedi" shares none of Pushkin's romantic story of individual alienation and tragic passion. Nor is there any possibility for the ambiguity Lemon finds in the Russian reading of "The Gypsies." Garshin's idealized Gypsies, unlike Pushkin's, are not immune to the arbitrary reach of empire. Gypsies, legally catalogued as "state peasants," were no less vulnerable than any other peasant or, more importantly, than any other person, to the arbitrary exercise of centralized power.

With his Gypsies, Garshin mobilizes not the "trope of war" by which conservative nationalists promoted unity,[28] but a trope of indigenous and nomadic culture that makes possible not only "Russianness," but life. "The Elder" refers to his bear as *kormilets*, a word derived from the verb "to feed," and meaning both "bread-winner" and "wet-nurse." The *kormilets* makes life possible. Peasants deprived of the Gypsies' visits will be like Gypsies deprived of their bears. Once the Gypsy life is destroyed, not only will "Adonis" become a horse thief, and the Gypsy-smiths become ordinary workers, but the villagers (the "people"—*narod*) will go the way of the city. Garshin's Gypsies had been a conduit to Russian *Volia*.

In a coda, the narrative returns to the "time of telling," and a first person narrator: "I recently happened to spend some time in Bel'sk" (215). Not much has changed. The narrator drops in on the sober gentleman of the first section. Foma, the pharmacist, having profited by the sale of bear grease, "to this day speaks with pleasure about the slaughter of the bears" (216). In a final piece of dialogue, Foma recalls, for the narrator, his prediction regarding the fate of Adonis, and announces that not a week had passed before the young Gypsy ("the scoundrel") stole his pair of grays. Responding to the narrator's simple query: "You know it was him?" Foma retorts: "How could it not be he? He was sentenced last year for horse-stealing and robbery. Sent to hard labor" (216).

Lemon's argument that "Russians speak of Gypsies in ambivalent ways" is grounded in her analysis of Pushkinian Gypsy *volia*: a freedom made possible by the very legal structures it supposedly transcends (34). Garshin's *volia* is radically other than Pushkin's. Pushing

the pan-European Gypsy idyll to its logical extreme, the narrative has maintained an absolute chasm between authority and subject. Flirting with blasphemy, the text asserts that Authority (Autocrat or God), cut off from the people and devoid of reason or compassion, is the source of evil. "Medvedi" marks the end of Russian boundlessness. The dream of timelessness or "historylessness," figured in the child-narrator's imagination as he drifts to sleep filled with thoughts provoked by exposure to the Gypsies, dies at the moment of the bears' slaughter. For, at this moment, the last remnant of the dream is pulled into history, into the bordered existence of civilization.

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## NOTES

1. I note but two studies that take up Gypsies and borders. Robert Fraser traces the parallel, nineteenth-century development of germ theory consequent to discoveries in the realm of cellular structure and the rise of enforced national borders, as they are reflected in the literary representation of Gypsies. In theorizing the development of the "bohemian narrative," Evlyn Gould notes the rigid maintenance of class boundaries between the "bohemian" bourgeoisie and the actual Gypsy.
2. See Katie Trumpener's 1992 essay, "The Time of the Gypsy," for a superb overview of the history of themes and ideologies underlying the literary depictions of Gypsies in European literature, of which nationalism is but one.
3. See Martin Malia's *Russia Under Western Eyes: From the Bronze Horseman to the Lenin Mausoleum* as an antidote to the too neat, essentialist dichotomy: Russia or the West. Malia reads pan-European history of fluctuating relations between Russia and the West to propose a "definition of Russia's place *within* Europe", transcending "the presumed polarity *between* Russia and Europe" (14). For a history of the arbitrary division, Europe and Asia, a division which has augmented western orientalizing of Russia, see Mark Bassin's article "Russia between Europe and Asia: The Ideological Construction of Geographical Space."
4. See Crowe, esp. 151–62, for an overview of government edicts, *ukazy*, addressing Gypsies within the Russian territories.
5. I follow, here, Trumpener's practice in referring to works written by non-Roma as "Gypsy" literature.
6. Pushkin's "The Gypsies" is central to the development not only of the Russian literary Gypsy, but the European as well. Positioned between Cervantes' exemplary novella "La Gitanella" (1613) and Mérimée's *Carmen* (1847) in the genealogy of the European literary Gypsy, Pushkin's poem developed the themes of liberation and natural man sufficiently to establish his text as canonical in this strain in the evolution of the Gypsy *topos*.
7. All citations from "Medvedi" are my translation from the Russian text. All further references will be indicated only by page number.
8. See also Emma Widdis's "Russia as Space," *National Identity in Russian Culture: An Introduction* (esp. 38–42), and Jarinzov's *The Russians and Their Language* (esp. 74).
9. Bel'sk is drawn from the provincial town of Garshin's childhood, Starobel'sk, southeast of Kharkov in Ukraine.
10. By the early nineteenth century, the European literary Gypsy had begun to evolve from an allegory for "alternative state forms, archaic stages of society, or specific political struggles" toward a "self-contained literary chronotope." Trumpener cites Alexander Pushkin's 1824 narrative poem, "The Gypsies" (*Tsygany*) as exemplary of this move toward the "aestheticization" of "Gypsy" literature, a prototype of the Gypsy idyll as metaphor for art, where a "self-consciously embattled authorship seeks in the Gypsy camp a last refuge from the political and social pressures of bourgeois norms, and the only remaining site of cultural autonomy" (866, 868, 870).
11. For a history of the evolution in Slavophile thought, see Edward C. Thaden's *Conservative Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Russia*.
12. As a student, Garshin had been active among the democratic artists of the *Peredvizhniki* group, whose paintings widely disseminated the spirit underlying "Going to the People." In 1883, the year of "The Bears," the most widely known of the *Peredvizhniki*, I. E. Repin used Garshin as model for the dying Tsarevich in the painting, "Ivan Grozny and his son Ivan."

13. Of primary concern to many intellectuals was the near absolute chasm between the numerically miniscule upper classes and the Russian peasantry, those who lived on the land. In the context of a later confrontation with this "two nation" reality, Moshe Lewin summarized: "The rural milieu in Russia during the course of Russian history . . . had all the traits of a distinct social system, set quite apart from the rest of society" (268). The consolidation of Russian identity around modern theories of ethnicity or race was a relatively late development in Russian history. Theoretically, it would not be unthinkable to locate "Russianness" among the Gypsies. Throughout the nineteenth century, the basic criterion for Russianness was conversion to Russian Orthodoxy (see Simon Franklin). For an overview of legal definitions, primarily for administrative purposes in the tsarist empire, see John W. Slocum's "Who, and When, Were the *Inorodtsy*? The Evolution of the Category of 'Aliens' in Imperial Russia." A helpful excursus, tracing the historical evolution in meanings of the words *narod* (folk, people) and *narodnost*' (nationality), appears in Nathaniel Knight's "Ethnicity, Nationality and the Masses: Narodnost' and Modernity." The fact of Russia's geographical position, lying between Europe and Asia, has long played an important role in deliberations over Russian identity. The precision of geographical orientation in the opening section of "Medvedi"— the steppe stretching to the east, the town situated to the west—suggests that Garshin was not insensitive to the notion of Russian affinity to and cultural inheritance from the East. For the theme of Russian identity in relation to the character of Russian thought, in which the role of the East plays a significant role, see Robin Aizlewood's article "Revisiting Russian Identity in Russian Thought: From Chaadaev to the Early Twentieth Century."
14. See, as well, Stephanie Sandler's study *Commemorating Pushkin: Russia's Myth of a National Poet.*
15. "The Gypsies" recounts the brief sojourn of the youth, Aleko, among a group of Gypsies. Alienated from society, Aleko is accepted into the Gypsy band, which he perceives as noble and free. He agrees to their condition that he adhere to their code. When abandoned by his Gypsy lover, Aleko is confronted with his failure to transform himself emotionally into a Gypsy. Gypsy freedom—in this instance, the freedom of woman to bestow her favors where she wills—is beyond him. Unable to shed his acculturation, he kills both Zemphira and her new lover. Aleko is banished from the Gypsy community.
16. In "Telling Gypsy Exile," Alaina Lemon elaborates Trumpener's analysis of the poem. She situates Pushkin's "The Gypsies" in the historical and biographical context of its writing: Pushkin's exile in the wake of the Decembrist revolt from central Russia to the southern imperial territories of the Caucasus Mountains and the recently ceded Moldova—the setting of "The Gypsies" (31). Lemon asserts that by situating the Gypsies "at the border," Pushkin rendered them an ambivalent sign: "simultaneously both of distance from centers of power and of imperial expansiveness" (34).
17. One of the most widely read writers of his generation, Garshin was quickly translated into several Western European languages; Maupassant prefaced, with an essay, an 1889 French collection (Henry 15–16). Single stories began appearing in English by 1883, collections of stories by 1893, and anthologies by 1897 (Henry 339 n32). Garshin is still widely known among Slavicists in the West for his stories "Four Days" (*Chetyre Dnia* 1877) and "The Red Flower" (*Krasnyi tsvetok* 1883); as the model for the protagonist of Anton Chekhov's story, "The Fit" ("*Pripadok*" 1889), which he contributed to a memorial volume compiled by Garshin's friends after the author's death; and as the model for the dying Tsarevich in Ilia Repin's portrait of Ivan IV, for which he sat while writing "The Bears."

18. Transformation in Garshin's work may be related to the transfiguration central to the art of Nikolai Gogol, whose stylistic influence is so palpable in Garshin. On Gogol and transfiguration, see Robert A. Maguire's "Gogol and the Legacy of Pseudo-Dionysius."
19. Garshin's prose style "paved the way" for Chekhov, master of Russian impressionism (Henry 259). For more on Garshin's relationship to Chekhov, see Henry (116–20) and Yarwood (esp. 116–30). Among the last works read and highly praised by Garshin before his premature death is Chekhov's story "The Steppe" (Henry 22), a story reflecting his influence on the younger author. Read as a portrait of "all Russia," Chekhov's story follows the naïve observations of a young child as he travels across the steppe (Bialyi 45).
20. 1883–1886 are the years of Garshin's "Tolstoyan phase" (Henry 183), when his preoccupation with nonviolent resistance is the strongest. In 1884, Tolstoy set up a publishing venture, "*Posrednik*," "to make available to the common people literature written in simple language and in the spirit of Tolsty's moral teaching" (Henry 193). Garshin rewrote "Medvedi" and published the story as "The Bears' Execution" in "*Posrednik*" (Henry 369 n16). Garshin's English-language biographer, Henry relies heavily on his Soviet biographer, Grigorii Bialyi, with the exception of Bialyi's late and positive assessment of "Medvedi" (Bialyi 50–54). For an extended discussion of Garshin's engagement with Tolstoy's theories of nonviolence, see Bialyi, esp. 63–89.
21. See Trumpener, esp. 853.
22. Lemon critiques Pushkin's image of Gypsy *volia* as a product of aristocratic, urban imagination, where Gypsy choirs had become enormously fashionable. "To partake of Gypsy song was supposed to unleash the unpredictable forces of authentic desire—to thus achieve not ordered liberty under earthly rule, *svoboda*, but to swim the currents of will and caprice, *volja*" (33). Garshin is familiar with the distinctiveness of urban fantasies regarding Gypsy song and is at pains to distinguish his Gypsies as something different: "One of them stepped off to the side and in a throaty tenor voice struck up a strange song in his native language, not bearing any resemblance to the songs of Moscow Gypsies or vaudevillian singers, but a peculiar, wild, plaintive [song], alien to the ear" (206). See Crowe (162–65) for an overview of Russian Gypsy choirs.
23. The "birth of the artist" theme, embedded so deeply into the story, as subtle as the initial "we" and as self-effacing as the oblique case "me" ("my father said to me"), is nearly invisible. Yet, embedded at the mythical core of the story, the theme may be central. In this case, "Medvedi" may fall within the same category to which Trumpener assigns Pushkin's "The Gypsies": the Gypsy idyll as metaphor for art.
24. See Bialyi for a discussion of the theme of childhood in Russian literature of the 1880's. Bialyi reads Garshin in the context of Tolstoy's, Chekhov's, and Korolenko's perception of the child's superior moral compass and more accurate apprehension of the world than that of the adults amongst whom he lives (43–46).
25. Garshin's portrait of the Gypsies' transactions with villagers fits nicely with Lewin's summation of a widely shared culture among the peasantry: "mostly preliterate in character, with a popular religion as its basic spiritual common denominator, even if local differences in beliefs, folklore, ceremonies, and superstitions presented infinite, often picturesque, varieties over the huge territories" (268).
26. The Gypsy Elder's address to his ancient bear replicates the elegiac, rhythmic prose of Gogol's apostrophe to Rus' in *Dead Souls*. This frequently cited passage, extolling Russian expansiveness (*prostor*), is a primary criterion for an émigré interpreter of Russia to the English in her assessment of Gogol as the exemplary, "nationalist" author: "Rus' . . . All seems poor and scattered and bare about thee. No bold marvels of nature startle

one's eye. . . . All is open and empty. Thy towns are like small dots which fail to charm the eye. But what is that unaccountable, mysterious power that draws me to thee? . . . What is the prophecy of this unembraceable prostòr? Is it not in its arms that limitless thought should be born, in thy arms, Rus', which embrace all?" Cited in Jarinzov 68–69.

27. Henry recognizes here, in asking the bear's forgiveness, Garshin's familiarity with bear cult rituals of Siberia and Northern Russia (143–4, 359n42). As a reference to indigenous practices, begging the bear's forgiveness connects the Gypsies with other peoples, native to the land. The centrality of bears to the very idea of "Russia" is suggestive of another layer of allegory. In European mythologies, bears are closely related, by virtue of a perceived similarity, with humans, and are common totems. The very "humanness" of the Russian bears intensifies the threat to Russianness that their destruction implies.
28. Maiorova's essay, "The Trope of War," follows the debates through which the public (conservative) nationalists, capitalizing on the strong wave of popular feeling provoked by the 1863 Polish uprising, appealed through the "trope of war" to the still powerful memory of popular unity in the face of foreign intrusions, notably in 1613 and 1812. She writes: "Russian nationalism . . . gained strength as a rhetorical power, one that was present in all spheres of cultural production. . . . In their war propaganda, the nationalists . . . dragged the monarchy into the Russo-Turkish War (1877–78), seeing in this conflict not only a historical opportunity to liberate the Russians' 'Slavic brothers' but, above all, the channel for an awakening, a rebirth, a consolidation of the Russian people" (534).

# Chapter 4

# "Gypsies" and Property in British Literature

## *Orlando* and *Wuthering Heights*

*Abby Bardi*

> *It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite.*
>
> Julia Kristeva[1]

Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* (1928) is manifestly a novel about the ambiguity of gender: in it, a young man changes, during a three hundred-year-plus lifespan, into a woman.[2] In the course of Orlando's transition from male to female, gender's multiple possibilities are shown to be far less stable than the rigid binaries of the nineteenth century against which Woolf and the Bloomsbury Group reacted would suggest.[3] What is less clear is that *Orlando*, like so many of its nineteenth-century predecessors, is a novel about the ambiguity of property, about the way the apparent solidity of ownership of an inherited ancestral estate such as Orlando's (modeled on Vita

Sackville-West's Knole[4]) could dissolve from the clarity of primogeniture into indeterminacy, turmoil, and litigation. As gender is revealed to be as filmy and mysterious as Orlando's transformation from male to female, the distribution of property is shown to be equally amorphous, linked to principles no more certain than those of gender.[5] It is in the midst of the transition from male to female, from property owner to litigant, that Orlando replicates the plot of many English ballads[6] and runs away with a "gipsy tribe" (140), seeking respite from the exacting demands of gender and ownership and the complicated relationship between the two.[7]

In depicting the ambiguous, "in-between" status embodied by Gypsies in relation to the twin tyrannies of gender and property, Woolf is drawing from traditional associations between the Gypsy figure[8] and complications of both gender and ownership, and reanimating the nineteenth-century trope in which Gypsies functioned as challenges to the status quo. Viewed through the lens of twentieth century writers' open interrogation of such subliminal Victorian concerns as sexuality, gender, property, race, and empire, the way in which Gypsies work in nineteenth-century novels to unsettle social mores can be seen more clearly. This paper will examine one Victorian text, *Wuthering Heights*, that employs the Gypsy trope, and will argue that what *Orlando* makes manifest in its representations of Gypsies sheds light on the complex figure of Heathcliff, who is variously accused of being a Gypsy, an immigrant, and the devil. It is Heathcliff who brings about the destabilization and redistribution of the properties that serve as the novel's cornerstones, including the eponymous Heights. Because of Heathcliff's machinations, the Earnshaw family's hereditary capital is usurped and nearly lost to the family, and it is only by the eradication of his transgressive influence that it can be restored. In the context of Woolf's deployment of the Gypsy trope, Heathcliff's alleged Gypsiness appears to be an important factor in the destabilization of property.

In *Orlando*, it is no accident that Woolf constructs a "gipsy tribe" as the location of ambiguities with regard to property: from their arrival in the British isles in the early 1500s, the Romani people were the site of multiple anxieties about property on the part of non-Romanies—about goods, which they were thought likely to steal, and about land, on which they camped. The history of anti-Romani legislation, which began under Henry VIII and continued in various iterations into the present day, spells out the nature of the evils with which they

were associated, and the many destabilizing social phenomena for which they were blamed.

Foremost of judicial concerns about them was the fear that they would appropriate property through theft or even occult means. The "Egyptians Act" of 1530, passed by Henry VIII, banned the so-called Egyptians from England. The statute stated that "many outlandysshe People callynge themselfes Egyptians" had "by crafte and subtyltie . . . deceived the people of theyr money, and also hath comytted many and haynous felonyes and robberies" (22 Hen. VIII. c. 10, 1530–31). If the "Egyptians" did not follow the statute and "avoyde the Realm," they were subject to harsh penalties: "they and [every one] of them so doynge shall forfayte to the Kynge our Sovereign Lorde all theyre goodes and catalls [cattle]" (22 Hen. VIII. c. 10, 1530–31). Evidently, merely "beynge in thys Realme" was sufficient for conviction on the grounds of theft and larceny, and what was thought to be an appropriate response to their presence was to confiscate the Romanies' goods in turn. If a justice of peace, sheriff, or "eschetour" were to seize the Egyptians' goods or cattle, he could "kepe and retayne to his owen use the moyte [moiety, i.e., half] of suche goodes so by hym seased" (22 Hen. VIII. C. 10. 1530–31). Anxiety about displacement of property looms large in anti-Roma legislation, and suggests that it is this association between Romanies and such misappropriation that informs their deployment in literature.

Until the nineteenth century, when the concerns of legislation shifted and began to characterize Romanies as unclean and in need of hygienic measures, the other primary focus of legislation against them was on their reputed itinerancy, a form of life directly counter to the system of property ownership through which the feudal system was transformed throughout Europe after the Middle Ages. At precisely the historical moment that England began to move toward cementing the redistribution of land into fenced, private spaces,[9] the "Egyptians" arrived in England and, for the next four hundred years, served as a convenient vehicle for the consolidation of British identity through a process of "abjection" through which, as Julia Kristeva suggests, the body and, by inference, the body politic, is shored up. Presumably, by ridding itself of rogues and vagabonds, whose numbers included Romanies and other wandering people, the emerging unified Britain, in Kristeva's terms, "constitutes [its] own territory, edged by the abject" (6); yet, after the first wave of immigration, it was never possible for Britain to fully reject the Romanies, whose descendents were

born on British soil and, thus, were, in Kristeva's terms, part of the abjecting self (5). Indeed, the history of anti-Romani legislation can be read as a narrative in which a unifying British population repeatedly attempts, unsuccessfully, to reject portions of itself to create a sense of its own discrete wholeness—attempts that are doomed to failure.

An overview of anti-Romani legislation compiled by Mayall in *English Gypsies and State Policies* lists acts from 1530 through 1889 that explicitly or implicitly restrict the movements of traveling Romanies (23–26). Nearly every one of these statutes mentions the words "vagabonds" (albeit with a variety of spellings), "wandering," and, often, "beggars" and "rogues." For example, an act of 1739–40 under George II was called the "Vagrant Act," and another, in 1783 under George III, the final pre-nineteenth-century anti-Romani statute, was the "Rogues and Vagabonds Act" (24–25). As Mayall notes in *Gypsy Identities 1500–2000*, during the sixteenth century, when the Romanies first appeared in the British Isles, vagrancy was considered synonymous with criminality, and considerable legislation arose at that time to combat itinerancy, as well as the criminal behavior associated with it (57–63). In the language of this legislation, Romanies are depicted, like the Turkish Gypsies in *Orlando*, as vagrants living on the margins of polite society, and, as we have seen, the English government's initial desire was to rid the country of them entirely. In 1547, a statute passed under Edward VI entitled "An Acte for the Punishment of Vagabondes and for the Relief of the Poore and Impotent Parsons" (1 Edw. VI. c. 3, 1547) reveals the connection between fear of itinerancy and fear of interference with property: it stated that "Idlenes and Vagabundrye is the mother and roote of all thefts Robberyes and all evill actes and other mischief." In 1551–52, a similar act aimed at "Tynkars and Pedlars" forbade traveling: "Punishments included enslavement, branding, and chains" (Mayall *English Gypsies* 23). Historically, not all "vagabonds," let alone "rogues," were ethnic Romanies, as Mayall makes clear: the nomadic Romanies "joined a migrant and itinerant population of early modern England that was diverse, fluid, and periodically very numerous" (*Gypsy Identities* 57). The years 1560 to 1640 were a peak period for nomadism and, thus, for antinomadic laws that abated only when poor laws changed and made it economically advantageous to return itinerants to their places of origin (*Gypsy Identities* 58). Although the Romani people had been nomadic since their diaspora from India,[10] they happened to arrive in the British Isles in time to join countless others

whose itinerancy existed as entropic counterpoint to the increased privatization of rural lands, and whose movements the government aimed to control. According to Mayall, the result of this repression was "to create a nomadic underclass, or itinerant underworld, which while allowing some variation essentially saw them as part of a wider, common fraternity living on or outside the margins of the law and social acceptability" (*Gypsy Identities* 62). The Romanies were part of this greater fraternity and came to represent precisely the kind of itinerant living "outside the margins" legible in both *Orlando* and *Wuthering Heights*.

Scholars such as Ian Hancock and anthropologist Judith Okely have disputed this historical image of the Gypsy as "idle" vagrants whose peregrinations are random: "The Gypsies do not travel about aimlessly, as either the romantics or the non-Gypsy suggest," Okely states. "[Their] movements are governed by a complex inter-relation of political, economic and ideological factors" (125). In the chapter "How to Interact with Romanies," Ian Hancock suggests, "If you're writing about Romanies, avoid such words as 'wander' and 'roam,' since they suggest aimlessness and lack of purpose, and perhaps the luxury to simply travel at one's whim. Don't say that we live in 'tribes' . . . generally speaking, Romani social structure isn't tribal" (105). The depiction of the "gipsy tribe" in *Orlando* runs directly counter to Hancock's admonitions: Woolf's Gypsies *do* wander aimlessly—they "followed the grass; when it was grazed down, on they moved again" (141), and they school Orlando in their "science of stealing" (142). Indeed, in *Orlando*, Woolf represents the "gipsy tribe" with whom Orlando escapes as wanderers whose exoticism encapsulates all the traditional stereotypes about Gypsies. Existing in isolation beyond the confines of the Turkish court and its emphasis on rank and title, these Gypsies are itinerant and, as such, objects of romantic desire: when Orlando arrives, they are camped on "high ground outside Broussa" (a phrase suggesting their high moral ground in rejecting property), living in the mountains that Orlando had often seen from afar and where he (a man at that point) had "longed to be" (140). In her analysis of *Orlando*, Karen Lawrence follows Norman O. Brown in reading "all walking, all wandering" as "genital-sexual," but contests Brown's reading of this movement as "phallic," pointing instead to *Orlando*'s "polymorphous sexual possibilities" (qtd. in Lawrence 253). Orlando joins the Gypsy tribe in this polymorphous nomadism, washing "in streams if she washed at all,"

and living beyond the reach of private property: "there was not a key, let alone a golden key in the whole camp" (141).

But far from being polymorphously sexual, the Gypsies in *Orlando* seem to be beyond gender and sexuality, as well as beyond—or above—the ownership of property. The simultaneous destabilization of both property and gender is underscored when Orlando's own legal status as male heir places her (at that point) in a position that is as marginal as the Gypsies' in relation to the mainstream cultures of Europe. When she becomes a woman and returns to England, she temporarily loses the automatic claim to her ancestral estate that maleness had granted her:

> No sooner had she returned to her home in Blackfriars than she was made aware . . . that she was a party to three major suits which had been preferred against her during her absence, as well as innumerable minor litigations, some arising out of, others depending on them. The chief charges against her were (1) that she was dead, and therefore could not hold any property whatsoever; (2) *that she was a woman, which amounts to much the same thing*; (3) that she was an English Duke who had married one Rosina Pepita, a dancer; and had had by her three sons, which sons now declaring that their father was deceased, claimed that all his property descended to them. (168; my italics)[11]

It is only the certainty of gender that enables property to be held absolutely; once gender is destabilized, the right to hold property becomes subject to dispute. *Orlando*'s narrator calls attention to Orlando's ambiguous legal state: instead of continuing to own her property, "[a]ll her estates were put in Chancery and her titles pronounced in abeyance while the suits were under litigation" (168). As a person of no clear gender, Orlando's identity as landholder is, similarly, "in abeyance" unless her status as a male can be determined: "Thus it was in a highly ambiguous condition, uncertain whether she was alive or dead, man or woman, Duke or nonentity, that she posted down to her county seat, where, pending the legal judgment, she had the Law's permission to reside in a state of incognito or incognita as the case might turn out to be" (168). When gender is revealed as a "highly ambiguous condition," property follows suit; and in *Orlando*, Gypsies are not only emblematic of this ambiguity, but seem, in aiding her escape from the Turkish court and in hosting her during her period of gender transition, to have facilitated it.

Under the law, however, Orlando's gender is ultimately held to be certain: when the lawsuits are finally settled, Orlando's marriage to Pepita is annulled, and her sex "is pronounced indisputably and beyond the shadow of a doubt . . . Female." In parodic legal language, Orlando reflects, "the estates which are now desequestrated in perpetuity descend and are tailed and entailed upon the heirs male of my body" (255). Thus, Orlando is allowed to resume "possession of titles, her house, and her estate—which were now so much shrunk, for the cost of the lawsuits had been prodigious, that though she was infinitely noble again, she was also excessively poor" (255). Orlando's femaleness has, in effect, disinherited her—not only is she without capital, but she is also without real property: "[t]he house was no longer hers entirely. . . . It belonged to time now; to history; was past the touch and control of the living" (318).[12] At the same time that Orlando's gender comes loose and remains forever in dispute (despite what the law decrees), her relationship to property mirrors this instability.

As Orlando's legal status morphs from the certainty of maleness, nobility, inheritance, and ownership into this state of contestation, the "gipsy tribe" with whom he or she escapes mirrors this change. Upon awakening as a woman, Orlando has changed sex but not gender, and appears gender-neutral until "she" returns to European society, dressed in confining female garments. Prior to this return, the Gypsies offered her a transitional period between maleness and femaleness by themselves affirming neither principles of binary gender nor of concrete ownership. While Orlando is among them, her sex change seems unimportant to her: the narrator comments that "[i]t is a strange fact, but a true one that up to that moment [when, dressed as a woman, she returns to England] she had scarcely given her sex a thought" (153). It is only when she boards the ship "the *Enamoured Lady*" in female apparel that the transition becomes apparent to her: "it was not until she felt the coil of skirts about her legs and the Captain offered, with the greatest politeness, to have an awning spread for her on deck that she realized, with a start the penalties and privileges of her position" (153). The connection between performative gender and apparel is suggested here: she reflects on the unisex clothing of the Gypsies, noting that "the gipsy women, except in one or two important particulars, differ very little from the gipsy men," and concluding that "[p]erhaps the Turkish trousers, which she had hitherto worn had done something to distract her thoughts," that is from gender

(153). Physical sex may be an "important particular" in some circles but it does not appear to create true gender difference, at least not among the Gypsies.

In the same way that the Gypsies' appearance in the text marks the beginnings of gender's instability, it also functions to destabilize the notions of ancestral property. Indeed, the Gypsies offer Orlando an entirely different perspective on property than that of the landed aristocracy:

> One night when they were questioning her about England she could not help with some pride describing the house where she was born, how it had 365 bedrooms and had been in the possession of her family for four or five hundred years. Her ancestors were earls, or even dukes, she added. At this she noticed again that the gipsies were uneasy. . . . Now they were courteous, but concerned as people of fine breeding are when a stranger has been made to reveal his low birth or poverty. Rustum followed her out of the tent alone and said that she need not mind if her father were a Duke, and possessed all the bedrooms and furniture that she described. They would none of them think the worse of her for that. (147)

Far from viewing Orlando's aristocratic heritage as something to be proud of, the Gypsies regard it as a sign of "low birth."

This paradigm shift, perhaps even more striking than Orlando's sex change, utterly deconstructs the notions of property that inform not only aristocratic families such as Orlando's and the Sackville-Wests, but the nineteenth-century novel. In his study of "fears . . . about the powers of the commodity" (3) and their consequences, Jeffrey Nunokawa notes that anxiety about capital and the commodity is a "major theme" in the Victorian novel (3): "The nineteenth-century novel never ceases remarking the reach of market forces into the parlors, bedrooms, and closets of a domestic realm that thus never ceases to fail in its mission to shelter its inhabitants from the clash of these armies. . . . [E]verywhere the shades of the countinghouse fall upon the home" (4). Among the Gypsies in *Orlando*, however, not only does the countinghouse not reach into the domestic, but the domestic sphere itself is reconstituted, expanded to include the earth itself. As Orlando realizes that the Gypsies are not only not impressed with her aristocratic heritage, but embarrassed for her about it, she is mortified, "seized with a shame that she had never felt before. It was clear that Rustum and the other gipsies thought a descent of four or five

hundred years only the meanest possible. Their own families went back at least two or three thousand years. To the gipsy whose ancestors had built the Pyramids[13] centuries before Christ was born, the genealogy of Howards and Plantanagets was no better and no worse than that of the Smiths and the Joneses: both were negligible" (147–48). Here, Woolf's Gypsies contravene all the assumptions on which the landed aristocracy depends, and establish for themselves a hereditary sense of property in which there is no private ownership, and a "descent" of merely four or five centuries, on which this aristocracy is based, is negligible in comparison to their own history. Emblems of status in the language of the aristocracy are, for Gypsies, an embarrassment: "[T]here was no more vulgar ambition than to possess bedrooms by the hundred . . . when the whole earth is ours. Looked at from the gipsy point of view, a Duke, Orlando understood, was nothing but a profiteer or robber who snatched land and money from people who rated these things of little worth, and could think of nothing better to do than to build three hundred and sixty five bedrooms when one was enough and none was even better than one" (148). The Gypsy perspective imagined here upends conventional conceptions of property and class, rendering them the object of satire.

In *Orlando*, then, Gypsies have performed a function: when they appear in this text, the main character's gender and, thus, his or her legal status and consequent ability to own property, moves from being clear, fixed, immutable, into a morass of ambiguity and confusion. While in recent years, much attention has been paid to how Gypsies are represented in texts, their catalytic function in these texts has received little scrutiny. When Gypsies enter a text, the assumptions that it is the project of the nineteenth century—specifically of the nineteenth-century novel—to stabilize are destabilized: in the presence of Gypsies, property, sexual conventions, gender, and national identity come loose. In rejecting conventions of property and ownership in postfeudal society, Gypsies became a convenient receptacle for anxieties about other social mores. Gypsies in nineteenth-century British literature trope escape from these restrictive practices, fomenting destabilization on multiple levels throughout the texts they inhabit. Their mere presence works to overturn the conventional notions of sex, gender, and property whose constructions are the "ideological work," in Mary Poovey's phrase, of the British nineteenth-century.

If, in *Orlando*, Gypsies act as heralds of a redistribution of property, in *Wuthering Heights*, it is the alleged Gypsy, Heathcliff, who actively impedes the flow of primogeniture and causes the temporary redistribution of the two properties in the novel, Thrushcross Grange and Wuthering Heights, a situation that is rectified only by his death. While Heathcliff's gender is not unstable, everything else about him—his provenance, his ethnicity, and the source of his capital—is unclear. Deborah Nord calls Heathcliff "a mutant gene that, once let loose in the line of Earnshaws and Lintons who follow him, changes everything" (197). Terry Eagleton notes that "Heathcliff is inserted into the close-knit [Earnshaw] family structure as an alien," having come from "that ambivalent domain of darkness which is the 'outside' of the tightly defined domestic system" (*Myths of Power* 102). Whereas, in *Orlando*, questions about the distribution of property function as an undercurrent, in *Wuthering Heights* they are foregrounded; arguably, the two properties in *Wuthering Heights* are its main characters, and it is their fates that we trace over the course of the novel's two generations of Earnshaws and Lintons—fates ultimately determined by Heathcliff, whose alien presence disturbs their ownership. His Gypsyness or "darkness" is the "mutant" factor that reverses the course of domestic harmony the two families might otherwise have followed, destabilizing the binaries of the marriage plot.

Initially, Heathcliff himself functions as a commodity. Rescued from the streets of Liverpool, England's foremost slave port by Mr. Earnshaw, Heathcliff is presented to the Earnshaw children as a gift: Earnshaw disgorges "a dirty, black-haired child" from his coat, and tells his wife that she "must e'en take it [him] as a gift of God; though it's as dark almost as if it came from the devil" (36). From the beginning, Heathcliff causes the displacement of property, taking the place of the whip Catherine had requested, which Mr. Earnshaw lost "in attending on the stranger"; and it is his fault that Hindley's violin is broken (37). Indeed, Heathcliff threatens to displace the very food from the family's table: Mrs. Earnshaw responds to his presence angrily, demanding to know how her husband "could fashion to bring that gipsy brat into the house, when they had their own bairns to feed, and fend for?" (37). Heathcliff is thus accused, in the same sentence, both of usurping the legitimate Earnshaw children's claim to sustenance *and* of being a Gypsy; from his first appearance in the family, his mere presence, much like that of the Gypsies in *Orlando*, functions to place ownership at risk.

While Heathcliff is referred to as a "stranger" by Nelly Dean, and initially rejected by the Earnshaw children, Mr. Earnshaw insists on treating the foundling as a member of the family, naming him after "a son who had died in childhood," but stopping short of giving him the surname "Earnshaw"; according to Nelly, the name "Heathcliff" "served him ever since, both for Christian and surname" (38). From the beginning, Heathcliff occupies an ambiguous position within the family as both stranger and sibling; indeed, as Nord and others, including the 1970 film version of the novel, have noted, the novel contains "hints that Heathcliff might be Earnshaw's bastard son" (198). Similarly, his ethnicity is indeterminate—though he is repeatedly referred to by others as a Gypsy, his antecedents are never established, though during his introduction to the family, according to Nelly, he "repeated over and again some gibberish that nobody could understand" (36–37), which suggests foreign origin; as Liverpool is a port, it could be argued that he has come from another country[14], but it is equally possible that his "gibberish" is Romani.[15] Certainly, Emily Brontë did not intend that we should be able to ascertain Heathcliff's ethnicity. His "darkness" argues equally well for origins in India, Africa, America, England's Romani population,[16] and, as Charlotte Brontë suggests in her 1850 preface, the devil: "we should say he was child neither of Lascar or gipsy, but a man's shape animated by demon life—a Ghoul—an Afreet"[17] (xliii). Although this supernatural dimension to Heathcliff's identity could be read as redolent of Gypsies' presumed occult connections, the dispute among critics as to his ethnicity suggests that Emily Brontë had no intention of creating a clearly demarcated ethnic identity for him.[18] As in *Orlando*, where gender ambiguity affiliates Orlando with the Gypsies living on the margins of European society, the ambiguous Heathcliff is, in Kristeva's terms, abjected in an attempt to maintain the "identity, system, and order," in her words (4), of the Earnshaw and, later, the Linton clans and the property that adheres to them.

Despite his indeterminate ethnicity, however, Heathcliff is repeatedly referred to by other characters as a "gipsy." Lockwood describes him as "a dark-skinned gypsy in aspect, in dress and manners a gentleman" (5), and Joseph calls him "that fahl, flaysome devil of a gipsy" (87). Another such reference involves Heathcliff again displacing his adopted brother Hindley's property: when his colt goes lame, Heathcliff blackmails Hindley into exchanging horses with him, threatening to tell Mr. Earnshaw about the beatings Hindley has given him. As

horse-trading is "an ancient part of the Romani tradition" (see Bowers), it could be argued that the trade with Hindley is further evidence of Heathcliff's Gypsy credentials. After some brief fisticuffs, during which Heathcliff repeats his threats, Hindley says, "Take my colt, gipsy, then," and, a moment later, calls Heathcliff a "beggarly interloper" and "an imp of Satan" (39). Here, Brontë conflates these three facets of Heathcliff's identity—Gypsy, interloper, devil—echoing the historical anxiety about Gypsies as interlopers, threats to property, with occult propensities.[19]

Another such reference occurs when Catherine and Heathcliff are caught by the Lintons as they peer through the windows of Thrushcross Grange. Dorothy Van Ghent famously reads this scene as an enactment of the windowpane as "the medium, treacherously transparent, separating the 'inside' from the 'outside,' the 'human' from the alien and terrible 'other'" (161). Certainly, this incident illuminates, as it were, the affinity between Catherine and Heathcliff, their darkness pitted against the lightness of the fair-haired Lintons ("the language of light and dark," as Nord puts it [197]), and in Van Ghent's words, their "raw, inhuman reality of anonymous natural energies" versus "the restrictive reality of civilized habits, manners, and codes" (157). The contrast between Catherine's social status and her duality with Heathcliff is underscored when Edgar Linton tells his mother that the girl their bulldog has captured is Catherine Earnshaw. "'Miss Earnshaw? Nonsense!'" Mrs. Linton exclaims. "'Miss Earnshaw scouring the country with a gipsy?'" (50); here, we see the conflation of Gypsyness with itinerancy—"scouring the country." She then realizes that the girl is in (dark) mourning garb and, therefore, must indeed be Catherine Earnshaw. Since Mrs. Linton has identified Catherine's companion as a Gypsy, she has perhaps mistaken Catherine for one as well. But, although Mrs. Linton has concluded that Heathcliff is a Gypsy (or perhaps, uses the term casually to mean "a cunning rogue"[20]), Brontë ensures that Heathcliff's ethnicity remains contested, having Mr. Linton identify him as "a little Lascar, or an American or Spanish castaway," and Mrs. Linton sums up by terming him "'[a] wicked boy, at all events . . . and quite unfit for a decent house!'"(50). It is perhaps more accurate to refer to Heathcliff's ethnicity not as ambiguous, but as multiple: he is marked with a variety of identities, all of which cohere in his otherness. However, it is his Gypsyness that facilitates Catherine's "scouring the country" or wandering with him, an activity that is all the more shocking because of its

veiled sexual undercurrent. Indeed, in light of Karen Lawrence's discussion of *Orlando*, in which she considers Norman O. Brown's idea that "all walking, all wandering" is "genital-sexual," it becomes clearer just how inappropriate this "scouring" is; and the 1970 film version of the novel suggests that Healthcliff and Catherine consummated their relationship while perambulating the moors.

The next character to refer to Heathcliff as a Gypsy is Edgar Linton who, after Heathcliff's long absence, responds to being informed by Nelly Dean of his return by crying, "'What, the gipsy—the ploughboy?'"(95). Nelly cautions Edgar against calling him by "those names," which are clearly meant to be pejorative, but Edgar momentarily makes it clear that he regards Heathcliff as a social inferior, a "runaway servant" whom Catherine insists upon welcoming "as a brother"; when Catherine squeezes his neck with delight at hearing of Heathcliff's return, Edgar says, "[D]on't strangle me for that! He never struck me as such a marvelous treasure" (95). The word "treasure" suggests that Edgar has continued to regard him as an object or property, but this shifts as it becomes clear that Catherine's "brother" has become a gentleman, or at least a semblance of one, whose appearance has been radically altered by his change in fortunes. Nelly is "amazed to behold the transformation of Heathcliff," whose "countenance . . . retained no marks of its former degradation"; though he still has a "ferocity" that is only "half-civilized," "his manner was even dignified, quite divested of roughness, though too stern for grace" (96). The claims of both nature and nurture are evident here: Heathcliff cannot shed his ethnic darkness or ferocity, the "black fire" in his eyes. However, the veneer of upward mobility is sufficiently convincing that Edgar is, for a moment, "at a loss how to address the ploughboy, as he had called him" (96). The "ploughboy" has been transformed into a capitalist during his three years away, though how he has made his fortune is never made explicit, and this transformation results in his subsequent acquisition of the two central properties in the novel, Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange. The suggestion here is that, while a Gypsy/vagrant, as Heathcliff initially is, does not, as in *Orlando*, own property, a faux gentleman can indeed do so, but his central Gypsyness, which is repeatedly emphasized by references to his darkness and otherness ("I did not feel as if I were in the company of a creature of my own species," Nelly says of him [162]), acts, as in *Orlando*, to upset the natural distribution of property, all of which should by rights have belonged to Hareton

Earnshaw and Catherine Linton II. Like gender in *Orlando*, class is performative here, but while Heathcliff's upwardly mobile dress may lend him a gentrified persona, unlike in *Orlando*, where beneath the veil of costume lies an ambiguous multiplicity of gender possibilities, Heathcliff's Gypsyness/deviltry cannot be expunged by costume: Gypsyness may destabilize multiple social structures, but its essential qualities cannot be erased.

Property ownership, on the other hand, is infinitely malleable. As *Wuthering Heights* progresses, it becomes clear that the central method of Heathcliff's revenge on everyone who has crossed him is to strip them of their assets. The second half of the novel, ushered in by Catherine I's death, is both the story of the second generation of Earnshaws, Lintons, and Heathcliffs, and the combinations thereof, and of the two properties and their movement from Heathcliff's possession back to their rightful owners, a process that can only take place upon Heathcliff's death. Like Shakespearean comedy, *Wuthering Heights* ends in multiple marriages: even more significant than the union between Hareton and Catherine II is the marriage between the two properties, the Heights and the Grange, their freeing from the interloper who has usurped them.

In making the transition from Gypsy to gentleman, Heathcliff has made a transformation that is the opposite of Orlando's, having morphed from being property himself, a product of the slave port Liverpool, into someone who is able to acquire property and, thereby, disturb its rightful distribution via primogeniture. As his Gypsyness is effaced by his adoption of class markers, he becomes less of a commodity himself and more capable of ownership, albeit temporarily. And if it is his alleged Gypsy identity that causes everyone to reject him and renders him unsuitable as a mate for Catherine (as does, it can be argued, the incestuous quality of their union), it is, in turn, this rejection that causes him to seek revenge on his enemies, Hindley and the Lintons, by usurping their property. Had Mr. Earnshaw adopted a fair-haired orphan from the streets of Liverpool, one can imagine him easily assimilated into the family, but it is Heathcliff's darkness, read as both Gypsy-like and Satanic, that causes him to be ostracized. His acquisition of property grants him legitimacy, a kind of faux primogeniture, in which he becomes the true son of Mr. Earnshaw; but this is merely a temporary displacement in the chain of inheritance in which Hareton Earnshaw's and Catherine Linton's claims to the properties are ultimately restored.

If we return to our consideration of anti-Romani legislation, we may read this anxiety about the Gypsies in both *Orlando* and *Wuthering Heights* as an aspect of more general fears about Gypsies' itinerancy. Orlando's wandering with the Gypsies accompanies the loss of both gender and capital, the twin pillars of nineteenth-century "ideological work," in Poovey's words: "The model of binary opposition between the sexes, which was socially realized in separate but equal 'spheres,' underwrote an entire system of institutional practices and conventions at mid-[nineteenth] century [roughly the time of *Wuthering Heights*' publication], ranging from a sexual division of labor to a sexual division of economic and political rights" (8–9). Heathcliff's peregrinations, too, set the instability of property into motion: his arrival destabilizes the Earnshaw family's commodities, and his unexplained disappearance allows him to amass enough money to become a gentleman. In bringing about the usurpation of property, his wandering has precisely the effect on the Earnshaws and Lintons about which legislation to curtail Romani "vagrancy" appears to reflect anxiety. Ultimately, however, this usurpation is doomed to failure because, like the Gypsies in *Orlando*, Heathcliff cannot ultimately possess land; his Gypsyness does not permit it. Like Orlando, Heathcliff possesses an ambiguous status that denies him the ability to participate in the nationalist project of landholding in Britain.

From these examples of Gypsy figures who enter a text and facilitate destabilization of gender and property in particular, and a disturbance of the social order in general, we may deduce that, as the Gypsy figure became a fixture in British literature over the course of the nineteenth century, that trope began to stand in for a complicated set of functions. Anxieties about the encroaching of others upon what was perceived to be normative British culture, about social insurrection, foreignness and/or hybridity, about failures in the system of primogeniture and even anxiety about paternity itself, were projected onto the Gypsy figure. By the twentieth century, the volatile threat that Gypsyness posed to the status quo was well established. *Orlando* embodies these multiple anxieties playfully: the novel is itself grounded upon a hidden subtext of Gypsy hybridity, if we consider that Vita Sackville-West, on whom the character of Orlando is modeled, had a Romani ancestress, and it is this hybridity of both ethnicity and gender that destabilizes Orlando's hereditary aristocracy, much as it did Sackville-West's. *Wuthering Heights*, however, is far less playful, and takes seriously the threats of hybridity posed by Heathcliff

that are enacted in the tragically short life of his son. At the end of *Wuthering Heights*, the Heights and the Grange are returned to the Earnshaw and Linton lineages, and the social order, signified by property ownership, is restored, having nearly been destroyed by the families' admission of a Gypsy figure. Once Heathcliff is wholly expelled, abjected, the body politic can be healed, and the hereditary status quo reestablished. In *Orlando*, however, as one might expect from a modernist text, it would appear that the social order is not restored, but complicated, as everything that was the nineteenth century's project to stabilize—gender, property, ethnicity, and by implication, nation—proves to be indeterminate.

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## Notes

1. *Powers of Horror*, 4.
2. Karen Lawrence has called it "a narrative of boundary crossings—of time, space, gender, sex" (253).
3. For a discussion of the nineteenth-century project of dichotomizing gender, see Thomas Laquer, *Making Sex*.
4. In a famous court case—made even more confusing by the fact that Vita's mother Victoria was married to her cousin, Lionel Sackville-West, who bore the same name as her own father—Vita's father's right to inherit Knole was challenged by her uncle, who alleged that his father, Lionel Sackville-West, the elder, had been legally married to Vita's grandmother, a Spanish dancer named Pepita, and that he was therefore a legitimate heir to the estate (Glendinning 30).
5. As Karen Lawrence puts it, in Orlando, "desire is polymorphous, the heterosexual paradigm of adventure destabilized" (252).
6. See, for example, the Francis J. Child ballads "Johnny Faa" and "The Gypsy Laddie" in which an aristocratic woman leaves her family and property to run away with the Gypsies.
7. See Lawrence for a discussion of orientalism in Orlando, and the way "[T]he East . . . serves . . . as a site of erotic freedom and liminality" (256).
8. With an awareness that these terms are contested, I have adopted the practice of using the term "Romani" to denote the actual Romani people and "Gypsy" to denote literary representations.
9. See Mayall, *Gypsy Identities* (58).
10. See Mayall, *Gypsy Identities*, for a discussion of Indian origin (222–29).
11. These suits mirror the litigation in Vita Sackville-West's family, in which her uncle sued to prove that his father had been legally married to Pepita (Glendinning 30).
12. Indeed, Knole was eventually taken over by the National Trust (Glendinning 326).
13. Here, Woolf, probably in jest, reflects the mistaken belief that the Romani people originally came from Egypt.
14. Christopher Heywood has made the argument that Heathcliff was black; Humphrey Gawthorp has made a similar connection between Heathcliff's ethnicity and the Brontës' anti-slavery sentiments (113–21).
15. One of the markers of Gypsyness, as evidenced in George Borrow's *Lavengro* (1851), is their unintelligible language; in *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841), for example, Nell witnesses an "encampment of gipsies" who speak "a jargon which the child did not understand" (323).

16. Nord argues that "the language of light and dark the novel deploys to distinguish between physical and temperamental types" (5) helps create the obvious affinity between Heathcliff and the similarly "dark" Catherine.
17. The Oxford English Dictionary Online defines "afreet" as "An evil demon or monster of Muslim mythology."
18. In *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, Terry Eagleton reads Heathcliff as Irish, a "fragment of the Famine" of the 1840s (11), but concedes that he "may be a gypsy, or . . . a Creole, or any kind of alien" (3).
19. In contemplating Heathcliff's "gypsy lack of origins," Dorothy Van Ghent suggests that "Heathcliff might *really* be a demon" (154; her emphasis).
20. The Oxford English Dictionary Online records this obsolete definition of "Gipsie" from 1635 (2.a.).

# Part 2

## *Porrajmos*

## Representations of the Romani Holocaust

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# Chapter 5

# Trauma, Guilt, and Revenge

## The Romani Holocaust in Stefan Kanfer's *The Eighth Sin*[1]

*Valentina Glajar*

Each year of my patched-up life
I mended the fabrics
of my decrepit, tattered world.
In memory I recognized
faces and smiles,
even my father and mother reappeared
as longed-for frescoes of the past.
I have traveled old and squalid paths,
maneuvered my sails
between the shores of history.
I have continually come across the wonder
of memory inscribing itself,
and the agitated past
quietly welling up in the present.[2]

In 1978, more than thirty years after the liberation of the Nazi death camps, Stefan Kanfer published his novel *The Eighth Sin*, the first

widely read literary account of the extermination of Romanies in Nazi Germany.[3] The fate of the Roma and Sinti had stirred virtually no interest in the literary world until 1978, and the Romani *Porrajmos* had become "an almost forgotten footnote to the history of the Nazi genocide" (Tyrnauer 97). It is, therefore, not surprising that Frank Timothy Dougherty applauds Kanfer's "sheer courage in taking on a theme of the proportions of the [G]ypsies and the Holocaust" (260). Taking on such an overwhelming and understudied topic as early as Kanfer did was not only courageous, it was imperative in calling attention to the fate of a people still stigmatized and marginalized as if the Holocaust never happened and never involved them.[4] It is easy to dismiss Kanfer's novel from a contemporary perspective, but it is more important to discuss its relevance in the context of the 1970s and, especially, at the new fin-de-siècle, when Romanies were subjected to renewed discrimination in both western and eastern Europe.

Kanfer's novel preceded a constellation of events that ushered the Romani question to the forefront and led to the recognition of Romanies as victims of the Holocaust in the 1980s. On 27 October 1979, a group of German Sinti, along with Roma representatives from many European countries, gathered at Bergen–Belsen to honor the Romanies that perished during the Holocaust. They also drew attention to the fact that Sinti were still discriminated against in Germany. According to Gabrielle Tyrnauer, "[t]he Sinti's new eagerness to speak publicly about the Nazi past and their experiences in it grow out of their escalating fear of its repetition, perhaps in altered form" (Tyrnauer 104). Simone Veil, the President of the European Parliament, and a concentration camp survivor herself, was present to show her support for the plight of the Romanies.[5] The following year, on 4 April, Sinti and Roma activists, along with a German non-Roma, engaged in a hunger strike at the former concentration camp, Dachau. "Their objectives," according to Tyrnauer, "included official recognition of the Nazi crimes against the Roma and Sinti, appropriate restitutions, an end to legal discrimination and police harassment, and the establishment of a Sinti cultural center at Dachau" (Tyrnauer 101). While the hunger strike initiated a political debate that allowed some CDU (Christlich Demokratische Union) and CSU (Christlich Soziale Union) representatives to air their discriminatory rhetoric against Roma and Sinti, it also gained support from the liberals and moderates. The CDU representative, Alois Hundhammer, for example, claimed: "Wir lassen uns nicht zu Schuldigen abstempeln. Es käme

dann nämlich so heraus, als ob Zigeuner lauter Engel wären und wir die Schuldigen" (qtd in Margalit, *Die Nachkriegsdeutschen*, 246–47) ("We will not allow [this] to mark us as guilty . . . the Gypsies are angels and we are guilty" qtd in Margalit, *Germany and Its Gypsies*, 253). Needless to say, Hundhammer failed to seize the historic moment, but, on the other hand, his statements resonated with the attitude of many Germans who were reluctant to recognize Sinti and Roma as racial victims of the Nazi regime, and, just like Hundhammer, they did not want to identify with Roma or Sinti. However, the founding of Sinti and Roma organizations such as the Federation of German Sinti (*Verband Deutscher Sinti*) and the international Romani Union, as well as the support Romanies received from The Society for Threatened Peoples, was an important factor in the process of gaining the long-awaited recognition as Nazi victims in 1982.[6]

On 16 September 1986, the United States Holocaust Memorial Council organized the first Day of Remembrance in honor of the Romani victims of Nazi genocide. The first report of the President's Commission on the Holocaust in the United States, chaired by Elie Wiesel in 1979, had not recognized Romanies as Holocaust victims on racial grounds.[7] Moreover, the report lists "Gypsies" last in a series of victims killed at Auschwitz: "In addition to Jews, most especially Poles, Soviet prisoners of war, Frenchmen, Serbs, Slavs, and Gypsies were killed at Auschwitz."[8] However, on this Day of Remembrance in 1986, many representatives on the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council expressed regret for having ignored the plight of Romanies. Elie Wiesel gave a moving speech in which he apologized to the Roma and Sinti people: "I confess that I feel somewhat guilty toward our Romani friends. We have not done enough to listen to your voice of anguish. We have not done enough to make other people listen to your voice of sadness. Your suffering too must be recorded" (United States Holocaust Memorial Council, *Day of Remembrance*, 4).

Although the Holocaust has been researched for decades, and testimonials and fictional accounts of Jewish survivors have been analyzed in ever increasing degrees of sophistication, Romani studies, a still developing research area, has lagged behind in examining the *Porrajmos* and, over time, has been hampered by external and internal factors. As Sybil Milton explains in her article "Persecuting the Survivors," at first, "few archives and scholars were interested in documenting Nazi crimes against Roma and Sinti" (37), and the privatization of the official Nazi records delayed, for more than three

decades, serious academic analysis of these records (Milton 38). According to David Crowe, the failure of the allied powers to deal with Sinti and Roma as a specific victim group at the Nuremberg trials, as well as their failure "to document and emphasize the genocidal nature of German and collaborationist crimes against the Roma has also robbed Roma scholars of some of the key documentation essential to modern investigations of the *Porrajmos*" (81). In recent years, some Holocaust scholars have opposed including Romanies as Holocaust victims because they see the European Jews as the sole target of Nazi racial policies of extermination.[9] Crowe goes on to point out that archival work has yet to be undertaken in the former Eastern Bloc countries for a more thorough study of the *Porrajmos* and the collaboration or initiatives of these countries regarding the deportation and extermination of Romanies (84–85). Due also to an ongoing distrust of *gadjé* (non-Roma), many Roma survivors were, and are, reluctant to testify, believing that a written document about their experiences could lead to further persecution (Crowe 83). It is also important to note that, at the end of World War II, the few Romani survivors who were literate had no desire to write about their horrific experiences, nor were many people interested in reading their stories (Kenrick 5). It is, therefore, not surprising that it was more than forty years before Romani survivors published their own testimonial accounts of surviving the Nazi death camps. Since the 1980s, the Austrian Romani siblings Karl, Mongo, and Ceija Stojka have described and published, for the first time, their camp experiences in artistic and literary accounts. In Germany, the survivor Walter Winter wrote about being a German and a Sinto in Nazi Germany in *Winter Time: Memoirs of a German Sinto who Survived Auschwitz*.[10] The French Romani author Matéo Maximoff described his experiences in France's internment camps in *Dites-le avec des pleurs*.

Kanfer's *The Eighth Sin* earned a well-deserved place in the literary history of Holocaust studies as the first English-language literary text to address the *Porrajmos*. Not without its critics, in 1978, Kanfer's acclaimed novel initiated a long-overdue discussion of the forgotten victims of the Holocaust. Speaking to its historical importance and ethical necessity, *The Eighth Sin* became a Book-of-the-Month Club selection and led to Kanfer's appointment on the President's Commission on the Holocaust—the only journalist ever to serve on that commission.[11]

To do justice to Kanfer's fictional account of the *Porrajmos*, as well as to its criticism, it is important to discuss the representation of the Romani Holocaust in this pioneering novel. Kanfer's project contributes to the historiography of the Holocaust, and establishes an important intervention in the representation of Romanies as victims of the Nazi genocide, and the reception of fictional Holocaust accounts. The constructed "Gypsyness" of the main character exposes, and takes issue with, the perseverance of stereotypes associated with Romanies, as well as the ignorance of non-Roma regarding Roma history and their suffering during World War II.

Kanfer's novel tells the story of a fourteen-year-old "Gypsy" boy named Benoit who is liberated by the British from a Nazi camp and taken to London, where he is eventually adopted by a Jewish couple, Max and Risa Kaufmann. His entire family perished in a concentration camp, with the exception of one former Nazi Kapo, Eleazar Jassy, who, as the readers find out in the novel's surprising ending, is actually Benoit's older brother. Throughout his life, Benoit moves from London to New York and, thirty years later, returns to Europe after having experienced the seven sins: avarice, pride, envy, gluttony, sloth, lust, and wrath. By indulging the sins, Benoit, the first-person narrator, tries to come to terms with his past and the childhood memories he has tried to suppress and erase for most of his narrated life. However, Benoit's compulsive way of experiencing the first six sins reflects unsuccessful attempts to forget the Holocaust, the camps, and, implicitly, his own family. Everyday events trigger memories that allow Benoit to remember, and the readers to see into his constructed past. Catching a glimpse of a person he believes is Jassy, whom he hates passionately for maiming and slaughtering his own people, turns his life upside down. He becomes obsessed with the capture and killing of Jassy—a revenge that the first-person narrator justifies by relating incredible stories of cruelty and murder attributed to Jassy during their incarceration in the concentration camps. It takes Benoit more than thirty years to finally locate Jassy in St. John in the Virgin Islands, Jassy having changed his name to Jonas Melalo, "the most dreaded demon of the Gypsies" (260), and darkened his skin so he can pass as a black person from the islands. Benoit strangles Jassy and leaves the islands to return to Europe. He flies to Paris, where he lives on the streets; the reader is left to assume he resumes his life as a "true" Gypsy and realizes that "the life of seven sins was the avoidance of the eighth, the deadliest sin: the sin of forgetting" (288).

Stefan Kanfer writes a well-researched novel that, on different narrative levels, describes facts, fictional memories of Auschwitz, and stages of forgetting or repressing the past as a means to surviving in the post-World War II world. The main themes of memory, guilt, and revenge spring from the overarching project of calling attention to the fate of Romanies during World War II, and are realized through a sophisticated narrative structure. The eight chapters, which follow Benoit's story from the camp to New York and then Paris, and develop around the seven sins, consist of an external, an internal, and a factual string of narration. The external narrative follows Benoit's story as seen by outsiders. The internal narrative, marked by italics, allows the past to resurface in the form of memories, voices from the past, and dialogues with Jassy or the camp *Kommandant*. The third aspect of narration includes referenced factual information from trial testimonies, witness accounts, and historical documents, and is marked by a smaller font.

In a review of Kanfer's novel in 1978, Christopher Lehmann-Haupt poses an unavoidable question: "Is it possible for a conventional novel to do justice to the holocaust?" (21). While Lehmann-Haupt's review dismisses Kanfer's project altogether as a trivial "mystery-thriller sparked by revenge" (21), his question goes beyond Kanfer's novel to address the representations of the Holocaust in fictional accounts, their limitations, and ethical dimensions. According to James Young's categorization of Holocaust literature, *The Eighth Sin* is an example of a docu-novel or documentary fiction. The problem that Young and others associate with these novels is the ambiguity that arises between the factual documents and fictional characters that can lead the reader to interpret the events themselves as fictional artifacts (Young 52). Kanfer's novel can be considered docu-fiction in that it documents the Holocaust story of the fictional character Benoit, and focuses on the memories of this character and his post-Auschwitz life, written from the perspective of the 1970s. As Young explains, novelists who write a fictional Holocaust novel are particularly concerned with "documentary authority" (53), which serves to validate—or not—the project of the novelist. Kanfer's narrator backs up the fictional story with excerpts from authentic documents. He intersperses these "items," which entail factual accounts that refer specifically to the treatment of the Romanies in the concentration camps and their lack of recognition after the end of World War II.[12] These factual "items" provide links to the actual events, and while they validate

Benoit's story they also anchor the narrative to the history of the Romani Holocaust. To quote Young again, "how does the perception of authority in the Holocaust novel affect the way readers approach and respond to Holocaust fiction? That is, can Holocaust documentary fiction ever really document events, or will it always fictionalize them?" (52). Given the reviews it received in 1978, Kanfer's novel certainly made an impression. According to the reviewer of *The New Yorker*, "Mr. Kanfer has written a story that cannot easily be dismissed" (117). The reviewer from *Time* explains the effect of the novel on the readers: "Kanfer . . . has given the familiar documentary evidence of the death camps and their aftermath a persuasive and moving life in fiction" (92). While the anonymous *Time* reviewer is not concerned with reconciling fact and fiction, transposing facts into this fictional project clearly convinced this reviewer that Kanfer's novel documents the Romani Holocaust, although the story and the characters are fictional.

Does Kanfer's novel document events, or does it even claim to document the *Porrajmos*? The factual evidence incorporated into the fictional story of Benoit certainly draws attention to the overlooked fate of Romanies in an unprecedented way by 1978. The well-researched facts included in this novel speak of the intention of presenting a documented, believable story, rather than necessarily documenting events, and of steering Benoit's story into the heart of the Romani *Porrajmos*.

In *Reading the Holocaust*, Inga Clendinnen claims that "we listen differently to stories which are 'real,' however naïvely or awkwardly reported, from stories, however beguiling, which we know to be invented" (172). While it is undeniable that survivors' testimonies render the reality of the camps differently than a fictional account will ever do, one has to wonder whether a reader can ignore the historical facts when reading a fictional book such as Kanfer's *The Eighth Sin*. Is it possible to simply "marvel at the fictioneer's imagination" (172), as Clendinnen claims? So, to invert Young's question, can we read Kanfer's docu-fiction as straight fiction and ignore the historical events that loom larger than life? The ambivalent relationship between history and literature in the case of Holocaust docu-fiction does not allow readers to ignore the facts, while at the same time reminding them the story is fictional, although probable. Kanfer makes a sincere effort to present the story of a Romani Holocaust survivor, though a fictional one, and his novel remains one, of only a few, that calls attention

to *Porrajmos* and exposes the indifference of Germany toward Romani survivors for decades after World War II.

The next question that arises regarding Kanfer's representation of the Romani Holocaust has to do with ethical considerations of who is entitled to write, why, and how.[13] What qualifies Kanfer to write about *Porrajmos*, and does he indeed represent the story of the Roma people in an ethical manner that survivors would not find offensive? Stefan Kanfer is not a Romani, but his novel is written after extensive research of the Holocaust and his personal involvement with the rehabilitation of Nazi victims. As an outsider to the Romani world, however, Kanfer creates an imagined "Gypsy" identity that is reflected in the main character Benoit. Benoit grows up as an adopted orphan who is completely isolated from his former way of life, and he comes into contact with no other Romanies in the course of the novel until the end, when he kills his brother. Benoit's constructed "Gypsy" identity has its flaws and, at times, is historically inaccurate. Benoit, despite having a French name, is supposed to be a Romani boy from Bucharest. His grandfather is French, and Benoit remembers stories he used to recount in French. Benoit's last name is Jassy, which is the German name of a city in the northeast of Romania. The novel never elucidates how Benoit and his family end up in a Nazi concentration camp, since a large segment of the Romanian Roma, including the ones from Bucharest, were deported to the river Bug in Transnistria during Antonescu's regime. Historians estimate that 25,000 to 36,000 Romanian Roma were deported to Transnistria, where thousands died as a result of starvation, typhus, or execution (Ioanid 225–37).[14] Benoit and his family, however, share the fate of Romanies from German-occupied parts of Europe who were deported to Auschwitz and, namely, to the "Gypsy camp" in Birkenau.[15] In regard to his life in the camp, Benoit's imagined story resonates with factual accounts by Roma survivors, and points to the fact that Kanfer's novel is based on thorough research into survivor testimonies and historical accounts.

Benoit is portrayed as an outsider who feels "tolerated, not accepted" (36–37). At times, one has to wonder if he feels like an outsider because of his extraordinary past experiences, or because he is an uprooted orphan that has to learn a new language and adapt to the non-Roma American world, as well as his adoptive parents, who seem to know little about his heritage. The "Gypsyness" of Benoit was criticized by Saul Maloff, who remarks in his review: "[i]f Benoit were

not there to tell me on every page that he is in fact a Romany Ishmael, the last trustee of his people, I might have mistaken him for a Jewish intellectual . . . trying to pass for one" (733). If Maloff expected an ethnic Romani—and it would have been interesting to learn how Maloff imagined Roma ethnicity—he certainly was disappointed. Benoit's heritage transpires mostly through his childhood memories as the only link to his past. It is the factual "items," and Benoit's memories, that remind the reader constantly that he is a "Gypsy," and that the project of this novel is to address the experience of Romani victims during and after the Holocaust.

While many Roma scholars and activists define the complex Romani identity on the basis of language, the common Indian origin, and customs,[16] Kanfer's novel alludes, in part, to all three considerations, adding a parallel between African Americans and Romanies.[17] In spite of some Romani poems and proverbs, language plays a peripheral role in defining Benoit's heritage in the novel. However, when asked by Laura, one of Benoit's first love interests, what language he speaks, he tells her it is English, which prompts her question, "You sure you're a Gypsy?" (103). Laura is puzzled, having expected Benoit to speak a certain "Gypsy" language. What makes him a "Gypsy" then—the mere color of his skin? "Are you part Negro? I mean you're always tan. But you never go on vacation or anything. You *are* angry" (103). In another episode, a black prostitute inquires about his darker skin and wonders about his ancestry. Also, at the juvenile detention center, Otis, a young black man, compares the situation of Romanies to that of African Americans, and establishes a hierarchy of victimization in which Romanies are situated at the very bottom: "You're not a black man. And you're not precisely white, either. You're the only creature I ever met I feel sorrier for than me" (76). Not only is Benoit as a Romanian Romani a descendant of slaves, he also has to carry the burden of being a Holocaust survivor, the only survivor of his caravan.

The ambivalence of the attitude toward Romanies that vacillates between admiring their free spirit and condemning their lifestyle, as well as the perpetuation of positive and negative stereotypes, has led to misrepresentation and prejudice. In his dialogue with Laura, Benoit plays with exotic "Gypsies" in hopes of intriguing Laura: "[d]ark flashing eyes, tales of romantic caravans, Carmen and Don José" (103). However, Benoit's invocation of romantic Gypsy figures is juxtaposed with Laura's image of "those people in storefronts" who

she thought "were dark because they didn't wash" (103). Although this dialogue becomes a transparent attempt on the side of the narrator to deconstruct some stereotypes in a didactic way, it nevertheless provides some reliable information on Romanies, as reflected in Benoit's reply to Laura's derogatory comment: "Maybe they don't. Or maybe they descend from tribes back in India. Anyway, there's all kinds of Gypsies" (103). The Roma people are by no means to be treated as a monolith, as this interpretation would preclude the diversity and complexity of what *gadjé* erroneously call "Gypsies." When Benoit mentions that he is adopted, Laura comes up with another stereotype: "That's a switch . . . I thought the Gypsies always snatched other people's babies" (103). In a nutshell, the dialogue exposes both ignorance and misinformation on the side of non-Roma, and the perseverance of ambiguous stereotypes associated with Romanies.

The only genuine link to Benoit's Romani heritage is established through the traumatic experiences he shared with his own people in the concentration camps. Through recalled memories, the narrator depicts posttraumatic effects that survivors have to cope with for years after the liberation of the camps, which, in Benoit's case, translate into obsessive attempts to forget.[18] As Cathy Caruth explains: "The story of trauma . . . far from telling of an escape from reality—the escape from a death, or from its referential force—rather attests to its endless impact on life" (7). While Benoit rejects any talk about survival guilt as "facile palaver" (28), many incidents in his post-Auschwitz life point to deep-seated guilt and trauma that go beyond his accidental survival, and point to a coerced involvement in the death of another Romani. This, and most other traumatic camp memories, are associated with Eleazar Jassy, who, as a Nazi Kapo, was responsible for denouncing and murdering his own people. Benoit remembers an instance in which he was forced to participate in the hanging of a "disobedient" Romani. Although ordered by a Nazi officer to pull at a rope and hang this person in order to save his own life, Benoit is reluctant to do so:

> — *Don't tell me you cannot. There is a disobedient man at the end of the rope. There will be three obedient men at this end.*
> — *I'm not a man, sir. Please don't make me do this.*
> — *Come on, Ben. Don't spoil it for us.*
> — *Pretend to pull. Eleazar will do the real pulling.*
> — *No, I cannot.*

— *Damn you, pretend or we all die.*
— *Oh, God, where is God now?*
— *Pretend, Benoit.*
— *Pull! Slowly now! Don't let him up too quickly!* (72)

Pretending to pull does not incriminate Benoit entirely, but he still becomes part of this man's death and, at the same time, part of the other two men's crime. While he pretends to pull the rope, the other two men execute the order and hang the "disobedient" man without pretense. By refusing to obey the order, Benoit becomes disobedient himself, and the fear of getting caught and executed haunts him into his adult life. Although Benoit does not become a participant in the crime, as a witness, he takes on the difficult role that places him between the murderers and the murdered.

Benoit's internal tribulations are concealed, and mostly invisible to the outside world. Even his adoptive parents are denied access to his childhood memories. In order to protect him, they never ask about his past experiences. It is mostly mnemonic markers, such as in the stealing and lying episodes in the chapter "Avarice," that draw attention to unresolved issues that resurface in various forms. Stealing, for example, transforms from his "best sport" (37) into a "disease" (40) during Benoit's teenage years, and he ends up in a juvenile detention center. Benoit takes issue with the fact that Romanies were allegedly incarcerated and executed because of stealing or other criminal activities. He associates the factual story of the eighteen-year-old Zacharias Winter, who was executed for stealing a bicycle as a minor (39), with the murder of his father and his own story of a juvenile thief. "If a bicycle was enough to die for, what punishment would a copper bowl earn? . . . Maybe it was only bicycles the Germans killed for. If I could only be a German and know about such things. Thievery would not be a problem to a German" (39). The chain of associations that links Zacharias to Benoit renders Benoit's complicated relationship to his past and shows that, in spite of his rejection of any guilt feelings, the burden of survival weighs heavily in his memories and everyday life. The fact that Benoit himself stole the copper bowl, and that his father died for crimes he did not commit, forces Benoit to cope with another aspect of survivor guilt.

For Benoit, guilt and memory are inseparably associated with the exterminators and persecutors, as he calls attention to the injustice that Romani survivors suffered after the war: "[I]f we remember the

dying, we have to remember the murderers. Don't you see? If I bring all of that back, I have to resurrect the Germans. I want them dead. I want *it* dead" (138). In the case of Benoit's story, the murderers are both the Nazi perpetrators and the Romani collaborators like Eleazar, who continues his life, without remorse, under various names and assumed identities. The more severe question posed by the novel has to do with how Germany dealt with the guilt and the memory of the Romani Holocaust. According to the novel, by 1978, Germans had not acknowledged their responsibilities for the extermination of hundreds of thousands of Romanies: "The Nuremberg trials had punished no one I had heard of. The common citizens who tortured us were free" (29). As Ian Hancock points out in "Romanies and the Holocaust," "[n]obody was called to testify in behalf of the Romani victims at the Nuremberg Trials, and no war crimes reparations have ever been paid to Romanies as a people" (392). That Romanies were subjected to the most horrific medical experiments by Mengele and others, that thousands of women were sterilized, and that an estimated half a million died during the Holocaust is well known today.[19] However, the prejudices against Romanies barely changed in postwar Germany, and German authorities continued to harass them. In many cases, the same Nazi documents issued by the Institute of Race Hygiene were used after the war to register Romani survivors in Bavaria, which led to further discrimination (State Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau XVII). Moreover, Nazi perpetrators were rarely punished; on the contrary, in some cases, they were promoted after 1945.[20]

Benoit is entrapped by the facts and memories he tries to suppress, and all his actions are determined by them. In *Still Alive*, Ruth Klüger reflects on the idea of forgetting and erasing her childhood memories: "I thought, she [her aunt] wants me to get rid of the only thing that I own for sure: my life, that is, the years I have lived. But you can't throw away your life like old clothing, as if you had another outfit in your closet" (177). In Kanfer's novel, it takes Benoit many years, and seven sins, to realize that he can never master a new life because any "new" life is still made of the fabric of his heritage. Benoit sums up the dilemma of his life as follows: "My memory, my curse, stirring in the dust of ground bones" (89). On the one hand, Benoit's memories are his only link to his parents, and a way of identifying with his family and the Romani victims, but on the other hand, his memories fuel his urge to avenge their deaths according to the Romani law. Revenge and the

hunt for Eleazar Jassy become an obsession, and all other sins seem digressions from his main, self-assigned purpose in life.

The seventh sin, which brings about Eleazar Jassy's murder, is also the one that makes Benoit realize that the worst sin of all is that of forgetting. Back in Paris, living on the streets, Benoit is writing about his life struggles to his adopted son, Daniel. While he tried all his life to forget his past and the trauma of his camp experiences, he realizes that forgetting would mean losing his heritage and his story. "The road is better than the inn, my father and uncles sang. Yes, but suppose you have not only forgotten the inn but lost the road?" (235). The road back to himself also takes him back to Europe and to a lifestyle he can only remember: "I wander now, a solitary, pointed out by nannies as a madman, the last of the caravan" (285). Ironically, hiding from the police, dressed in rags, dark-skinned, and homeless, Benoit returns to the most stereotypical image of "Gypsies"—that of an outsider and beggar, living at the outskirts of European society.

Kanfer's novel was a welcome and significant initiation into exposing and understanding the plight of the other victims of Nazi genocide. It takes on a stigmatized people that endured discrimination, persecution, and murder, that were denied the right to the status of Holocaust victims, and that had nobody to speak in their behalf, and it broadcasts their story in an unprecedented way. That was 1978. While there now are more studies that document the *Porrajmos*, testimonial accounts by Holocaust survivors, and fictional novels based on real stories, Kanfer's pioneering novel opened new venues for regarding the complexity of Holocaust stories, and renders Romanies as a specific group of victims by focusing on the historical and cultural aspects of their persecution. One would like to hear that Kanfer's—along with the projects of others—contributed to an understanding of Romani history and influenced the centuries-old prejudices about Romanies in the consciousness of non-Roma.

Nonetheless, the familiar headlines about Romanies render a different contemporary reality that shows that the relationship between *gadjé* and Roma is still worrisome, and that Romaphobia continues to bear tragic consequences: Germany wants to deport east European Romanies back to Kosovo (Wood); Romanians set Roma villages on fire and murder three Romanies in the village of Hădăreni (Bridge); Nazi slogans such as "Kill the Gipsies," "Kill the Jews," and "Heil Hitler" can be seen carved in a sidewalk in the small Romanian town of Victoria (see Figures 5.1 and 5.2); neo-Nazi skinheads in Canada


Figure 5.1 © Sergio Glajar, 2007


Figure 5.2 © Sergio Glajar, 2007

demonstrate against Roma refugees and wave signs that read: "Honk if you hate gypsies," "Canada is not a trash can," and "You're a cancer to Canada"[21]; Slovak and Czech physicians are accused of compulsory sterilization of Romani women (Leidig; Dudikova); and Czechs in the town of Usti nad Labem build walls to separate themselves from the Roma people (Fürst). Romani deportation, murder, sterilizations, and ghettoization after Auschwitz are not only barbaric, atrocious, and incomprehensible, they also signify how much more has to be done to influence the individual and collective consciousness of non-Roma, whether through literature, film, or other media, and to contribute to a critical normalization of the relationship between Roma and *gadjé*.

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## NOTES

1. I would like to thank Nina Berman for her careful reading and commentary on an earlier draft of this essay, and Ian Hancock for his continued support and encouragement.
2. Jacob Glatstein, "I have never been here before," *Art from the Ashes*, ed. Lawrence Langer, 658.
3. The first fictional account of the *Porrajmos* is Menyhért Lakatos's Hungarian novel *Füstös képek* (*Smoky Pictures*) that was published in 1975 in Budapest, but is mostly unknown.
4. As Sybil Milton explains in her article "Persecuting the Survivors: The Continuity of 'Anti–Gypsyism' in Postwar Germany and Austria," already on 12 March 1949 the Cologne police issued a circular entitled "*Bekämpfung des Zigeunerwesens* (Combating the Gypsy Menace), revealing the continuity of attitudes to Himmler's 1938 order that named the Munich police bureau of Gypsy affairs as the Reichszentrale zur Bekämpfung des Zigeunerwesens" (36).
5. Gilad Margalit discusses the events of the 1980s in Germany in more detail in his study *Die Nachkriegsdeutschen und "ihre Zigeuner*," especially in Part VIII: "Die 'Entdeckung' der Zigeuneropfer und ihr Rang in der NS-Opferhierarchie" (229–72). See also Gabrielle Tyrnauer's article "'Mastering the Past': Germans and Gypsies" in Diane Tong's *Gypsies: An Interdisciplinary Reader* (100).
6. In 1985, in Richard von Weizsäcker's memorable speech on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the end of World War II, Roma and Sinti were mentioned after the Jewish victims, the peoples of the Soviet Union and Poland, and the Germans who died as a result of bombings, as prisoners and as expellees. Margalit interprets this hierarchy of victims as a clear indication that, even after their recognition as victims, Roma and Sinti had yet to figure in the category of innocent victims in the collective consciousness of the Germans. Moreover, in Margalit's analysis of the speech, Weizsäcker's hierarchy of victims reflected the discourse of the 1950s, when Germans believed that Roma and Sinti, homosexuals, the mentally ill, and people persecuted on the basis of their political and religious beliefs had, to some degree, brought their persecution upon themselves (265).
7. The report of 27 September 1979 reads as follows: "In the Nazi program of genocide, Jews were the primary victims exterminated not for what they were but for the fact that they were Jews. (In the Nuremberg Decree of 1935, a Jew was defined by his grandparents' affiliation. Even conversion to Christianity did not affect the Nazi definition.) While Gypsies were killed throughout Europe, Nazi plans for their extermination were never completed nor fully implemented. However, Nazi plans for the annihilation of

European Jews were not only completed but thoroughly implemented." ("President's Commission on the Holocaust," 22 Nov. 2007 http://xroads.virginia.edu/~CAP/HOLO/holo.htm).

8. The report does, however indirectly, acknowledge that other victims were killed on racial grounds. If the statement is referring to Romanies, it contradicts the 1970s theory that Romanies were killed on grounds of being "asocial" rather than on the basis of race.
9. Although Henry Friedlander clearly states in his study *The Origins of Nazi Genocide* that the persecution and mass murder of Romanies parallel the fate of the Jews, Guenther Lewy's more recent study, *The Nazi Persecution of the Gypsies*, claims that Europe's Roma and Sinti were never targeted for total, or even partial, extermination by the Nazis. For a comparative analysis of Nazi policies against Jews and Gypsies, see also the article by Brenda Davis Lutz and James M. Lutz, "Gypsies as Victims of the Holocaust." Lutz and Lutz argue that Romanies were also targeted for extermination by the Nazi regime. According to them, "[t]he majority of the Gypsy population in Axis Europe was beyond the direct control of the Nazi extermination machinery and, as a consequence, survival rates were higher. In contrast, the European Jews were concentrated in areas under direct German control, and therefore the proportion of fatalities was much higher" (346). Other factors such as the refusal of some countries (Bulgaria and, to some extent, Romania) to deport Jews and Romanies contributed to the higher survival rates since geographically about 77 percent of prewar Romanies were concentrated in southeastern Europe.
10. See Ferdâ Asya's article in this volume for a detailed discussion of *Winter Time*.
11. However, while Kanfer was appointed on this commission as a result of his long-time involvement with bringing Nazi perpetrators to justice, and certainly because of his novel, no Romani representatives were part of this commission. William A. Duna was the first Romani representative appointed to the Holocaust Memorial Council in 1987 by President Reagan, and the second representative, appointed by President Clinton in 1997, was Ian Hancock, Romani scholar and Professor at the University of Texas at Austin.
12. Among his "items," Kanfer quotes Lucie Adelsberger's memoir *Auschwitz: A Doctor's Story*, in which the author relates her encounters with Romanies in the "Gypsy camp" at Birkenau. Although they were all inmates living under the same conditions, Adelsberger points out the differences between Romanies and other inmates, and indicates a hierarchy in the camp: they were dark-skinned, and the women wore colorful clothes and liked to belly-dance or lie naked. She perpetuates already-existing stereotypes as she describes them as exotic, childlike creatures: "If the many dark-skinned people and the screaming colors of wild and haphazardly combined garments hadn't lent the whole scene an exotic atmosphere, we might have thought it was the eve of a village festival" (34).
13. See, for example, Daniel R. Schwarz's study *Imagining the Holocaust*. Schwarz addresses pertinent questions regarding "fictive constructs," their relevance, whether they are disrespectful to the Holocaust, and the legitimacy of texts written by those who are not Holocaust survivors or Jews (3–4).
14. See also Lucia Cherciu's article in this volume.
15. The State Museum of Auschwitz-Birkenau edited a two-volume list of Gypsy prisoners that comprises 10,849 women and 10,094 men (See State Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau).
16. Romani ethnicity is a debated topic among social scientists and activists, and none of them seem to agree on what constitutes a "real Gypsy." See, for example, David

Mayall's *Gypsy Identities 1500–2000* for a comprehensive and insightful discussion of "Who are the Gypsies?"

17. In her article "Blackening Gypsy Slavery: The Romanian Case" Mihaela Mudure compares aspects of slavery in the histories of both African Americans and Romanies. She is also participating in the Black Europe Project as the only Romanian scholar representing and writing about black Europeans/Romanians. See also Ian Hancock's study *The Pariah Syndrome*, in which he discusses the slavery history of Romanies in the Romanian Principalities until the second half of the nineteenth century, when Romani slaves (*robi*) were finally freed. See also Matéo Maximoff's *La prix de la liberté*—a novel about nineteenth-century Romani slavery in Romania.
18. In "Romanies and Sinti in the Concentration Camps" Karola Fings addresses the lifelong trauma for survivors of the camps, especially for Romani women. She quotes Maria Peter, who lost most of her relatives: "I cannot forget, even today, everything I lived through. I have nightmares regularly, I dream of all the horror that I experienced in Auschwitz and elsewhere. I wake up in the middle of the night from my dreams, my whole body trembles. These frightening dreams come back all the time, they have become a part of me that I can never be free from" (109). Fings also discusses the situation of Romani women who were sterilized at Ravensbrück—the center for mass sterilization of Romanies—and for whom "there was no liberation in 1945" (94). In his comprehensive study *Rassenutopie und Genozid*, Michael Zimmermann also discusses the situation of sterilized Romani women. In the Romani culture, having many children is considered good fortune; on the other hand, being sterile is a shame and a sign of misfortune (Zimmermann 376). See also Heike Krokowski's study *Die Last der Vergangenheit* and her analysis of the long-term effects of the Nazi persecution on German Sinti Holocaust survivors.
19. The recent film by Alexandra Isles, *Porraimos: Europe's Gypsies in the Holocaust*, focuses on Auschwitz survivors from Austria (Karl Stojka), Germany, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia. Dina Gottliebova, the Czech Jewish artist who painted portraits of Romanies on Mengele's orders, is also featured in this documentary, as she tells about encounters with her Romani subjects. Her famous portraits are exhibited in the Auschwitz Memorial Museum in Poland.
20. "For example, in 1947 Robert Ritter became the Chief Youth Physician in the municipal health office of the city of Frankfurt-on-Main" (Fings 110). Although various legal inquiries into Ritter's past were conducted, in the end, he was left alone as he was considered "Mitläufer" (hanger-on)—a category that entailed no punitive actions (Willems 266). Karola Fings also states that most SS doctors who performed mass sterilizations at Ravensbrück were never punished for destroying these women's lives. Fings mentions that, in 1956, a case was brought against Dr. Clauberg, but was abandoned nine months later (94).
21. While the six neo-Nazi skinheads were initially acquitted on a technicality, that is, because the court could not prove that the terms "Gypsies" and "Roma" are synonymous, a new trial has been recently ordered ("Justice for Roma," *The Toronto Star*).

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# Chapter 6

# Unveiling the Origin of the Romani Holocaust

## The Anarchist Tradition in *Winter Time* by Walter Winter

*Ferdâ Asya*

Over the last few decades, Holocaust history and literature have documented that the Nazi government of Germany decimated half a million Romani people for the origin of their race. While scholars are discovering the facts and exposing the details of this ghastly period in Romani history, survivors are imparting their lamentable ordeals with the intention that "no individual, should ever have to suffer what . . . [they] suffered" (Winter 123). As much as the scholarship is helpful in uncovering the degree of the inconceivable cruelties practiced on the Roma by Nazi scientists and officials, these studies are less effective than the chronicles of the survivors for creating in the human conscience the obligation to discover the true motive for the unparalleled inhumanity executed by the Nazi government on the Romani people.[1]

In recent Romani Holocaust scholarship, the argument on the reason that drove the Nazis to persecute the Romanies is split into two veins. On the one hand, the basis for the Nazi state to attempt to annihilate the Romani people was detected as racial. On the other hand, it was claimed to be purely social; Romani lifestyle was considered simply asocial by the Nazi government.[2] It is unmistakable from the definition of "part-Gypsy" and "part-Jew" formulated by Robert Ritter, the racial-hygiene expert on the Romani people, that the Nazi state perceived the Romani race at least as deleterious as the Jewish race to its subsistence in power: "[I]f two of a person's sixteen great-great-grandparents were Gypsies he was classed as part-Gypsy, and later, in 1943, could be sent to Auschwitz. . . . [A] person with one Jewish grandparent (*four* great-great-grandparents) was not generally affected by Nazi anti-Jewish legislation" (Kenrick and Puxon 67). In addition, to reinforce their persecution plan, Nazi scientists and officials used the term "asocial" to define the Romani way of life. They tried to legitimize this term by inserting it in their contrived racial theory: "[T]hey believed that behavior [so called *Asoziale*] was linked to race and that membership in some races caused deviant behavior. In the case of Gypsies, scientists and police officials in Nazi Germany believed that their alien racial traits produced criminality" (Friedlander 249). These two lines of argument throw light upon the racial and social realms of the Nazi's persecution of the Roma.

However, the intensity of the Nazi's deeds during the Holocaust discloses a more powerful motive than these ostensible reasons for the Romani genocide. Certainly, one does not need to compare the Romani Holocaust with the Jewish Holocaust to demonstrate its horrifying effect. The different reasons for which millions of people from both races perished, and the ways and numbers in which they were massacred, leave the consequences of this period in history unchanged. Yet, a comparison would be useful to unveil the Nazi's true intention for attempting to annihilate the entire Romani population.

Scholars of the Jewish Holocaust almost unanimously identify that the traditional conflict in religion between Jews and Christians spawned the Nazi's racism toward the Jewish people and the growing political power of the Jews augmented the Nazi's anti-Semitism toward them. Clearly, the Nazis felt intimidated by the intellectual, political, and economic power of the Jews and used racial superiority as a pretext to aim at eliminating them. Scholars of the Romani Holocaust, however, do not find the Nazi's policies toward the Romani

population as simply clear-cut. Apparently, the Nazi's persecution of the Roma did not ensue from a religious strife. Historically, the Romani people had no common religious creed and, over the centuries, most of them had converted to Christianity or Islam. On the face of it, they neither had the desire nor the political organization to affect the national ideology of Germany. Neither did they have an ambition to overpower Germany economically.

Obviously, for the hierarchically structured Nazi nation-state, the stateless Roma presented a deeper intimidation than a simple social irritant. Essentially, this racist government feared the anarchist spirit of the Romani race. Admittedly, it is unrealistic to imagine that, if the Nazis had not attempted to annihilate the Romanies, the Nazi government would have been overthrown by an anarchist Romani revolution. However, it is also clear that none of the reasons that the Nazis fabricated to decimate the Romanies corresponds with the realities of the Romani character and lifestyle. In fact, under the blanket of inferior racial origin and asocial conduct, the Nazis aimed at destroying the threat of the anarchist traits embedded in the Romani character and lifestyle.

The Romani people arrived in Europe in the thirteenth century before nation-states were formed and racial inequality was institutionalized in European communities.[3] At this time, the Roma's dedication to the love of freedom, equality, independence, and cooperation, which renders their existence insupportable to the nation-states of the world today, posed no impediment to their favorable reception by the European communities. In explaining the defeat of the communes by the state in the Middle Ages, the communist anarchist Peter Kropotkin advocates that "the most glorious periods in man's history are those in which civil liberties and communal life had not yet been destroyed by the state, and in which large numbers of people lived in communes and free federations" ("The State: Its Historic Role" 212).[4] The Romani people had no difficulty in blending in this environment. As Gabrielle Tyrnauer explains, "In feudal times, Gypsies had a clear niche in society. They were itinerant artisans, traders, entertainers and practitioners of healing and occult arts, particularly fortune-telling" (xi-xii). Apparently, the conflict between the guest and the host communities emerged from the steadfastness of the Roma to their anarchist tradition and lifestyle while the European communities evolved into nations. The Romanies refused to surrender their organic way of life to the artificial systems of nation-states,

which would destroy their communal spirit by imposing hierarchy, inequality, and rivalry among the members of their communities.[5] The ecological anarchist Murray Bookchin explains that the formation of the state is not a natural social process. On the contrary, "[i]t is only when coercion is *institutionalized* into a professional, systematic, and organized form of social control—that is, when people are plucked out of their everyday lives into a community and expected not only to 'administer' it but to do so with the backing of a monopoly of violence—that we can properly speak of a state" (*Remaking Society* 66).[6]

The incorruptible nature of the Romanies gradually set them apart from the Europeans and their separate existence was assumed to be a threat to the establishment of nations. Europeans used the Roma's different origin, skin color, language, and religion as an excuse to discriminate and ostracize them for their independence from the new establishments. According to Kenrick and Puxon, the "Church in western Europe generally rejected the Gypsy people even when they professed to be converts to Christianity" (21). Europeans affected skepticism about the sincerity of the Romani people's faith. However, the truth was that they were assured of the Roma's genuine commitment to Christianity, but they were never convinced that these people would serve this creed's purpose of boosting the power of developing nations: "Rome is dead, but its tradition is reborn; and the Christian church, haunted by the visions of Eastern theocracies, gives its powerful support to the new powers [nations] that seek to establish themselves" (Kropotkin, "The State: Its Historic Role" 224). The seed of racism, the institutionalized discrimination, against the Romani people was sown at this time by their persecution by the church and the state.[7]

The Roma's habitual resistance to surrender to the systems of nation-states and their reluctance to join in the institutions of governments emerge as the real motives for the Nazi government's agenda to annihilate them. Today, their determination to maintain these boundaries still continues to be the cause of discrimination and persecution against them.[8] The Romanies are wrongfully accused of being lazy, their vocational arts and crafts are considered worthless, and their traditional practice of fortune-telling is branded as sorcery. Accusations like these have trapped the Romani people in a vicious circle. Undeniably, at the dawning of the nation-states, they refused to yield to the unfair disciplines that suppressed their unbridled existence. Subsequently, their free spirit and independent lifestyle were deemed

a threat to society. Consequently, their existence was considered unacceptable.

Although data are increasingly becoming available, the efforts to establish the awareness and recognition of the Romani Holocaust still meet obstacles globally.[9] As documented by many scholars, prejudice, engendered by ignorance, and most governments' reluctance to recognize the loss of at least half a million Romani people render the propagation of knowledge in this field challenging.[10] In addition, the Roma's traditional indisposition of "keeping alive the terrible memories" (Hancock, "Responses to the Porrajmos: The Romani Holocaust" 56), their "cultural restrictions upon speaking about the dead" (57), and illiteracy prevent the survivors from relating their own experiences.[11]

Furthermore, disillusioned with the Roma's persistently discreet and relentlessly separate way of life, some scholars record that the Romanies conceal or distort the truth about their tradition, customs, and lifestyle.[12] Undeniably, facing centuries of discrimination from the societies in which they have lived, the Romani people may find no obligation to satisfy the curiosity of their disinterested observers. For centuries, having met the reluctance of outsiders to understand their unique tradition, they may also mistrust the sincerity of their inquirers. In his memoir, *Winter Time*: *Memoirs of a German Sinto who Survived Auschwitz*, Walter Winter admits that, after his horrifying experiences in the hands of Nazi officials, his trust in people, even those who are friendly, has been enervated: "What I have been through has made me distrustful. Totally distrusting. In the past I was not so" (15). Notwithstanding, his memoir confirms that, in the familial, occupational, and social life of the Roma, it is the predominance of the tradition of communist anarchism and ecological anarchism that genuinely threatened the racist policies of the Nazi state. Winter's work also uproots the fallacious contention that the Romani people were killed in ghettos and concentration camps because their alien racial traits produced criminality.

Walter Winter's memoir reveals that, throughout the centuries, despite the persecution and attempts at annihilation, the Romanies have maintained their loyalty to their tradition, the anarchist tradition. "Mutual aid" and "blood tie," the basis of communal relationships in anarchist communities, constituted the universal principles of the Romani way of life, and these principles were instilled in the Winter children. When the parents were traveling on bicycle or horse-drawn

wagon, "[i]t was like this: we children mucked in, whether it was the youngest aged only five or six, or the eldest, this was second nature to us. When the elder siblings had something to do we gave a hand where we could" (3). Evidently, mutual aid was a widespread custom in the daily life of the community. Later, when the parents traveled far and could return home only twice a week, Winter recollects, "[f]riends from my mother's side of the family, a man and a woman, kept an eye on us, cooking and looking after us" (10). Mutual aid is now a universal custom of the Romani people. Regrettably, it was lost to the populations of Europe as their communities gave way to nation-states. The theory of mutual aid was formulated by Peter Kropotkin, who based his communist anarchism on Darwin's theory of evolution. Kropotkin posits that it is not the strongest, but the smartest, who survives through evolution toward mutualism by cooperating with members of society rather than competing with them (cf. "Anarchist Communism" 53). Kropotkin explains: "[T]he fittest are not the physically strongest, nor the cunningest, but those who learn to combine so as mutually to support each other, strong and weak alike, for the welfare of the community" (*Mutual Aid* 2).

Logically, competition results from the desire to accumulate property and privation of property is the prerequisite for an anarchist society. Murray Bookchin perceives that, "it is hard for the modern mind to appreciate that the precapitalist societies identified social excellence with cooperation rather than competition; disaccumulation rather than accumulation . . . and care and mutual aid rather than profit and rivalry" (*Remaking Society* 47). He explains that the organic preliterate societies based their exchange of properties on a principle termed, by Bookchin, as *usufruct*: "Things were available to individuals and families of a community because they were needed, not because they were owned or created by the labour of a possessor" (50). The Winter family's purchase or barter of goods, only when needed, emulates the system of *usufruct*. When Winter's father wanted to travel, he bargained with a cartwright: "'If you build me a caravan and a wagon you can have my land and house'" (Winter 5). Winter records that, in 1934, they exchanged the family's old car, Winter's father's gold watch, and cash for a Cadillac (cf. 20). After the war, when the family's house was returned to them, they traded it for a Hanomag towing vehicle owned by a horse dealer (cf. 118). The Winter children adapted to the custom of *usufruct* at an early age. "Each day," Winter

recalls, "I took a basket of eggs to a shopkeeper, roughly a two-kilometre walk, and bartered them for provisions" (10–11).

Reminiscing about the close ties he had with the children of other Romani families, Walter Winter explains that he had a sense of kinship with these children as if they were all a big family. Later in life, he felt a similar connection with some people of Spain, Italy, Sri Lanka, or Turkey: "When someone was your cousin, then he was your cousin. . . . No one was allowed to say anything against him; no one could run him down. No one was permitted to say anything against the family" (8). Clearly, this sentiment survives from the tradition of "blood tie" that prevailed in Winter's ancestral anarchist communities. Murray Bookchin detects the significance of "blood tie" as the determinant of "self-identity" in preliterate societies: "It was one's affiliations by blood, be it because of a shared ancestry or shared offspring, that determined whether an individual was an accepted part of a group, who he or she could marry, the responsibility he or she had to others . . . indeed, the whole array of rights and duties that a community's members had in relation to each other" (*Remaking Society* 51).[13] The Roma's sensitivity to intermarriage can be explained by the "blood tie" which binds them to their race.[14]

Murray Bookchin denotes that the disruption of the continuity between nature and human beings took place at a time when "organic community relations, feudal or peasant in form, dissolved into market relationships" (*Post-Scarcity Anarchism* 63). He posits that the pursuit of industrialization will further destroy the earth and it "will become incapable of supporting man himself" (68). The Roma's urge to live close to nature demonstrates that they have retained the habit of living in continuity with nature, which is lost to the urbanized populations when they submitted to the lifestyle imposed on them by nation-states. Angus Fraser remarks that the Romani people "take unkindly to the confinements imposed by apartments. . . . It is as if they carry over a style close to that of the encampment, uneasy with solitude . . . and spending a good deal of time outside the house, even when at leisure" (309). Before the Nazi government devastated the social and economic structure of their life, Walter Winter's parents were horse-dealers and farmers, and the family lived in a caravan. Winter recollects: "At this time we still had horses. . . . We planted potatoes, cabbage and vegetables; we had everything at home. We ploughed our land ourselves with the horses, despite it being marshland" (9).

Over the centuries, discriminative government policies have discouraged the Romani people from taking positions in public sector and prevented them from the opportunity of proving their abilities. Indisputably, their adverse experiences with governments have created in them the wariness not only of government positions but also of personal joint ventures. Ironically, the discriminatory attitudes of governments and the public have fortified the Roma's sense of independence. When Walter Winter's father was offered a position by a horse trader to visit horse fairs for him, he refused the job as "he wanted to remain independent" (3). Nevertheless, the grip of the laws of the national socialist government of Germany made the involvement in public employment unavoidable for Winter himself. In 1938–39, he had to do compulsory labor service.[15] At the end of his term, Winter "heard that there had been a [sic] official communication: I was a Gypsy and therefore could not receive promotion" (29). Later, in the navy, even after he had become a gun captain of an anti-aircraft battery, he discovered that "there was always someone watching me, who had me under surveillance" (33). In the navy, he faced the same racism as he did in the labor service: "I was the only one not to be promoted, just as in Labour Service" (34).

Fortunately, the Roma's hereditary custom of working in continuity with nature and their natural abilities and talents have provided them with a rich resource to survive independently. Regrettably, they continuously face hostility toward the occupations they have undertaken. The origin of this antagonism rests in the nascence of the state. Naturally, when they arrived in Europe, the Romanies excelled in their traditional vocation of arts and crafts such as smithing, metalworking, and basket weaving. However, the rivalry by the guilds, to which they were not accustomed, pushed them out of these professions. Moreover, the industrialization of nations trivialized the artistic worth of handicrafts and took away these occupations from the Romani people who were, as many tribal peoples, in Murray Bookchin's statement, used "to [giving] soapstone, marble, bronze, and other materials, a 'voice,' as it were, an expression that realized its latent capacity for form" (*Remaking Society* 188). The governments, which are still blaming the Romani people with laziness, have closed all the avenues for them to practice their traditional vocations for subsistence. Walter Winter relates: "My parents' family had been artistes and showmen or travelling entertainers as they were once called. Sadly, the relevant

documents were taken from us during the Nazi period and they cannot be procured again" (4–5).

Prohibiting fortune-telling under the guise of maintaining social security vividly typifies the way in which the state conceals its fear of losing social and political power to the Roma. Fortune-telling is both an intuitive calling and an occupation handed down to the Romani people traditionally by their ancestors. Definitely because of this reason, it is the most vituperatively targeted Romani occupation by the state. Marlene Sway states that, while she was researching for her book, which was published in 1988, "fortunetelling by palmistry or any other method was illegal in California" (8). Apparently, with magic and intuition, the fortune-teller gains a superiority over even the most hardheaded and tough-minded person.[16] Indisputably, the state's strife with the fortune-teller is a deep-seated matter of power. Embodying the image of the "shaman," the fortune-teller represents to the state a puissance over the psychological, social, and political make-up of the society. While explaining the emergence of the shaman in the development of hierarchy in the life of primordial society, Murray Bookchin explains:

> The shaman is a strategic figure in any discussion of social hierarchy because he (and, at times, she, although males predominate in time) solidifies the privileges of the elders. . . . He professionalizes power. He makes power the privilege of an elect few, a group that only carefully chosen apprentices can hope to enter, not the community as a whole. . . . Perhaps more significant than this distinction is the fact that the shaman is the incipient State personified. (*The Ecology of Freedom* 83–84)[17]

Thus, visualizing the shaman in the person of the fortune-teller, the state deems the Roma its most prominent rival. For the state, the fortune-teller epitomizes the ancestral moral and social strength of the Romani race. The outlawing of fortune-telling as sorcery, even in the present time, is the ultimate representation of the state's fear of losing its place to the anarchist spirit and lifestyle of the Romanies. The state places the fortune-teller—possibly a Romani woman—in the last rank of the socially manufactured ladder called hierarchy, misrepresents its dread of her power as criminality ensued from the inferiority of her race, and legitimizes the suppression of fortune-telling as state policy.[18]

The Nazi state's policy was a power politics of oppression, persecution, and mass murder beneath the facade of a labyrinthine set of racial

charts and rules and a bizarre claim that the Roma are susceptible to pollution and crime. Noticeably, these claims are fabricated deviously to falsify the Romani image, particularly in the areas of their life that are exemplary. Indeed, the true Romani character and lifestyle can be drawn out by deciphering the false images that the states have devised about the Romani people. For example, the racial hygiene laws of the Nazi government is a calumny of the "ritual purity" that the Roma inherited from India: "The Gypsy way of life, called *romanipen* or *romańija*, involves, among other things, the observation of rules governing one's state of personal cleanliness. . . . [These rules] include restrictions upon contact with other people or animals, the preparation of food, the washing of the body, crockery, or clothing, and so on" (Hancock, "Introduction" 5–6).[19] As Europeans were overcome by racism at the birth of nation-states, the cursory boundaries of race denoted that dark complexion equaled uncleanliness. Gradually, this biased opinion distorted European's perception of the Roma. Later, their negative outlook was exacerbated by the Nazi government's condemnation of the Romani people: "The Nazis added to the general public's vague feelings of mistrust and dislike of the Gypsies the racist view that Gypsies are hereditarily infected beings, of unworthy, primitive, alien blood, necessarily involved in asociability [sic] and criminality" (Wytwycky 30). Undeniably, this unconscionable accusation further prejudiced the common people and, eventually, it was accepted by them as a fact. Consequently, it was easy for the Nazi state to decree a racist law out of it. In *Winter Time*, Walter Winter's recollections are the working out of the Nazi state's misrepresentation of the Roma's physical traits to instill in the public a prejudice against them. Winter explains: "When you entered a town you had the feeling of being observed and looked at strangely by people. We dressed no differently from others, but we were dark skinned. You could really sense the looks boring into our backs. . . . When people saw a person of dark appearance they immediately saw a Gypsy" (24).

Walter Winter's account of the discrimination and persecution he endured from his early youth to his later years exemplifies the Nazi state's influence over the general public's antagonistic attitude toward the Romani people. When the Nazis failed to use racism to set people against the Romanies, they applied force to compel people to ostracize and persecute them. Winter relates that the Nazi coercion came in between his father and the Association of Fairground Workers: "[A] man named Aalhorn from Oldenburg stood at the executive table in

SA uniform. Previously he had been pleased when my father had stood him a drink. Now my father had to leave" (27). Harassed by neighbors who were brainwashed by the Nazis, ousted by friends who were constrained by the Nazi government's regulations, and persecuted by the institutionalized organs of the government such as the police who drove them from town to town, Winter admits: "I must in all honesty say they were dreadful times" (14).

Over the years, governments have been securing public support to establish an unfounded claim that the Romani people steal goods. Deprived of having an education, prevented from working in their traditional occupations, and ostracized by the societies in which they inhabit, the impoverished Romani population may resort to taking what they need: "Finally, ask primitive man if it is right to take food in the tent of a member of the tribe during his absence. He will answer that, if the man could get his food for himself, it was very wrong. On the other hand, if he was weary or in want, he ought to take the food where he finds it" (Kropotkin, "Anarchist Morality" 90). Walter Winter's account of his "having got the better of the SS" (97) by stealing potatoes from the SS in Auschwitz, to save himself and his friends from starvation, is symbolic of his use of the anarchist morality to counter the governments' accusation of the Romani people of stealing after deliberately attempting to starve them.

In comparison to the established state, the organized military power, and the vast population of Germany, the absence of state, military resource, and manpower of the Roma may make the claim inconceivable that the Nazi state considered the Romani race a threat to its existence. However, despite these facts, history proves that the German state has witnessed Romani heroism several times. When the campaign against the Romani people in the Netherlands developed, they gathered their forces together for armed resistance and, in 1722, a thousand of them fought a battle against regular German soldiers (cf. Kenrick and Puxon 47; Hancock, "Gypsy History in Germany and Neighboring Lands" 12). The Romani people were placed together in the concentration camps not "out of any humanitarian motive or desire to bestow any 'privilege' but rather because the Gypsies became completely unmanageable when separated from their family members" (Hancock, "Responses to the Porrajmos: The Romani Holocaust" 48).[20] It is also known that the Roma did not accept murder in the concentration camps easily. After the carnage of 2,987 Romani people on the night of 2–3 August 1944 in Auschwitz,

the next morning, the "vacant camp was strewn with broken pots and torn clothing, reflecting the fact that the Sinti and Roma fought to the end" (Burleigh and Wippermann 126). During, what he thought, the last moments of his life, Walter Winter voiced the indestructible courage of all the Romani people: "'When they decide to gas us, I'm not getting onto the lorry. . . . We'll try to grab a revolver or machine gun from one of them. We'll mow down the SS and then kill ourselves'" (84).

Both history and Walter Winter's personal account show that, under the cover of racial origin and asocial conduct, the real motive for the Romani Holocaust was the anarchist traits in the Roma's character, which were tantamount to freedom, equality, and independence, and their way of life, which rested on a stateless society. Definitely, these characteristics in the Romani people's character and lifestyle posed a threat to the existence of the Nazi state, which was founded on racism, inequality, and hierarchy.

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## NOTES

1. David Crowe and John Kolsti's edition, *The Gypsies of Eastern Europe*, includes a detailed chronology of Romani history from 1407 to 1990 and several articles on the experiences of the Romani people in Eastern Europe. Angus Fraser's *The Gypsies* provides information on the Roma's origin, migrations, and survival in Europe. Ian Hancock's *The Pariah Syndrome* records the history of the Romanies from their departure from India to their contemporary situation in Europe and North America with a chapter, "German Treatment of Gypsies in the Twentieth Century." Donald Kenrick and Grattan Puxon's *The Destiny of Europe's Gypsies* delineates Romani history before, during, and after the Nazi period. Gabrielle Tyrnauer's *Gypsies and the Holocaust: Bibliography and Introductory Essay* contains information on the persecution of the Romani

people and a comprehensive bibliography on several aspects and periods of the Romani history.

2. In *The Nazi Persecution of the Gypsies*, Guenter Lewy argues that race was not the primary factor for the persecution of the Roma by the Nazi government; rather, the asocial conduct and criminal behavior of the Romani people played an important role in the decision of the Nazis to annihilate them. Lewy's contention is challenged by Ian Hancock in "Responses to the Porrajmos: The Romani Holocaust." Hancock's well-documented essay traces the racial motives of the Nazis. Hancock's essay and chronology, "Gypsy History in Germany and Neighboring Lands: A Chronology Leading to the Holocaust and Beyond," rectify the misrepresentation of the Romani Holocaust.
3. It is beyond the scope of this article to examine the inextricably intertwined evolution of race and nation-state. For race and nation as the determinant factors of the composition of societies since the sixteenth century, see Philip Yale Nicholson, *Who Do We Think We Are? Race and Nation in the Modern World*.
4. See Peter Kropotkin, "Anarchist Communism: Its Basis and Principles." He states that "there remains among most impartial men a well-founded fear of the . . . 'popular State' being as great a danger to liberty as any form of autocracy if its government be entrusted" (50).
5. Kropotkin's summary explains the reason for the refusal of the Roma to be dominated by the state: "The role of the nascent state in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in relation to the urban centers was to destroy the independence of the cities; to pillage the rich guilds of merchants and artisans; to concentrate in its hands the external commerce of the cities and ruin it; to lay hands on the internal administration of the guilds and subject internal commerce as well as all manufacturers totally to the control of a host of officials—and in this way to kill industry and the arts; by taking over the local militias and the whole municipal administration, crushing the weak in the interest of the strong by taxation, and ruining the countries by wars" ("The State: Its Historic Role" 246–47).
6. For the loss of organic community life in communes to the artificially structured societies in nation-states, see Peter Kropotkin, "The State: Its Historic Role" (211–64); and Murray Bookchin, "Hierarchies, Classes, and States" (41-73) in *Remaking Society*.
7. See Henry R. Huttenbach's essay, "The Romani Pofiajmos: The Nazi Genocide of Gypsies in Germany and Eastern Europe," for the "age-old discriminatory practices and attitudes" (33), since the fifteenth century, as the basis for the Nazi's racist policies.
8. See Kenrick and Puxon, *The Destiny of Europe's Gypsies* (49–51), for assimilation and Maria Theresa's policies of mass assimilation of the Roma in Hungary in the eighteenth century. See also Ian Hancock, "Gypsy History in Germany and Neighboring Lands: A Chronology to the Holocaust and Beyond" (13).
9. A number of publications provide information on the Romani character and lifestyle in various parts of the world. David M. Crowe's *A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia* delineates Romani history in Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Russia, and Yugoslavia. Danuta Czech's *Auschwitz Chronicle 1939–1945* consists of registers of the Gypsy Family Camp in Birkenau with accounts of men and women prisoners from 26 February 1943 to 21 July 1944. Hermann Langbein's *People in Auschwitz*, a study of Auschwitz, was written drawing on the writer's personal experiences of the camp, and it has many references to the Romani people who were imprisoned and murdered in the camp. Sybil Milton, in "Persecuting the Survivors: The Continuity of 'Anti-Gypsyism' in Postwar Germany and Austria," describes the hardships that the Roma are still facing in contemporary society in these two countries in Europe. Judith Okely's *The Traveller Gypsies* provides a social anthropological approach to the Romani way of life in Britain and Ireland. *Gypsies, Tinkers and Other Travellers*, edited by Fernham

Rehfisch, includes articles on Romani traditions in North America and Europe. Mostly based on continuous contact with the Romani people, Anne Sutherland's *Gypsies: The Hidden Americans* contains information on the social and economic lives of the Romani people in the United States. Diane Tong's *A Multidisciplinary Annotated Bibliography* covers many disciplines such as art, folklore, history, linguistics, psychology, and sociology.

10. The exact number of the Romani loss in the Holocaust is indeterminable. Based on Ulrich König's inference, Ian Hancock points out the impossibility of estimating the loss accurately. The approximate estimation ranges between 500,000 to one million (cf. Hancock, "Responses to the Porrajmos: The Romani Holocaust" 49–50).
11. See Kenrick and Puxon, *The Destiny of Europe's Gypsies*, especially for the persecution of the Romanies after their arrival in Europe; and Ian Hancock, "Responses to the Porrajmos: The Romani Holocaust," for the contemporary prejudice against the Roma.
12. For example, Marlene Sway, in *Familiar Strangers: Gypsy Life in America*, expresses her gratitude to "Little George, an adolescent Kalderash boy" (ix), for serving her as a "clearinghouse of information": "When I suspected that other Gypsies had given me erroneous information or conflicting messages, Little George would always correct it" (x). Sway states that Little George always explained her the "Gypsy logic behind disinformation" (x).
13. For blood tie as a factor of community responsibility in pre-class societies, see Murray Bookchin, *The Ecology of Freedom*. Bookchin explains the social function that the "blood oath" had imposed on the human mutual obligations before the hierarchal class system was born (cf. 85–86).
14. For marriage among the Roma, see Anne Sutherland, "Marriage" (206-54) in *Gypsies: The Hidden Americans*.
15. "The National Socialist Compulsory Labour Service Law (Reichsarbeitsdienstpflichtgesetz) of 26 June 1935 committed young men and women between the ages of 18 and 25 to a compulsory six-month Labour Service. The Reichsarbeitsdienst was a semi-military organization" (Winter 125).
16. Kenrick and Puxon quote a story relating that Hitler hated the Romani people because they foretold his downfall. He decided to exterminate them so that he could break their evil power (81).
17. See Murray Bookchin, "Hierarchies, Classes, and States" (58-65) in *Remaking Society* for the shift of power from the elders through the big man to the shaman. See also Peter Kropotkin, "The State: Its Historic Role" (217–18), for the chief, sorcerer, and shaman as leaders in the primitive society.
18. See Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann, "Barbarism Institutionalized: Racism as State Policy" (44–73) in *The Racial State: Germany 1933–1945*.
19. Ian Hancock identifies the origin of the Romani people "in the Rajput population in northwestern India . . . (mainly Aryan-speaking Dravidian) peoples" ("The East European Roots of Romani Nationalism" 134). For the origin of the Roma, see also Ian Hancock, "Responses to the Porrajmos: The Romani Holocaust" (47); and Susan Tebbutt, *Sinti and Roma: Gypsies in German-Speaking Society and Literature* (xiii).
20. Ian Hancock quotes Ulrich König in *Sinti und Roma unter dem Nationalsozialismus* (129–33).

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# Chapter 7

# The Deportation to Transnistria and the Exoticization of the Roma in Zaharia Stancu's Novel *The Gypsy Tribe*

*Lucia Cherciu*

The novel *Şatra*, translated into English as *The Gypsy Tribe*, deals with an often silenced past: it focuses on the ethnic minority of Gypsies in Romania during World War II, but never calls the members of the tribe by their name. In the Romanian original, the author does not use the words "Gypsies" or "Roma"; instead, he describes their physiognomy, talks about their eyes, or uses euphemisms. During communism, indeed, the name Gypsies[1] rarely appeared in print. Even in the census, the members of a numerous ethnic community were included under the category of *naţionalităţi conlocuitoare* (coinhabiting nationalities). The invisibility of the Roma within cultural and literary representations during communism is, to some extent, reiterated in the scarcity of texts about the treatment of Gypsies during the Romani Holocaust and the camps in Transnistria. It is only today that historical texts start to go back to the war documents, and monographs attempt to inscribe the historical and social dimensions of the ethnic group of Roma in Romania. In 1968, when the novel

*Şatra* was published, the topic of Gypsies was often taboo, and the author takes many precautions in describing the deportation of a nomadic tribe. While the novel claims to offer a critique of the conditions and the destiny of the Gypsies sent to Transnistria, it perpetuates stereotypes and, thus, contributes to reinforcing the prejudice against the Roma minority. Today, the reader needs to recontextualize the novel and uncover the practices of exoticization and romanticization often used by the author to the detriment of historical fact.

Writing about the Roma means engaging in a dialogue and contributing to "the idea of constructed identity," discussed by David Mayall in his book *Gypsy Identities.* Canonical texts can often be "influential in shaping public opinion of the group" (23). Mayall points out that "notions of the true and pure Romany are now generally recognized as racialized and romanticized constructs" (31). In this respect, the portrayal of the Roma in Zaharia Stancu's novel offers such a one-dimensional view that presents the nomadic Roma as a unified and homogeneous world. Mayall believes that the "majority society manipulates identity by means of discriminatory legislation and through media representations" (31). Similarly, literature serves to perpetuate stereotypes, and can often contribute to the stigmatization of the Roma. While memorializing the atrocities of World War II, the novel continues in the tradition of representing the Roma as different, exotic, and, more importantly, in the process of being extinguished because of the war and the pressures of change.

Because *Şatra* is a canonical text, it became one of the main ways Romanians learned about the Romani Holocaust. In his excellent article, "Duty and Beauty, Possession and Truth: 'Lexical Impoverishment' as Control," Ian Hancock demonstrates that texts have the ability to construct identity when it comes to the representation of the minority: "The manipulation by societies in power of the identities of subordinate groups is achieved in many ways. One such way is through discriminatory legislation, such as that enacted against the Romani people in almost every land, including the United States. Another is through media representation, both factual and fictional. This last category, the portrayal of Gypsies in poetry, film, and novels, is the most effective in establishing such negative feelings because they are absorbed subliminally by children and adults" (115). Whether it creates positive or negative stereotypes, literature ultimately engenders reality and influences the opinions of its readers. Thus, in his novel, Zaharia Stancu not only gives voice to the prejudices of his

time, but feeds them and creates some of his own. The novel was widely read from the very beginning, and criticism has recognized its status among his strongest work, thereby assigning it recognition and value. Although the Romani Holocaust was not studied in school, for decades, *Şatra* has become a source of information about the atrocities of World War II through its portrayal of a nomadic Romani community. At the same time, it has contributed to proliferating a prejudiced view of the Roma that is echoed in some of the literary criticism it has generated.[2]

In this context, the romanticization of Gypsies refers to the systematic process of simplifying reality to make it fit into readily available models. Romanticizing the Roma means utilizing allegory at the expense of history; myth at the expense of reality; types rather than individuals. Characters become bigger-than-life heroes, evil villains, or, in the case of women, inspired fortune-tellers or ravishing beauties. The plot favors the sensational, the improbable, and the coincidence. The description falls back onto readily available stereotypes that the majority tends to summon when thinking about Gypsies, including horses and carts, dancing bears, gold and jewelry, and hedonistic pleasures.

Its corollary, the exoticization of the Roma, implies that the author emphasizes differences in representing the members of a minority. According to this view, Gypsies embody the fears of the majority population. They are depicted as physically different, and their bodies are racialized through a rather obsessive description of the color of their skin or the magic beauty of their eyes, for example. Exoticized Roma are seen as proud heroes who are hard to control, or oversexualized women with magic powers. The Roma are often portrayed as living on the margins of society, challenging and, sometimes, threatening its norms. In social terms, Gypsies are often criminalized, whereby they are seen as asocial people who break the law. Whether poor or lavishly rich, the Roma are represented on the periphery of society.

It is such destructive stereotypes about the Roma community that are perpetuated in *Şatra* to the extent that the novel does a disservice to the political portrayal of the Roma. In describing the nomads as a homogeneous, a historical group that is not aware of its own predicament, at the mercy of the historical forces of the time, but blind to its own historical determination, the novel disempowers the Roma. It presents them as victims of history who have no control of their fate. Zaharia Stancu often replaces history with myths and allegories. For

him, myth can become a strategy of appropriation, whereby the majority projects its own wishes of assimilation onto the minority.

Published during communism by a writer who is considered either a sell-out to the system, or one of its most successful representatives, the novel does not mirror a social, political, and historical portrait of Roma as much as it produces a text, constructs an ethnic identity, and, in the process, reflects the stereotypes and the prejudices of the late 1960s in communist Romania.[3] Trying to bypass the rules of censorship of the communist regime, the novel offers a political form of evasion. One could argue that the nostalgic perspective on the destiny of the Roma, as represented in the novel, does not merely reflect the fate of the Roma during the deportation to Transnistria, but it also represents the regime's view of the Roma in the late 1960s in communist Romania. The stereotypes of the novel reflect the position of the party at the time, and the majority's preference of assimilation over integration of the Roma. Stancu's elegiac tone in the novel in dealing with doom, death, and the disappearance of a way of life, with its unique order, tradition, and system of laws, could be explained as an awareness of the party view on the nomadic Roma and its intention to assimilate them to the norms of the majority. Since the English translation by Roy MacGregor-Hastie in 1973[4] is out of print, a synopsis helps to understand the novel better. Although it does not mention any specific year, the action takes place in 1942 during World War II, and follows the fate of a Gypsy tribe or *shatra* banished by the authorities, represented merely through gendarmes. The novel is written from the point of view of the Gypsies[5] themselves, who do not know who sent them across the river to the east of Romania, and are not aware why. Chronologically, the novel spans one year, and the community has to endure a long, cold winter. Initially, the tribe is made up of ninety-nine persons, but because some die of starvation and internal fights, and a few women die in childbirth, the number keeps going down till, in the end, the tribe has about forty people, or, six wagons left out of thirty (281). On the way, gendarmes from various towns direct them along, and ask the Roma for money and bribes. At the same time, members of the authorities often refer to waves of other Roma communities forced to travel to their isolation and perish.

Hym Basha, the chief of the tribe, married to Blind Ma, exerts his authority over his five sons and all the members of the community, and sometimes whips them to settle arguments or regain control. Smaller segments of the plot include a love triangle between Lysandra, her

husband Gosu, and her lover Ariston. The two men end by fighting with whips and knives to decide who will win Lysandra. In the end, Gosu kills Ariston, and Lysandra stays behind to die on Ariston's tomb. Hym Basha's son Alimut marries the young and beautiful Kera, but on their wedding night, she is raped by four strangers (apparently *gadjés*), while he is beaten up, tied to a pole, and forced to watch.

On their way to Transnistria, the community is often harassed by the authorities, and equally by deserters and various soldiers they meet, who are after the Gypsies' money, horses, or food. In fact, the novel tends to create a Manichean distinction between inside and outside, whereas many individuals outside of the Gypsy community become sources of oppression who are trying to cheat them out of their few possessions, or otherwise take advantage of them. At the same time, there are a few individuals who support them, such as Mr. Ax, who conducts reliable business with them, and people on the road who seem to know of the fate of the Gypsies.

Once they arrive at their destination, the Gypsies are left alone with simple directions: "Until you get orders to the contrary, you'll live here. You are not to go more than three miles from the wagons. You'll have to get along as well as you can, with God's help. No villages or towns around. And any attempt you make to get away will mean you'll be shot. Without trial. Is that clear?" (119). Once they settle in a place far away from any other community, and behind the front, the Gypsy tribe is left to their own devices. They spend a year east of the Dniester, in the wilderness, cut off from the world and any form of support. Sometimes emissaries of the outside world come in seeking gold, their horses, food, drink, cigarettes, or women. Other times, outsiders come in to negotiate and offer them food in exchange for gold.

As the winter gets colder and their provisions scarcer, the community starts to fall apart, Hym Basha progressively loses his power over his group, and the Gypsies split into groups and fight each other. Several times during the novel, they engage in grotesque brawls that include everyone—men, women, and children—leading to an episode in which the Mammoth, an unruly woman, injures a boy named Bus by using him as a weapon: "In the brawl she had used him as a club and he was unconscious, in a faint, or dead. A trickle of blood came from his lips" (222). After graphic descriptions of fights between them, for power or over women, the Gypsies end up eating their bears, horses, and donkeys, and feeding on wild animals. In a scene

impressive in its symbolism, Hym Basha commits suicide and the rest of the tribe fight to take his place. The Mammoth and her husband kill a wounded soldier to take his gold watch, his teeth caps, and his medals. In spring, when the front comes closer, the substantially diminished tribe heads back west, with people pulling the wagons instead of horses, and the couple Alimut and Kera seem to offer a promise of reconciliation.

This synopsis indicates that Zaharia Stancu uses myth and parable at the expense of historical fact. *Şatra* is a political text that has the power to inscribe reality and make things happen with words at the same time as it obscures the historical facts during World War II. On a positive note, the novel creates a space for representing minorities in literature, and draws attention to the atrocities of the war. However, the representation of Gypsies incriminates the community and often presents them in an unfavorable light, so many acts committed in moments of desperation ultimately reflect on the image of Roma in general.

To understand the novel better, the reader needs to go back to war documents and try to recontextualize the historical dimension of the Gypsy Holocaust in Transnistria. This is a timely enterprise, given the fact that, recently, historians have started to reconstruct the Gypsy history. While much has been written about the Jewish Holocaust, the monograph on the Gypsy Holocaust has yet to be written. Reading the novel with an awareness of the constructed, artificial, and ever-changing character of the concept of Roma identity, the present analysis tries to favor primary sources, going back to collections of archives about what happened to the Roma during World War II. The historical research that has started to appear after 1989 helps to reinscribe the deportation of Roma across the Dniester. In his excellent book, *The Holocaust in Romania*, Radu Ioanid dedicates a chapter to the Romani Holocaust, alleging that during World War II, Gypsies had a similar fate with the Jews, but while many studies have been written about the latter, attention has yet to be paid to reconstructing the history of the Roma.

The persecution of the Roma began when Marshal Antonescu asked for a census of the Gypsies who lived in Romania. His order of 27 May 1942 asks for the numbers of Roma to be included on lists. In this early document, the authorities operate with the distinction between nomadic and sedentary Roma. While the first category of nomads seems to be very clear, the second category works through a

process of criminalization[6] and homogenization of the sedentary Roma. The following paragraph foreshadows the confusion, the mistakes, and the excesses that were committed in the process of following out the order:

> This is to inform you that the Ministry of Internal Affairs needs to know in an absolutely precise manner the number of Gypsies from the following two categories:
>
> Nomadic Gypsies (*căldărari, lingurari* etc).
>
> Sedentary Gypsies, that is only those that although are not nomads, have received sentences and are recidivists or have no means of survival or a precise employment to allow them an honest way of earning their living, and thus constitute a burden and a danger for the public order. All of these will be listed together with their families, that is: husband, wife, underage and of age children, if they live under the same roof. (Nastasa and Varga, eds., *Minorităţi Etnoculturale* 273)

This description is very vague, and it makes it sound as if most sedentary Roma have a criminal record, thus contributing to the criminalization of the Roma. Given the diversity of the Roma's means of employment, with its variations between stable, seasonal, or daily labor and special crafts, this definition, in one sentence, seals the fate of the Roma. The whole order is unrealistic, since the very next paragraph requires that "To this purpose, the members of the police, together with the gendarmerie, will carry out a census of all these Roma, in a single day, specifically on May 31, 1942" (274). The request is absurd given the fact that many Roma had no papers, were not legally married, and some of them had never been counted in any census, so planning to carry out such a task during only one day is just a pretense of objectivity, covering up the clear fact that the Roma were not sent to Transnistria because they were criminals, unemployed, or homeless, but simply because they were Roma.

The following order, dated May 24, 1942, reinforces the distinction between nomadic and sedentary, making special provisions for some of the sedentary Roma: "There will be classified the categories to be excepted (those with useful employment)" (276). After describing the nomadic and sedentary Roma, another paragraph collates the two under the sign of parasitism and criminalization: "Later on, depending on the possibilities of transportation, first all the urban centers and then the rural centers will be cleared of all the parasitic,

retrograde, and dishonest Gypsies, who have so far been tolerated and allowed to take shelter through a guilty carelessness by the leaders of our public affairs" (276). Whether nomadic or sedentary, all the Roma are described as criminals with whom authorities had put up for too long.

The reaction to this impossible task of counting the Roma is expressed in July 1942, when Dr. Manuila responds that such a census is hard to do, stating that

> Right now there isn't available such a statistics regarding Gypsies, as Marshal Antonescu requests. Before the general census from 1930, in the Romanian statistics there was no such term as "*ţigan*." In 1930 Gypsies show up for the first time in the Romanian statistics. Institutions required the exact records of Gypsies, but these records were not done for many reasons. The first one was that authorities themselves refused to name someone as *ţigan*, this being considered a pejorative term. Thus, even the Gypsies who were easy to identify were sometimes left alone because of feelings of condescension or compassion. The second reason is that in many cases—especially related to interracial mixes, the Gypsy ethnic character could not be established with certitude. Often those who are named *ţigani* protest the term energetically and consider themselves insulted. (*Minorităţi Etnoculturale* 296)

This confusion in terms of ethnic background was reflected in the process of carrying out Marshal Antonescu's orders that both settled and nomadic Roma be first counted and then seized in the streets.

Whether considered nomads or "asocials" (Ioanid 225), Gypsies were sent east to Transnistria, between the rivers Dniester and Bug. Radu Ioanid shows that about twenty-five thousand people were rounded up in the streets. Some of them were seized and taken as they were, with no provisions or luggage, while some nomadic Gypsies were allowed to take their carts and horses, and were able to travel this way. Marshal Antonescu came up with the idea of sending Gypsies across the river to Transnistria, claiming that many armed robbers who broke into houses were Gypsies, and that this action was meant to protect the Romanian population.

The transportation of the Roma was not well organized, and no arrangements were made to house them or help them settle once they arrived. In her article "Gypsy Deportations from Romania to Transdniester [Transnistria] 1942–44," Michele Kelso follows the same distinction between nomadic and settled Roma, arguing that, for the

first, who traveled in their carts, the journey to Transnistria took one to three months (104). According to the memories of the former Mayor of Oceacov, quoted by Kelso, the fifteen thousand Gypsies who arrived during the first week "were in an incredible state of misery. . . . There were a lot of old people, women, and children. In the wagons there were paralyzed older persons well over 70 years of age, blind and on the verge of death. The great majority of them were naked in rags. I spoke with them. They were protesting, they screamed, they cried, they ranted: why were we arrested and sent to Transdniester?" (105)The authorities organized the transportation for the sedentary Gypsies, who were sent by train on a "five-day ride" that was much longer. They were offered bread and allowed to take some luggage. Their property left behind was administered by the National Center of Romanianization (110). Some of the Roma who could have stayed home insisted on following their relatives so that they did not remain behind alone. Others were promised that they would be given houses and land, so they were willing to leave.

Once they were settled, both nomadic and sedentary Gypsies were required to work, and food provisions were granted primarily to those who were able to work. Ioanid shows that "the number of Gypsies in Transnistria diminished rapidly due to executions, starvation and epidemics" (230). Given the unorganized and rushed process of seizing the evacuees, there were many families whose members were soldiers in the Romanian army, or had papers that proved they had served and had been wounded in the war. Some of them had property, good jobs, and owned businesses, so the claim that they were deported because they were nomads did not make any sense. In a way, the diversity of the population that was evacuated testifies to the great variety of the Roma professions and the heterogeneity of their social condition.

Some of them were settled in places previously owned by Ukrainians, and many of them perished during the winter because of the lack of food, the unbearable cold, and the epidemics of typhus. Overall, the deportations of the Roma were less consistent than of the Jews, and "more arbitrary" (Ioanid 236). There was no official legislation that directed what was to happen to the Roma, and secret documents reveal that the orders came from Marshal Antonescu, who had the idea of deportation in the first place. The Report of the Romanian War Crimes Commission relates that "[t]ens of thousands of defenseless Gypsies were herded together in Transnistria. Over half of them were struck by the typhus epidemics. The gendarmerie practiced

unprecedented terror; everybody's life was uncertain; tortures were cruel; the commanders lived in debauchery with beautiful Gypsy women and maintained personal harems. Approximately 36,000 Gypsies fell victim to Antonescu's fascist regime" (qtd. in Crowe 135). Michelle Kelso quotes several witness accounts that add vivid details to the records of war. Vasile Ioniţă, a seminomadic Gypsy, describes the hardships of the nomadic Gypsies in Transnistria: "They made earth houses and had to live there. So terribly were those people living that they reached the point of eating their horses for which they cared so much. In those days horses were so sacred, especially for them as they were nomads. They had long hair, and different, more colorful clothing. For seminomads like us, it was much easier to live than for the nomads who were mistreated because they were seen as different" (qtd. in Kelso 119). The winter of 1942–43 was hard for the evacuees, who were suffering from cold and hunger. Although there were stipulations that persons who worked would be fed, there was little work available in the first place. The scarce, rationed food consisted of bread, and sometimes even uncooked corn meal.

During August 1944, Gypsies were either sent back to Romania or left to figure out a way of their own to reach their homes. Some had to leave ailing old relatives and little children behind. As Kelso concludes, "Lists of survivors compiled by constables show that approximately 6,000 out of 25,000 Gypsies deported to Transdniester [Transnistria] returned to Romania" (130). Additionally, some who left on their own had contacted typhus and later infected members of the population with whom they came into contact. Some scholars disagree with the number of Roma survivors. For instance, Viorel Achim (*Deportarea Rromilor*) states that the number of the 6,000 who survived was counted only after part of the Roma had already left home on their own. But even he estimates that half of the 25,000 died in Transnistria (79).

During the deportation, many family members wrote letters on behalf of some of the evacuees, trying to prove the innocence of loved ones and save them. The letters addressed to the authorities point out that the population of Roma at the time was very heterogeneous, diverse, and complex in terms of physiognomy, and economic, social, and political background. Moreover, many of the young men had been required to enroll in the army, and scores of letters testify that Roma were treated like Romanian citizens when they fought both in the First and Second World Wars, but were ostracized when defined as

criminals outside of the law. These letters speak for the thousands of Roma who were good citizens, paid their taxes, were employed in steady jobs, and owned property. Some of the authors of the letters try to distinguish themselves from the criminalized category, thus incriminating their own people. For instance, one of the authors asks that he not be "included on a dishonorable list that contains only shiftless people and tramps—"*oameni fără rost şi haimanale*" (Nastasa and Varga, eds., *Minorităţi Etnoculturale* 467).

Viorel Achim (2000) tries to offer a larger picture, comparing the situation in Romania with other countries: "The Gypsies who were not registered under the category of those considered dangerous and undesirable, that is, their great majority, were not affected by the politics of the Antonescu regime. They did not lose their citizen rights—as happened to the Jewish population of the country—and their property didn't become the object of the Romanianization politics—as happened to the Jews" (69). However, while the treatment of the Jewish people has been often recorded and interpreted, history has yet to be written and documents have yet to be uncovered in order to bring to light the treatment of the Roma during World War II. Recording their history is important given the fact that, during the reign of communism, the Roma ethnic group was often rendered invisible. With the printing of documents from the war, the texts on the treatment of Roma will offer new angles of interpretation.

Given that history has yet to be written, the account of what happened in Transnistria offers a context to understand better the strategies of romanticization and exoticization used by Zaharia Stancu in his novel. Contextualizing the novel through historical records and witness testimonies demonstrates that the stereotypes used in literature or the media to represent a minority have dangerous effects. During the war, the Gypsies in Romania suffered the consequences of racism and discrimination; in this context, using stereotypes means taking shortcuts in describing the members of a minority as types rather than individuals, and in continuing their oppression.

The collective portrait of the Roma in the novel is sometimes drawn in stereotypical terms when describing the masses of men and women who were rounded up in the streets. The novel testifies to the amplitude of the event and clearly shows how whole populations of Roma were taken away and forced to travel in waves that seemed to fill the towns they passed through. The novel focuses only on nomads and does not make any references to sedentary Roma who had jobs

and owned property, thus creating a rather homogeneous image of the Roma. From the large numbers of people who shared the same fate, the novel presents the destiny of a *shatra*, and it often ends by privileging types rather than individual characters. The early description of Roma in the first pages of the novel creates a romanticized portrait: "The men in council all wore long hair, thick moustaches and unkempt beards. Scissors had never worked their way through that matted hair. Razors had never traveled over their cheeks or round their chins. Fate had given them all eyes black as tar, large, fierce, hypnotic. Their beards, moustaches and hair, smeared every day with walnut oil, gleamed like armour" (2). This portrait prepares the reader for an atmosphere that tends to depart from realism and escape into the mythical.

The mythical portrayal of the Roma nomadic community is emphasized by an atmosphere of doom that combines premonitions of death with a nostalgic view about a way of life that seems to belong to the past. While the Romanians they encounter on the way, and the gendarmes, seem aware of the plans of deportation, the members of the *shatra* are kept in the secret about their own fate. However, many symbols connect them with death from the very first pages of the novel, and the tribe leader has premonitions all along the way: "Hym Basha felt suddenly alarmed. It seemed—was it just his imagination—that the gendarmes were looking at them as if they were all dead people" (19). In his verbal exchange with a gendarme, Hym finds out that his *shatra* is not alone in its fate:

> "Just us?"
> "No," said the gendarme, "the orders are for all the gypsy shatras. The war . . . "
> "But we've got nothing to do with the war."
> "Maybe. But the war's got something to do with you" (19).

The *shatra* is isolated from other groups who share its fate, and has no means of intervention or resistance. Overall, in its description of the *shatra*, the novel seems to bemoan the disappearance of the nomadic way of life rather than deal with the deportation of the real Roma during the war.

The novel depicts the harsh conditions of the Roma in Transnistria through an obsessive description of hunger. Those who escaped and managed to run back home to Romania spread the word about the

terrible living conditions, so relatives tried to intervene on behalf of their loved ones. Both witnesses and official reports describe the scarcity of food, which became one of the main reasons the weaker persons, such as the elders and the children, died first. According to the report of 5 December 1942, "people who were able to work were given 400 grams of bread, and 200g for the elders and children. They were also given a few potatoes and very rarely salted fish and in extremely small quantities. Because of lack of food, many Gypsies—that is the majority of them—were so thin that they looked like skeletons. Especially recently, 10 to 15 would die every day" (*Minorităţi Etnoculturale* 511). Indeed, the novel shows the conditions in which the nomads lived during winter. They were often plagued by deserters who begged for food and sometimes stole from them, threatening them with their guns. Similar to what some of the records show, the Roma had to eat their bears, horses, donkeys, and hunted in the fields. However, the novel portrays them as self-sufficient, somehow being able to survive a whole year without any support from the authorities. At first, Hym Basha negotiates for food in the towns they pass through, and, later, they pay for food with gold, and manage to secure provisions for his dwindling number of people.

Given the fact that, up to this day, not many people are aware of what happened, *The Gypsy Tribe* serves to draw attention to the historical facts and teach contemporary readers about the past. The description of death, turmoil, the numbers of people who were sent away and mistreated, and their suffering because of hunger, cold, and disease is accurate, to some extent. However, while attempting to draw attention to practices of oppression and marginalization, the novel also perpetuates negative stereotypes and creates some of its own. For example, in its portrayal of violence, bears, illicit sex, religion, and sexuality, the novel presents Roma as wild, uncontainable, and often chaotic. At first, the tribe is well organized and follows Hym Basha's orders according to an old code of behavior. As the situation worsens, the leader loses his authority and the tribe falls apart. In all the stages of this process, though, the novel continues the romantic tradition of representing Gypsies. In a way, the novel does not merely present the Roma during World War II, but it also describes the nomadic Roma in general, as if they were a population about to disappear. That is why the author offers a romantic and exotic portrait of his heroes, describing them more as a community of the past.

Such scenes that accentuate the exotic do not simply describe the extreme conditions the Roma had to endure, but sometimes make the whole group of Roma appear in an unfavorable light. Together with the description of the bears and the symbolic episode when people have to eat their animals to survive, the novel abounds in violence manifested as fights and brawls among the Roma themselves. While in the first half of the novel Hym Basha manages to contain the violence and to some extent control the rivalry between Gosu and Ariston, who are fighting over Lysandra, the second part of the novel shows the disintegration of the tribe because of the harsh conditions of famine, cold, and disease. Nevertheless, within the economy of the novel, the descriptions of the brawls are often gratuitous, and seem to serve the purpose of incriminating the Roma rather than merely focusing on their living conditions. For instance, when Hym Basha loses his control and authority, the tribe starts an inner fight that sounds like parody and grotesque: "There were men wrestling with each other, rolling in the snow, punching each other's faces, tearing clothes to shreds, tugging away at beards and hair, biting noses and ears. The women were not idle, either. Some bickered and cursed, some spat at each other, some took hold of their children by their feet and whirled them above their heads like clubs, clouting anybody in range and ignoring squeals and groans" (221). The novel abounds in such scenes that describe the Roma as wild and hard to control, even when the laws of the tribe are still standing. Instead of dealing with the pain of their harsh conditions, Zaharia Stancu emphasizes a gratuitous violence that affects the overall portrait of the Roma in the novel.

The last pages of the novel portray the loss of human lives and the beginning of the survivors' long journey home. However, instead of describing their poverty and suffering, the novel presents the Roma from a negative point of view. The end of the novel focuses on the hardships of the people, emphasizing the change of the law: "Since the death and burial of Hym Basha, life in the *shatra* had changed. They had been brought to this place and left to their fate—they all knew it now—to survive or not to survive by luck. Some had survived to the thaw, others had gone during the harsh, ruthless months of winter. Old men and women had died, but some had escaped. Young men and women and children had died, and some had escaped" (262). The *shatra* falls apart and people fight for leadership, but, again, the novel emphasizes issues of power, rather than focusing on

the story of survival. The novel ends when the Roma start their long journey home. Similarly, in the literature on the deportation to Transnistria, there are few documents that describe the process of return and their journey home. During August 1944, some of the Roma started to leave on their own in groups, and there are no records of organized train rides back home. Some groups had escaped and run home earlier. In the novel, the Roma themselves pull their wagons instead of their horses or donkeys that had either died or been eaten. Heading back in six wagons out of the twenty with which they had started, only half of Roma survive the long winter and start their long journey home, thus reflecting the tragic consequences of the deportation in Transnistria.

Paradoxically, *Şatra* claims to represent the deportation of the Romanian Gypsies during World War II, but, in fact, the book is not about the Roma, but a pretext for romance, picturesque, and exotic. While the descriptions of the bears and the performances in town with *paparudele* (rain girls) may be based on reality, the emphasis on the exotic, rather than the pain and the suffering, takes away from the message of the novel.

In trying to create a myth, Stancu imposes the view of the majority. In describing Gypsies, Stancu falls prey to the fascination of the exotic, banking on the difference, the unknown, and the mystery. He does not offer a historically articulated sociological reality, but, instead, uses the exotic as another means to create a distance from the "other," and thus have control over issues of representation. When drawing on stereotypes about an ethnic group, he unwittingly becomes part of a political process of silencing the "other," affecting the minority's right to self-determination.

Readers today need to rediscover the history of the Roma, reinterpret their images in literary texts, and thus actively demonstrate the contribution of the Roma to the Romanian and European culture. That is why rereading the novel *Şatra* requires recontextualizing the novel and rediscovering the silenced past of the Romani Holocaust. Interpreting the novel against the general trend of exoticization and romanticization allows readers to open up a dialogue about relationships among various ethnic groups. Resisting the allegory and the false picturesque in the interpretation of the novel means being willing to question euphemisms, such as *oamenii oacheşi* (black-eyed people), that Zaharia Stancu uses intentionally, expose stereotypes, and

replace them with a historically articulated representation of the Roma.

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## NOTES

1. In this essay, the word *Gypsy* will appear interchangeably with *Roma* for stylistic reasons. However, the members of the community themselves prefer the words *Rom* or *Roma*—man or men in Romany. Early on in Romanian history, the word *Gypsy* or *ţigan* acquired a pejorative connotation, and was often considered a synonym with *rob* or slave. At the time when Zararia Stancu wrote his novel, he was certainly aware of the negative connotation, and this might be one of the reasons he refrained from using any direct words for naming the ethnic background of his heroes. Today, both *Roma* and *Ţigani* are used interchangeably in Romanian, with the intelligentsia clearly favoring the word *Roma*. Some Romanians, however, prefer to spell it as *Rroma*, probably to make sure there is no confusion between the words *Roma* and *Romania*, and to emphasize the different etymological origins of the two words.
2. See especially Voicu Bugariu (121) and Mariana Ionescu (303).
3. At the time, Zaharia Stancu (1902–74) was widely recognized in Romanian literature, well established in the Romanian literary life, and several times elected as the President

of the Romanian Writers' Union. He was a deputy in the Great National Assembly (*Marea Adunare Naţională)* and enjoyed all the honors of the system. In an interview titled "On My Writing Table," which appeared initially in 1972, he confesses that he worked on the novel for six years, stating that *The Gypsy Tribe* is the result of a long research of the people "I have described in the book and of the events that took place in the cruel time of the second world war" (147).

4. The quotations from the novel reproduce Roy MacGregor-Hastie's translation. All the other translations from Romanian belong to Lucia Cherciu.
5. Zaharia Stancu never uses the word *Gypsy* in his novel in reference to the ethnic origin of the focal community. Instead, he uses various other phrases, such as "dark people" (*oameni tuciurii*), "black-eyed people" (*oameni oacheşi*), and "the tribe men" (*ş ătrarii, oamenii şatrei)*. Some deserters call them *baraŋgladine* (derogatory slang term for "Gypsies"). Stancu's variations often seem awkward, and they do not solve the problem. In his translation, MacGregor-Hastie completely ignored Stancu's obvious attempts to avoid the word *Gypsy* and uses it all the time, replacing all the other euphemisms preferred by the author.
6. The term *criminalization*, when applied to the Roma community, could be defined in the words of Nicolae Păun, who states that "If a Rom commits a crime, he is not judged individually; on the contrary, the whole community has to pay the price of all the Roma's injured dignity" (qtd. in Godwin 418).

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# Part 3

# Transnational Romani Roles

## Gender and Performance

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# Chapter 8

# The "Gypsy" Stereotype and the Sexualization of Romani Women

*Ian Hancock*

> *The Gypsy women and girls . . . are capable of exciting passion of the most ardent description, most particularly in the bosoms of those who are not of their race, which passion of course becomes the more violent when the almost utter impossibility of gratifying it is known.*
> George Borrow, *The Zincali*

The fact that the representation of people of color—and women of color, in particular—has been exoticized and sexualized in the Western perception is nothing new (cf. Burney; Jan Mohamed; Jiwani; Lalvani; Negra; Parmar; Shohat and Stam; Yegenoglu). The Romani people, or "Gypsies," have not escaped this portrayal, and the literature that examines it is growing rapidly (cf. Champagne; Esplugas; Gabor; Gordon; Hancock, "Duty and Beauty," *We are the Romani People*, "The Concocters"; Iordanova; Lemon; Malvinni; Mayall; McLaughlan; Needham; Nord, "Marks of Race," "Seen in Rare Glimpses"; Pellegrino; and Schrevel).

Romanies are a people originating in Asia, whose ancestors left the northwest of India at the beginning of the eleventh century as a result of a series of Islamic incursions led by Mahmud of Ghazni. The Ghaznavids were defeated, in turn, in AD 1040 by the Seljuqs—another

Muslim people—and their militia and prisoners of war taken into Armenia, which the Seljuqs defeated in AD 1071. The Indian troops and their camp followers were settled in semiautonomous areas known as beyliks and, over the next two centuries, crystallized into an ethnic population inhabiting both the Seljuqs' Sultanate of Rûm and the adjoining Byzantine Greek territories. With the westerly expansion of Islam, Anatolia was increasingly encroached upon by the Ottoman Turks and, by AD 1300, different groups of Romani people had been pushed up into southeastern Europe. Here, perhaps half of that population was held in the Balkans in slavery (a condition lasting until 1864), while others were able to move on and spread out into the rest of Europe. There are today perhaps twelve million Romanies throughout the world, with between two and three million living in the Americas and elsewhere, and ca. eight million throughout Europe—thus constituting the largest and most widely dispersed of its many minority peoples. There are nearly twice as many Romanies as there are Danes or Swedes.

When Romanies first appeared in Europe, they were assumed to be a part of the Islamic spread into Christendom, and were identified with the Ottoman Turks. "Turks," as an exonym, referring to Romanies, is still found today in some places. Other misnomers that have stuck are "Egyptians," resulting in such erroneous labels as "Gypsies" (earlier *gypcians*), *(E)gitanos*, *Gitans*, etc., and the Byzantine Greek nickname *Athinggánoi*, "(the) don't touch (people)," which has given rise to *Zigeuner*, *Cigan*, or *Tsigane*.

While there are mediaeval and Renaissance references to an actual Indian origin, this fact did not become generally known, and eventually became forgotten, even by the Romanies themselves. As a consequence, a great many incorrect, and sometimes bizarre, hypotheses were put forward. These included an origin inside the hollow earth, or on the Moon or in Atlantis; that "Gypsies" were the remnants of a prehistoric race, or else were Druids, or Jews coming out of hiding after the mediaeval pogroms; or even that they were a conglomerate drawn from the fringes of European society that artificially dyed their skin and spoke a made-up jargon for the purposes of plotting criminal activity. It is the very existence of this nebulous identity that has contributed to the ease of its manipulation. The real origin was "discovered" fortuitously in the 1760s, when a student at a Dutch university, who had learnt some Romani from laborers on his family's estate in Hungary, overheard some students from India discussing their own

language. Recognizing similarities, he passed the information along and, eventually, it became public knowledge in the first book ever written on the subject (Grellmann).

The publication of Grellmann's book during the Enlightenment, which appeared in an English edition in 1807, coincided with the emergence of a number of scientific disciplines, including botany and zoology. The need to categorize the plants and animals being encountered in the new European colonies overseas quickly extended to the classification of non-European human populations as well, and the nineteenth century saw a plethora of dissertations dealing with "race" and the ranking of human groups—not only in terms of their perceived genetic, social, and technological advancement, but in terms of gender as well. Even Charles Darwin employed clearly biased language when he referred to "the uniform appearance in various parts of the world of Gypsies and Jews . . . contrast[ing] sharply with all the virtues represented by the territorially settled and 'culturally advanced' Nordic Aryan race," and further maintained that "man is more courageous, pugnacious and energetic than woman, and has a more inventive genius" (Darwin 557).

The notion that "race mixing" was dangerous both genetically and socially became, to an ever-increasing degree, the focus of such studies—not only because those born of unions between Europeans and colonized peoples of color were thought to have aspirations of political equality that could eventually challenge European dominance overseas, but because it was already believed that the product of "race mixing" resulted in the worst traits of both parents emerging in their offspring. Thus, describing their "bastard brood," Smith wrote "whatever is bad among the Europeans and the Negroes is united in them, so that they are the sink of both" (213). That non-European blood would contaminate the gene pool of Hitler's envisioned Aryan "master race" was the underlying rationale for the intended extermination of Romanies and Jews during the Holocaust. The small African and Afro-European population in Nazi-controlled Europe was eradicated even before the Holocaust began.

Because of its forbidden nature, miscegenation acquired an attraction that journalists were quick to exploit: depictions of sexual encounters between colonized or enslaved women of color and white males in their position of control found a ready place in Victorian literature. The erotic photography of the late nineteenth century consisted largely of naked African or Asian women (Stenger). That

magazines such as *National Geographic* have traditionally never included photographs of unclothed white women merely helped carry that double standard into the twentieth century.

The oldest organization devoted to the study of the Romani people was the Gypsy Lore Society, established in 1888, and still in existence. Some of its male members—all non-Romanies—referred to themselves as ryes, a self-designation interpreted to mean one who had gained privileged entrée into the Romani world, but which in Romani itself (as rai) means a person in a position of authority, including "lord" and "policeman." For some ryes at least, it seems to have had a more specific in-group meaning: managing to bed a Romani woman. Thus, in a letter dated 6 November 1908, Augustus John wrote to fellow gypsilorist Scott Macfie: "I have recently taken it upon myself to confer the title of Rai upon a friend of mine—one Percy Wyndham Lewis, whose qualifications, the having coupled and lived in a state of copulation with a wandering Spanish romi in Brittany, seemed to me upon reflection to merit the honourable and distinctive title of our confraternity."[1]

Westerners were (and still are) much more familiar with the enslavement of Africans in the Americas than they were with the enslavement of Romanies in Europe, and, because of this, inaccurate portrayals of Gypsies relied upon the literary clichés of the period, describing in stereotypical terms the kind of slave a Victorian audience was more likely to have been familiar with. Ozanne wrote that the Romani slaves in Wallachia had "crisp hair and thick lips, with a very dark complexion, [and . . . ] a strong resemblance to the negro physiognomy and character" (62, 65); St. John wrote that "the men are generally of lofty stature, robust and sinewy. Their skin is black or copper-colored; their hair, thick and woolly; their lips are of negro heaviness, and their teeth white as pearls; the nose is considerably flattened, and the whole countenance is illumined, as it were, by lively, rolling eyes" (140). An anonymous writer, three years later, wrote "on a heap of straw in the middle, in the full heat of the blazing sun, lay four gipsies asleep. They were all four tall, powerful men, with coal-black hair as coarse as rope, streaming over faces of African blackness" ("The Gipsies at the Danube," 273).

Sexual preoccupation also fixated on nonwhite men who were believed to be consumed with lust for white women. That not all the latter seemed quite so bothered by such a notion must simply have compounded this male insecurity; for example, in contrast to Smith's

dim view of the "mulattoes" in West Africa (above), a nineteenth-century visitor to the same region named Mrs. Bowdich found them "handsome, generally tall and gracefully formed, and very elegant" (Mahoney 126). The early twentieth-century practice of castrating African Americans by racist mobs directly underscored a sexual fear, and male Romani slaves in the Balkans were likewise seen as a threat to white womanhood. Among them there was a category called the *skopitsi*, men who had been castrated as boys and whose job it was to drive the coaches of the women of the aristocracy without their being in fear of molestation. This was reflected in the Moldavian Civil code at that time, which stated that "if a Gypsy slave should rape a white woman, he would be burnt alive" (Section 28, Panaitescu 14), but if a Romanian should "meet a girl in the road" and "yield to love . . . he shall not be punished at all" (Section 39; Panaitescu 14).

Perhaps related to this emasculation of the nonwhite male is the literary tradition of having white men, in Gayatri Spivak's words, "saving brown women from brown men" (294; see also Cooke). Shehrezade Ali has strongly criticized Disney's film *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* for creating a subliminal racial bias in the developing social attitudes of children:

> To date, none of Disney's white female characters have been mated with Black or non-white suitors, yet the animated women-of-color are exclusively tied to white men, embracing them and ignoring their own races. Is this Disney's attempt to be inclusive? Why does Disney put women-of-color in romantic situations with white men instead of men of color?, and what kind of subliminal message do you think it sends to little Black or Gypsy girls by repeatedly implying that the only hero or savior they have is a white male?, and what about little Black or Gypsy boys who have yet to see themselves in a strong hero role in a Disney film? What about their self-esteem?" [it . . . makes visual a continuing racist myth that every woman on the planet, whether Black or white, has only one everlasting hero—a white man. (Ali 2)

One recurrent feature in plots of this type is that the love interest turns out not to be a Romani after all, but a highborn white girl who was "stolen by Gypsies" as a child, thus making the romantic attraction ultimately acceptable.

Populations of color were seen, furthermore, as unclean, both spiritually and physically. Hoyland repeated the Elizabethan belief that the Romanies' dark skin was simply due to dirt: "Gypsies would long

ago have been divested of their swarthy complexions, had they discontinued their filthy mode of living" (39–40). Kenrick and Puxon believe that the present-day hatred of Romanies is a folk memory that dates from their earliest appearance in Europe, and stems from the mediaeval conviction "that blackness denotes inferiority and evil, [which] was well rooted in the western mind. The nearly black skins of many Gypsies marked them out to be victims of this prejudice" (19). European folklore contains a number of references to the Romanies' complexion: a Greek proverb says "go to the Gypsy children and choose the whitest," and in Yiddish, "the same sun that whitens the linen darkens the Gypsy," and "no washing ever whitens the black Gypsy." A widespread self-ascription in Romani is *Kalé*, which means 'Blacks,' while Caucasian *gadjé* (non-Romanies) are referred to in the same language as *parné* or *parnorré*, "whites," even by fair-skinned Romanies who might now be physically indistinguishable from them. The latter were remarked upon by the French traveler Félix Colson, who visited a slave-holding estate in Romania in the 1830s: "Their skins are hardly brown; some of them are blonde and beautiful" and, while this resulted from the established practice of offering Romani slaves as unwilling sexual entertainment to visitors, they were given such house-names by their owners as Bronze, Dusky, Dopey, Toad, Witch, Camel, Dishrag, or Whore (49). In her novel set in the time of Romani slavery, *Prince of One Summer*, Roberte Roleine described this scenario: "In the evening, the master makes his choice among the beautiful girls—maybe he will offer some of them to the guest—whence these light-skinned, blonde-haired Gypsies. The offspring from these unwelcome sexual unions automatically became slaves. It was this exploitation that was largely responsible for the fact that many Gypsies are now fair-skinned" (111). While she could be thus used, a Romani woman could not become the legal wife of a white man. Performing such a marriage was considered "an evil and wicked deed," and a priest doing so was excommunicated, as stated in an antimiscegenation proclamation issued in 1776 by Constantin, Prince of Moldavia:

> [I]n some parts Gypsies have married Moldavian women, and also Moldavian men have taken in marriage Gypsy girls, which is entirely against the Christian faith, for not only have these people bound themselves to spend all their life with the Gypsies, but especially that their children remain forever in unchanged slavery . . . such a deed being hateful to

> God, and contrary to human nature . . . any priest who has had the audacity to perform such marriages, which is a great and everlasting wicked act . . . will be removed from his post and severely punished. (Ghibănescu 119–20)

Those who have written about the treatment of the slaves have believed, probably as a salve to their own consciences, that Romanies were actually well-disposed to such barbarity: Lecca maintained that "once they were made slaves . . . it seems that they preferred this state" (181), and Paspates wondered whether Romanies did not, in fact, "subject themselves voluntarily to bondage "because of the "mild treatment" from their owners" (149). Emerit believed that "despite clubbings which the slave-owners meted out at random, the Gypsies did not altogether hate this tyrannical regime, which once in a while took on a paternal quality" (132).

Together with imagined uninhibited pagan (that is, non-Christian) behavior, the pathologized, Janus-faced image that emerged both fascinated and, at the same time, repulsed. The Augustinian phrase *inter urinam et fæces sedet amor* well reflects this paradox, which, in the case of people of color, might also allude to skin pigmentation. Bayle St. John, who based his anonymously written account wholly on Grellmann and who (like Carmen's creator Bizet) had never met an actual Romani in his life, wrote that Gypsies were "a very handsome race, the women especially. These bold, brown, beautiful women only make one astonished to think how such eyes, teeth and figures can exist in the stifling atmosphere of their tents" (142). It was, furthermore, his painful duty to caution his prudish Victorian readership that he was "sorry to be obliged to add that both men and women are, as a rule, exceedingly debauched"—bongobongoistic editorializing expressly calculated to titillate and shock, as well as being a claim safe from academic challenge (Douglas 15–16). Reference to the same two-way attraction, but attributed this time to Gypsy men, finds a place on the cover of Connie Mason's new novel *Gypsy Lover* (2005): "The arrogant gypsy had swept [the 'lovely Lady Esme Harcourt'] into his arms at a county fair, awakening both her desire and her disdain."

Male attitudes such as St. John's are still with us. In 1981, an article written by martial arts specialist Dave Lowry—entitled "What it's like to be a Gypsy Girl"—appeared in *Cosmopolitan* magazine. A clue to the motivation for a grown white man to tackle the topic in the first place is in his references to "male libido" and "endless erotic fantasies"

in his very first paragraph, and, while he claims to have allowed a young Romani girl "Sabinka" to speak for herself, it is clear that Sabinka is Dave Lowry, who had gathered bits and pieces for his highly misleading story from the then easily available sources—probably Gropper or Sutherland or Wood, all of which appeared during the previous decade.

It will be a while yet before an accurate depiction of Romanies—and Romani women—is the one that comes first to mind; most recently, *The New Yorker* magazine referred in its pages to "assertive women—'female scholars, priestesses, gypsies, mystics, nature lovers'" (Boyer 36), as though all those categories were behaviors or occupations. The pervasiveness of this exotic image is nowhere more in evidence than on the eBay Internet auction site, where "sexy gypsy-wicca blouses," and the like, account for almost all the over two thousand "gypsy" offerings posted there daily. Another site, "The Gypsy," informs the visitor that "Gypsies are normally dark skinned with bold flashing eyes; however it is not unusual to find golden or crimson haired Gypsies . . . most Gypsies live in traveling wagons called vardos . . . the campfire is the center of Gypsy family life." Two other sites providing details of Romani culture belong to Morrghan Savistr'i-Lovara, an "American born Rom woman in her Mid 20's" and Allie Theiss, a "descendant of Rom gypsies of Transylvania." On her Web site, Ms. Savistr'i-Lovara says she is "a practicing Chaos Mage as well as Shuvani (think Romani Shaman) [who is] now working to devise some Roma rituals for cleansing and purification that are newer and less complex that the traditional ones . . . most Rom do not do them because of the scarcity of materials as well as the amount of time they take to properly perform. [She is] owned by two cats names Fuzface and Mr. Pants." Allie Theiss in her books on Gypsy love magic (2005a, 2005b) tells the reader that that "no one knows where the Roma originated" (5), but "no matter their original origins, Gypsies, or Romas, are prized for their remarkable psychic abilities and the gift to attract good fortune or upset a life with a curse. All are born with such gifts, but what makes their powers so innate is their relationship with nature. Their bond with the spirits of the outdoors allow[s] their gifts to evolve naturall . . . no longer do they wander the earth in a horse-drawn caravan, but are modernized and travel by car, bus and plane. The very definition of "free spirits" (6). Thus, Romani identity still remains to a great extent controlled by the non-Romani world, by Hollywood and by novelists and journalists.

That an ethnic label might be applied metaphorically is not necessarily offensive, but it often can be. Stereotypes need not be malicious as long as they are recognized as just that—stereotypes. We know that Hollywood gangland mafiosi do not represent all Italians, and we learn in school, at the same time, about the contributions of Botticelli, Leonardo and Michelangelo. Today, with increased media coverage and access to informative Web sites such as Patrin and RADOC, ignorance can no longer be used as an excuse, if writers do their homework. The general public is coming to understand that the literary "Gypsies" (or more usually "gypsies") are something quite different from the actual Romanies, whose real story is both complex and moving—so reasons for the relentless perpetuation of the myth must be sought elsewhere, and the consequences of so doing examined. We do not want to say goodbye to Carmen and Esmeralda and their fictional sisters, but we should recognize them for who and what they really are.

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## Note

1. This letter can be found in the Romani Archives at the University of Liverpool (http://sca.lib.liv.ac.uk/collections/gypsy/links.htm).

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# Chapter 9

# Performing the Female "Gypsy"

## Commedia dell'arte's "Tricks" for Finding Freedom

*Domnica Radulescu*

### Brief History of the "Gypsy" Role in Early Modern Europe

The role or the disguise of female "Gypsy" appears on European stages as early as the sixteenth century. The present article proposes to study the creation of this role, its connections with the actual lives and images of Romanies, and its use by various performers of the commedia dell'arte tradition as a metaphor for the emancipation of women. First, a working definition of the commedia dell'arte is in order. Also known as *commedia all'improviso* (improvised comedy), *commedia delle maschere* (comedy of masks), and *commedia dei zanni* (comedy of servants), the commedia dell'arte is exclusively an actors' theater that emerged and knew its golden period during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Italy, France, and later, in Spain, England, and Germany. The term *arte* is used in its ancient meaning of skill and

professionalism, calling to mind the medieval guilds of specialized groups of professionals. The complete definition of this theater is given by the very names it has acquired: it relies entirely on the actors' professionalism and imagination, it is largely based on improvisation, most of the characters wear masks, and the characters who give it its very comic essence are servants.[1]

What do commedia dell'arte actresses and Gypsy women have in common? The present article proposes an in-depth examination of this question. In doing so, it tries to demonstrate that the role or disguise as Gypsy woman has been used by commedia dell'arte actresses as a symbol of female emancipation, and as an artistic form of defying traditional gender roles. My examples of the use of the Gypsy role and disguise derive both from actual sixteenth century commedia dell'arte scenarios and plays, and from modern theater, more specifically, from the theater of Franca Rame, the twentieth century Italian feminist performer trained in the commedia tradition. Out of Italy, in the second half of the sixteenth century, several troupes of actors *and* actresses made their glorious appearance onto the stages and streets of Europe. They were known under such names as *I Gelosi*, *I Confidenti*, *Gli Uniti*, and the last Italian troupe in France was actually called the *Ancienne Troupe de la Comédie Italienne* (The Ancient Troupe of the Italian Comedy). These troupes became a great sensation *because* of the presence of real flesh and blood women, particularly in France and England, where women's parts were still played by young boys. In 1564, the first female performer joined a commedia troupe. The age of the commedia dell'arte started, and women finally had their day in the theater, not just as silent mimes, or as singers, but as improvisers, creators of scripts, and full-fledged performers.According to modern scholarship, women had a crucial role in the development of comedy and in the art of improvisation in the commedia dell'arte, a very well kept "secret" for the last four centuries.[2] But, equally important, by appearing on stage in piazzas, castles, streets, in front of royalty, as well as in front of the common people, by traveling across Europe with their theater troupes, the commedia actresses made a radical step toward emancipation. They broke boundaries between the private and the public sphere, and acquired both the visibility and the mobility that were otherwise denied to most women of all social classes during that time.

In early modern Europe, from Sweden, to Elizabethan England, to Renaissance Italy, Gypsies were also, at times, known as troupes of

entertainers, jugglers, buffoons, dancers, and astrologers. Their first recorded appearances in Western Europe are, in fact, in Bologna, Italy in 1422, and in Paris, France in 1427.[3] The first commedia troupes were also first created in Italy in the early sixteenth century. Laws meant to limit the activities of the Gypsies were passed starting in the fifteenth century, but the large-scale movements to control and regulate their activities started in the seventeenth century.[4] Gypsy women were known since the Middle Ages as street dancers, palm readers, entertainers, and often thought of as "witches."[5] During Shakespeare's time, Gypsies were thought of as "strolling mountebanks, amusing the simple country folk," and in France, a "cunning" or palm reading Gypsy woman was known also as "cajoleuse" or "charlatane." As David Macritchie has pointed out, the word "charlatane" is synonymous to the Italian "gioculatrice" "a she-juggler, a cunning Gypsy."[6] The word "gioculatrice" in Italian also means trickster, which both Gypsy women and commedia actresses were often known as.

In a sixteenth century etching by Jacques Callot, called *Bohemiens Marching: The Rear Guard*, men in a semblance of military attire, women in flamboyant attire, and little children in comical clothes are seen traveling in a large caravan, some on horseback, some on foot, and some in carriages, much like the commedia dell'arte troupes used to travel. They look much like commedia dell'arte traveling troupes as portrayed in various painting and etchings: histrionic, free-spirited, with a touch of disorderliness, and dressed in flamboyant costumes. In an article about Jacques Callot's paintings of Gypsies, Edward Sullivan argues that Callot's paintings from the series *Les Bohémiens* avoid stereotyping and offer a rather objective image of Gypsy life, customs, and dress. The women in all the portraits wear the traditional large, striped, and fringed shawls tied around chemises and abundant skirts, similar to the Gypsy women portrayed in Caravaggio or De La Tour's paintings. Sullivan notes that while the men's attires changed over time to adapt to the fashion of the country they inhabited, the women's costumes remained roughly the same from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century.[7] Similarly, commedia dell'arte paintings from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, from Caravaggio to Watteau portrayed the commedia actresses in colorful and flamboyant attires that were not necessarily those of the fashion of the time, but of a timeless heroine. Most interestingly, though, Jacques Callot, who painted "Gypsies in March" and "Gypsies Camping," is also the author of some of the funniest etchings of commedia dell'arte characters,

such as Pantalone, Il Capitano, Pulcinella, and even an innamorata with a Pantalone or Capitano at her feet, as in the engraving called *Balli di Sfessania*. There are obvious similarities between the lifestyles of the Gypsy women and the actresses of the commedia dell'arte in early modern Europe: they traveled and crossed both city and national borders; they appeared in public and performed and entertained large masses of people; they traveled in caravans; they lived in close proximity to, and worked with, men other than their husbands. The commedia actresses developed the parts of the female trickster, while Gypsy women were known or thought of as tricksters. Both commedia actresses and Gypsy women relied heavily, in their performative art, on oral traditions and forms of expression that were part of an alternative women's culture in early modern Europe. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Scottish Gypsies were also known to travel with "some sort of conveyance containing accessories of their craft and a traveling theater." They were also known as "mimi" and "histriones," and were actually performing plays in the summer, "in the stanks of Roslin" (Macritchie 61). And, in Spain during the sixteenth century, Gypsies and "fools styled Gypsies" were also known to travel in what looked like troupes of jugglers and performers (Macritchie 60). Thus, the similarities go, at times, as far as actual overlaps between traveling troupes of actors and traveling Gypsy troupes.[8]

These obvious and practical parallelisms between the lives of the first professional actresses and female Gypsies incited the imagination of the people, and led to these women being equally idealized and demonized. They were both associated with sexual promiscuity and with the notion of unleashed sexual passion. They were both hated and envied for what was perceived as their freedom by comparison to the lifestyles of "respectable" women who did not enjoy similar freedom. The "free" life of both the first female performers and Gypsy women was often equated to a life of depravation and promiscuity. As pointed out by Lynn Matluck Brooks in an article on the role of women choreographers in Golden Age Seville, "People of the theater, in general, were considered an immoral lot throughout Spain and the rest of Europe," and "traveling performers, who could slip through the fingers of city justice, were often suspected as thieves and prostitutes."[9] At the same time, it was women who had a crucial role in the development of dance and choreography in the Seville processions during Golden Age Spain, just as it was women who had a crucial role in the development of the improvisational art of the commedia

dell'arte in Italy.[10] The emancipation of women throughout Europe during the Renaissance was doubled by the backlash against such emancipation and by the association of these women with promiscuity—much like the Gypsies themselves. In France from the fifteenth century on, Gypsies were considered as "most satanic witches." In England, "they were mercilessly persecuted," most of them being "hung as magicians and satanic witches." In Spain, Gypsies settled in the fertile plain of Andalusia and, until the reign of Charles III, were subjected to the "severest laws."[11]

Although the first performers and entertainers during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance were generally courtesans, the first professional actresses in the commedia troupes, starting in the second half of the sixteenth century, were married women who ran their acting troupes in collaboration with their husbands. While the performance and improvisational art of the courtesans[12] was part of the heritage of oral culture from which the first professional actresses drew their inspiration, actresses such as the famous Isabella Andreini, in fact, were particularly careful to protect their reputation and to be known as virtuous and chaste.

Similarly, the so-called promiscuity of Gypsy women, like the imagined looseness of the commedia actresses, was, rather, part of the overall process of demonization, idealization, and stereotyping than representative of an actual reality. In fact, within the Gypsy society, women were often subjected to cruel laws. For instance "an English Gypsy could kill his wife if he liked, without suffering for the crime" (Macritchie 53–54). The most common reason for a Gypsy man killing his wife was adultery. Thought to be Egyptians in Shakespeare's time, Gypsies are mentioned several times in his plays as examples of deceit and crimes of passion, as, for instance, in *Twelfth Night*: "Why should I not, had I the heart to do it, / Like to the Egyptian thief, at point of death,/ Kill what I love."[13] Killing for passion or jealousy is ultimately seen as admirable. Furthermore, within Gypsy customs, the union or marriage between a Gypsy woman and a non-Gypsy man was seen as defilement and was often severely punished.[14]

While there is abundant scholarship on the subject of the marginalization and oppression of the Romanies throughout the centuries,[15] there is little work done on gender differences within Gypsy societies that reveals the mistreatment of Gypsy women by both Roma and non-Roma men. As it usually happens, no matter how oppressed and

marginalized a group of people may be, there is always another group that is going to be even more oppressed and marginalized: the women of that group. In fact, history and statistics have shown that it is precisely within marginalized and oppressed groups that domestic violence is most rampant.[16]

That Gypsy women have been free-spirited individuals performing, traveling freely, and loving passionately, is true only so far. According to Gypsy laws since early modern Europe to recent times, the lives of Gypsy women have often held little value, and could easily be taken away without even a severe punishment to the criminal, and practices like forced juvenile marriages have been quite common. Recent reports on the situation of Roma women in Europe note that since Romani women often live at the fringes of society either because they are economically deprived or socially isolated by anti-Roma behaviors, they may be even more vulnerable than women in general. Recently, human rights groups have been trying to work toward reconciling issues of human and women's rights with cultural structures and traditional practices.[17] Simultaneously, Roma women have been trying to denounce and resist the layers of oppression that Romani women have been subjected to both from within Roma society, and particularly from the outside, by Western societies. Alexandra Oprea, a Roma feminist scholar has rightfully criticized the anthropological approach used in the study of third world cultures. She notes that, most commonly, this approach refrains from criticizing patriarchy and practices within these cultures, and issues such as domestic violence in Third World cultures are often unacceptable topics of discussion, mostly in an attempt not to "replicate" the racist and unjust practices suffered by these cultures at the hands of white supremacies (30–31). However, as Oprea brilliantly demonstrates, this position "turns a blind eye to patriarchal practices, excusing them as the 'other culture,'" a position, that "demonstrates disregard for the welfare of women harmed by these practices." Furthermore, the women from inside the culture who do complain and criticize the internal practices of abuse are considered as "traitors" and are stigmatized as having become too "Westernized" (31). Thus, Gypsy women are truly in a liminal position of "no man's land," their suffering neglected from the outside of their culture, their resistance condemned from the inside.

Ironically, what has long been perceived as free, loose, and promiscuous by the "respectable" society, both outside the world of the traveling acting troupes and that of the traveling Gypsies, could, in

reality, be its very opposite. It was the fact that both Gypsy women and female performers crossed the line from the private to the public, that they made "a spectacle" of themselves,[18] that they moved freely from place to place, and had a certain amount of economic freedom that automatically associated them, in the public imagination, with promiscuity. Jane Tylus notes that one of the very reasons why commedia was considered a scandalous place for women was precisely because the actresses portrayed female characters that took part in the space of the marketplace, a space normally associated with men. Furthermore, she points out that, in fact, "the characters of Isabella or Flaminia are frequently disguised as Gypsies, or male travelers when they appear in the piazza," while they remain undisguised when appearing in the window (332). The Gypsy disguise is thus among those that allowed women to participate in the social life of the piazza. Not only were professional actresses once "guilty" of crossing over into the realm of the visible, the public, but they were twice "guilty" for portraying, within their profession, female figures who defied the traditional roles of docile, silent housewives or obedient daughters, and who moved in the spaces normally associated with men. Thus, given their perceived, real, or imagined freedoms, Gypsy women become a positive symbol of emancipation, and their life style is paralleled by that of the commedia actresses.

The next fascinating parallelism is that of the transformation of the Gypsy woman into a role to be played within the commedia dell'arte scenarios and plays by the female performers. Isabella Andreini, the most famous sixteenth century commedia performer, who created the role of the ingénue, or the innamorata,[19] plays a woman disguised as a Gypsy in order to be able to travel across the world in search of her lover. In the scenario explicitly called *The Two Disguised Gypsies*, from Flaminio Scala's 1620 collection of *canovacci*, Isabella, hearing that her lover Flavio has been kidnapped by pirates, dresses up as a Gypsy girl and, together with her servant Pedrolino, also dressed up as a Gypsy, "went traveling through various parts of the world looking for him" (235). By means of the Gypsy disguise, Isabella and Pedrolino's plan works out, and they find the lost Flavio. Isabella's father, Pantalone, who at first falls in love with the Gypsy girl without realizing she is his own daughter, agrees in the end to allow her to marry Flavio, but not without having been shamed for his incestuous lust. Interestingly, before knowing the truth about Isabella's disguise, Pantalone is not only in love with her, but actually wants to marry her, without

concern for the difference in their class. In the end, when all disguises are revealed, the characters praise the would-be Gypsies for having brought together the lost lovers Flaminia and Oratio, and for having cured Oratio from his illness. And Isabella gets her Flavio.

Gigio Artemio Giancarli's *Cingana* or *La Zingana* (*The Gypsy Woman*, 1545) is one of the most important examples of Italian farce from the Renaissance. It is remarkable for its polyglottism, and is probably the first play where, in addition to various dialects, the characters speak Graeco-Italian, Hebrew, Aramaic, Arabic, and Romani. In 1589, the famous actress Vittoria Piissimi, played for the wedding of Ferdinando de Medici with the French princess Christine de Lorraine, the title role in the play *La Zingana*, while Isabella Andreini played *The Madness of Isabella* in an awe-inspiring performance.[20] In the play in which Piissimi starred, the Gypsy woman is not a disguise, but an important character who is largely responsible for the direction of the plot, who creates and resolves conflicts, helps bring the truth to light, punishes greed, and brings lovers together. Her presence is dangerous and benefic, mysterious and sensuous; her talk is eloquent and comical. Furthermore, the fact that she is actually presented as speaking Romani is quite revolutionary for the time, and lends the character an important note of authenticity.

Giancarli's Zingana both illustrates and explodes the stereotypes of Gypsy women. She is a trickster par excellence who, much like the commedia actresses themselves, and much like their staple roles of innamorata or the sassy maid, uses cunning and deceit, always ends on top, and has the last laugh. Zingana steals the male baby twin of a well-to-do family from Treviso and replaces it with her own dying baby. She returns fourteen years later to the same family, having raised the young boy, Madoro, into a remarkable young man. The family is in great turmoil because of several love intrigues, in particular the one of Angelica, the twin sister of Madoro. It is at this point that Zingana's character explodes the stereotype of the Gypsies as "Satanic witches" and thieves of children, and she appears in her full humanity as a loving mother, a wise and cunning woman, and a mysterious and savvy traveler.[21]

The tricks she plays on several of the characters, such as pretending to use love witchcraft to make one character fall in love with another, greatly add to the comic dimension of the play, and appear almost as a parody of Gypsy stereotypes. Her complicated past and the places she has traveled are shrouded in mystery, and often appear contradictory.

For instance, she tells one character that she comes from a country where "one does not work the land, wild places, sterile earth."[22] Toward the end of the play—when all identities are revealed and she returns Madoro to his family with an impeccable education and wearing stylish clothes that correspond to the status of his blood family—she alludes to the fact that she did her best to keep him among gentlemen and gentlewomen and "only when necessary" among the Gypsies.[23] There are only vague references to "all the places she has traveled." She is the only woman in the play to have traveled at all, to be knowledgeable about the world, and to have crossed quite a diverse array of universes.

From the point of view of performance, and of the connection to commedia dell'arte actresses, the intriguing fact is that the role of Zingana is not the most extensive role in the play, nor is it really the role of an innamorata. However, it was Vittoria Piissimi—one of the two most famous actresses of her generation, largely known for innamorata parts—that played this part and was greatly acclaimed for it. Giusepe Pavoni, in his eyewitness record of Piissimi's performance, describes Piissimi's interpretation of the role of La Zingana as an unforgettable experience. As we have seen, Isabella Andreini also played the role of the disguised Gypsy. My belief is that the most famous commedia actresses related and identified their own position in society, and the negotiation of their private and public personae, to that of Gypsy women, both at the level of the actual or perceived freedom of movement and sexual freedom, and at the level of the negative stereotyping that their respective societies cast upon them.

During the Restoration period in Enlgand, Aphra Behn, the first English woman to earn her living by writing plays, also created a very compelling female character that used the Gypsy disguise in order to get away from an unwanted marriage and freely pursue the man she desires. In the famous 1677 play *The Rover*, the rich marquise Helena is both safe and free to roam the streets of Italy during Carnival, in search of Willmore, the object of her desire, under Gypsy attire. Like the other characters who dress up as Gypsies, Helena can freely use her wit and her eloquence while relishing in her newly found sexual freedom as she flirts with Willmore in the streets of Napoli. By giving her female protagonist the Gypsy disguise, Behn empowers her and makes of this character a vibrant example of independent, emancipated womanhood in a carnivalesque setting, where gender roles are reversed or altogether subverted.

Aphra Behn herself led what was considered a rather scandalous life for her time and was, to some degree, a self-styled Gypsy woman.[24] She traveled half way across the world from Surinam to Holland to Belgium, returned to England from Surinam as the widow Behn, without anyone really knowing who Mr. Behn was, performed spying activities in Holland on a mission for Charles II, became deeply in debt and was threatened with prison for having overused the funds of the crown, believed in and practiced free love, and, most importantly, made a living with her pen, and was successful and economically independent during her lifetime. Many of her female characters, like Helena, are rebellious women whose actions blur the distinctions between virgin and courtesan, who act the way men do, who trick men by means of cunning and disguises, and, most importantly, who travel freely and search for sexual fulfillment and personal happiness.

The women who use the Gypsy disguise in the comic theater of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries free themselves from the constraints of their social class and manage to negotiate economic freedom with sexual freedom, and with freedom of movement. So intense is their desire of these three levels of freedom that the loss of social status and the acquisition of a social status perceived as inferior, as that of the Gypsy, becomes not only irrelevant, but a reason for celebration.

Analogies between the Gypsy women and the commedia actresses are not always symmetrical, and the Gypsy woman is a larger, all-encompassing figure whose literal existence becomes a metaphor for a certain kind of woman leading a certain kind of lifestyle. While Gypsy women were quite often performers, particularly dancers and singers, the commedia dell'arte actresses were not Gypsies. At least, no such records exist. That the image of the wandering, "cunning" Gypsy becomes a role and a disguise in the theater of professionals whose very lifestyles resembled, to some degree, that of the people they were imitating in their plays, is intriguing. As noted earlier, the commedia actresses were making a revolutionary statement through the women they portrayed on stage: strong, cunning, independent, always getting their way, subverting the authority of tyrannical fathers, punishing unfaithful lovers, and having the last laugh. The overlap between the very lives of the actresses and the roles they played is, in fact, at the very core of their emancipation. Thus, a role such as that of the Gypsy woman who can travel freely half way across the world, in a time when many women were locked up behind the walls of their houses by their husbands, becomes a symbol of freedom and emancipation, as well as

a means of acquiring the power in society that neither the Gypsy women nor the commedia actresses in fact fully possessed, but were at least striving to achieve.

There is no question that within the Gypsy role or disguise, a significant amount of idealizing and stereotyping took place, for neither were Gypsy women in reality as free as they were portrayed in the commedia scenarios, nor were they respected and welcomed in middle class or bourgeois families as the "Gypsy girl" is in Pantalone's family. But ultimately, for the purpose of the present article, this is irrelevant. What is relevant is the identification, the overlap, and the inside relation of sympathy between commedia actresses and the image of the Gypsy woman, and the transformation of the latter into a symbol of female strength, cunning, and independence. By performing the female Gypsy, the commedia actresses were both playing themselves and an idealized image of themselves that, in turn, became a symbol of freedom and sexual independence for women outside the realm of representation, in actual society.

## PERFORMING THE FEMALE GYPSY IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY—FRANCA RAME'S REBELLION

Franca Rame is a unique twentieth century Italian performer, playwright, director, and comedian, who draws all the strings of the women's comic tradition into a new explosive and unapologetically feminist comic performance. She emerges from, and continues, to a significant degree, the Italian tradition of commedia dell'arte, which she explores in terms of performative and comic techniques, while redirecting it toward the creation of a militant and fiery feminist theater. Rame was born in a family of puppeteers who turned to regular comic acting, which they called "teatro di persona,"[25] in direct derivation and continuation of the commedia dell'arte in terms of characters, plots, and burlesque comedy, and who could trace their roots to seventeenth century itinerant troupes.[26] Rame has devoted her professional life to making of her theater the essential comic space for a satire, aimed first at social conventions and, then more and more targeted at "the unfairness of the economic and political conditions of contemporary society."[27] Her characters are women from all walks of life—working mothers, housewives, young lovers, middle-aged,

disillusioned wives—and their experiences and subjectivity are center stage, forming, together, a vibrant polyphony of voices.[28]

In one such a play called *Mamma Fricchetona*, translated in English as *The Freak Mommy*, and in French as *La Maman bohémienne*, Rame uses the disguise of a Gypsy woman in order to find liberation from an oppressive family situation. The action of the play takes place during the late sixties or early seventies. The play traces the rebellion of this desperate working mother and wife, and her avatars, under the guise of a Bohemian, as she leaves her house in search of her son-turned-hippy. The image of the Gypsy in Rame's play also includes aspects of modern "Gypsies" or people who lived nomadic lives such as new age travelers and hippies.

The hippies were, to a significant degree, self-styled Gypsies who appropriated from the Roma people several of the signs perceived as conducive to freedom from state, family, and societal authority: living in communes and traveling freely with a minimum of material belongings, sexual freedom, the blurring of the private and the public, making a constant spectacle of themselves through the way they dressed, and through singing and dancing in public spaces. Many, in fact, came from middle class or well-to-do families, and that lifestyle was a matter of choice, not need. New waves of Romani populations from the Balkan regions moved into Italy in the sixties and seventies and settled mostly in the south and in Tuscany.[29] Furthermore, the seventies were also a period where the phenomenon of new age travelers appeared.[30] The increase in populations with nomadic lifestyles in Western Europe and Italy was largely synchronous with the movement of the hippies. The lines between these groups were, at times, blurred, and the latter modeled themselves, by various degrees, from the former.

Franca's character is oppressed within her own family. However, because she is a mother in a bourgeois society and, therefore, a symbol of authority herself, she is also marginalized by the hippy friends of her son. She is at the very margins of the margins of society, oppressed from within, laughed at from the outside. Her own status renders her more comparable to the actual Gypsies than the hippies themselves. For the hippies, the Gypsy dress, lifestyle, and overall grasp on life has been more of a fashion by which these groups have tried to undermine various forms of authority. As noted earlier, Gypsy women, idealized as they might have been, were often associated with promiscuity or witchcraft by the "respectable" society, while also, at times, subjected to cruel rules by the men of their own society.

Rame's decision to dress, act, and live like a Gypsy woman comes as a last resort in a desperate situation that is, nevertheless, presented in a humorous way. Her son has run away from home with a group of hippies, and her husband pretends to have asthma attacks every time she tries to talk to him about sharing household chores or about the problems facing their son. In the meantime, she is stuck with household chores, worries, and a lot of put-down from all those around her. One day she decides: "I'll be a gypsy, gypsies have no age!" (*Orgasmo Adulto* 26). Her transformation is meticulous, just like that of an actress preparing herself for a show, only an improvised show: "I went to one of those flea markets where they sell used clothes, odd pieces, oriental originals made in Monza, got myself decked out: Syrian sandals, a skirt from Marocco, a jacket from Afghanistan" (*Orgasmo Adulto* 26).

Parodically using the stereotype of the Gypsy woman as witch, she describes how she sat down in the midst of a group of hippies that her son had joined, and how she took out her "stuff." The "stuff" is much like a magical potion, only described in exaggerated, comical details: "essence of turpentine, oil of the liver of cod, excrement of horse, strong tobacco, pure alcohol, tincture of iodine, a little toothpaste for color . . . creosote for outhouses, some drops of lemon that never spoils" (27). She does not really manage to speak to her son but, instead, she is a hit with the hippies who use her potion to get high and who greatly admire her, particularly after she tells them her mother is from India and her father a "Gypsy from Calabria." She is taken to jail and, upon her release, becomes a national heroine acclaimed by a "mob of people, freaks, metropolitan Indians, feminists." They welcome her with a sign "Free Mamma Witch!" (28).

The Gypsy disguise of Franca Rame's character, like the one of the commedia actresses, is also a kind of mise en abîme,[31] in which the woman performer is engaged in layers of disguise that paradoxically give her the freedom to be more who she really is, to reveal her true nature and pursue her desires. Like the commedia actresses who were to some degree self-styled Gypsies, and who would sometimes portray women of middle class or high society disguised as Gypsy women, so does Franca Rame, an actress, feminist militant performing in the streets of Italy, in piazzas, factories or abandoned buildings, play the part of an oppressed wife who finds liberation, for a little while, under the dress and lifestyle of a Gypsy woman. Franca's character creates, with deliberation, her Gypsy persona, while also using and parodying

stereotypical images of Gypsy women. She tells her newly found friends: "I live casting spells and reading cards and the stars. I feed on only hen's blood and blood of freshly killed cats because I'm a witch" (27). These images sarcastically echo medieval stories of Gypsies as "Satanic witches." As she tells us, "they didn't believe me but they liked me and let me stay with them" (27).

Franca tells her story in the form of a confession to a Catholic priest inside the confessional of a church, as she asks for sanctuary from the police who are looking for her, and who have been sent by her own family to bring her back home. The mock confession, asking for sanctuary, the Gypsy disguise, and the use of the word "freak" to refer to Gypsies, hippies, and herself remind us of another Gypsy story taking place inside a Catholic church, where a "freak" of nature, coming from a Gypsy family, and a young woman, thought of as a Gypsy, also ask for sanctuary and intertwine their troubled destinies: no other than Victor Hugo's sentimental, romantic narrative *Notre Dame de Paris*, and the two tragic characters, Esmeralda and Quasimodo. That Rame's female character tells her story and finds refuge inside a Catholic church, disguised as a Gypsy woman, while the police are looking for her, is profoundly ironic. She tells the Father about her feminist awakening and how she discovered that "What is personal is political! You need to confront your sexuality!" She makes fun of the construction of gender that starts with the "little boys" who "make wee-wee standing up" and little girls who "make it sitting down" (28–29). Her discourse is moving into the carnivalesque. Rame uses the comic and improvisational technique called by Judy Little "carnivalizing," or "humoring the sentence," which entails a juxtaposition of voices in which the voice of authority is contained, parodied, and deconstructed. Such a comic voice, argues Little, "may not be typical of realistic drama, but in some experimental plays by women juxtaposed styles occur occasionally within a voice, and the result is carnavalized discourse."[32]

The sexual freedom of Rame's character is woven with her linguistic freedom in a discourse that sounds like a chant, or like a spell, that breaks taboos and turns the tables on accepted norms, conventions, and roles specific to so called "civilized society." It is widely recognized that it is precisely because Romani people historically have been known to break such taboos and norms that they have been both demonized and idealized. The carnival, as Bakhtin has noted, "is a temporary suspension, both ideal and real, of hierarchical rank," and

"a special type of communication impossible in everyday life," as well as a form of "liberating from norms of etiquette and decency imposed at other times" (9). *Commedia dell'arte* actors *and* Gypsies were present, performing and roaming the streets, during Carnival in early modern Europe. Female performers like Andrieni and Piissimi, and playwrights like Behn and Rame, all use carnivalesque reversals in which women, Gypsy women, and courtesans subvert the status quo of patriarchal societies with their irreverent laugh, their tricks, and their wit.

In her stream of consciousness confession and carnivalesque discourse, Franca breaks the ultimate taboo as she openly ends up talking about the sexual enjoyment she once experienced in religious terms, to a "holy" Father: "God! Holy Mother! Jesus Christ! It is so good. I think I'm in heaven" (29). She is terrified at the thought of returning home, despite the ardent pleas from her own reformed son and husband: "I felt sick!" she confesses. "Yes, because I had, like a flash, me back there, in my house, with all the aggravations, the shopping, the shirts to iron, without ever a minute for myself. You know, Father, if I wanted to read the newspaper, the toilet!" (29). In her own house, the only place where she had any semblance of freedom was the bathroom. No wonder that the nomadic life she has chosen for now seems so much more attractive than the prison-like life of her home.

The Gypsy disguise and nomadic life that she has experienced represent Franca's journey to a feminist awakening and to acquiring a resisting voice. Rame herself, just like the commedia actresses before her, identifies with the marginalization, isolation, despair, and rebellion of her own character *and* of the Gypsy woman she disguises herself as. The wife of the Nobel Prize Laureate Dario Fo, Rame has been marginalized and has lived in the shadow of her husband, while largely being responsible for his fame.[33] Franca Rame admits that she used to do everything: have a full day of work and come home and take care of all the household chores, until the day she rebelled and refused the double-shift life. Like her Gypsy woman character, she also went through a feminist awakening. One day, she rebelled and refused the double-shift schedule of working and running the household full time. And also, similar to the Gypsy women, who are seen as carefree and independent from the outside, while often being subjected to domestic injustices inside their own society, Franca was regarded, during the fifties, sixties, and seventies, successively, as the blonde "bombeshell," as the rebellious, radical "Harlequin of the Revolution."[34]

Simultaneously, inside her own family, she had to carry the burden of the child care, household chores, and her husband's fame. In an interview, she once said that she was the pedestal on which stands Dario Fo. Furthermore, like Romani women who are often victims of sexual and physical abuse by both Romani and non-Romani men, Franca was a victim of a gang rape by a Neo-Nazi group because of her feminist and radical leftist performances.[35] She later turned that experience into a testimonial play, called *The Rape*.[36]

The nomadic Gypsy life and disguise thus simultaneously functions as a reminder, as a testimony of her sufferings, and as rebellion, as liberation, as vindication. This disguise provides a carnivalesque moment, in which "Mamma Fricchetona," "Mamma Witch," is queen of the carnival, center stage, and symbolizes the appropriation of power by those who do not have it away from those who have too much of it. While even famous feminist notions that "the personal is political" get caught in the swirl of Franca's carnival and laughter, her ultimate message is an empowering and profoundly feminist one. Although, in the end, Mamma Fricchetona is caught by the police who break into the church with total disregard to the "sanctuary" that she has requested, the potential for power, liberation, and of breaking the shackles of patriarchy has been explosively revealed. The cruel irony of this theatrical moment is that real shackles are being placed around the character's wrists just as she is about to have the full realization of her newly acquired feminist consciousness and of the way to inner freedom. While she is being taken away by the police, Mamma Fricchetona yells: "Let's go! I'm over twenty-one. I will decide my own fate." And to the priest she yells: "You squealed, you're no son of Mary" (30).

Franca's one-woman shows and monologues were part of the feminist revolution in the Italy of the seventies and eighties, and were responsible for important changes in the lives of Italian women. Quite often, she performed her plays like the commedia actresses, and like Gypsy performers, in the street, in piazzas, in factories, and in abandoned buildings. Her Mamma Fricchetona is the Gypsy in all the oppressed women who is screaming to get out and roam the streets carefree, take center stage, try some magic, learn some "witchcraft," and have some fun for a change.

## CONCLUSION

The representation of Romani people in art, much like their treatment in actual society, needs to be understood in terms of gender categories and differences. As we have seen, within an important part of Western comedy and performance across several centuries, the image of the Gypsy woman has been appropriated by female artists and performers in ways that are relevant to the lives of women in society, and that are often different from the use of the image of the Gypsy man or of Gypsies in general, or that are different from the ways the Gypsy woman image has been used by male artists and performers. Thus, it is not only that our understanding of Gypsy women has to be refined by using gender as a category of analysis, but also by understanding the sociopolitical contexts, the artistic means, and the motivations of the very artists who have used, created, recreated this image. The case of women performers creating a role, a disguise, an image of the Gypsy woman in a sort of vertigo of theatrical representation is a remarkable one.

As already noted, these images are far from being devoid of stereotyping and idealizing. However, they have great artistic and political significance, for they point to the complex set of negotiations that these women artists have established between their real, and a set of overlapping imagined, lives, between their personal and public personae and the lives and images of other women in society. Together, these intertwined real and imagined lives form something like a dizzying hall of mirrors in which the image of the Gypsy woman, in her chemise, large skirts, and colorful shawl, dances her way from one century to the next, like a mirage, like an alluring presence that both imposes itself irrefutably to our imagination and escapes the fixity of definitions. This image has been used by women whose lives were comparable to the very lives of Romani women, therefore with a degree of sympathy and admiration. Such a use of the image of the Roma woman gives us a glimpse into the creativity of women artists who were real pioneers, as well as into their anguishes and dreams. Under their improvisational, comedic, theatrical art, the Gypsy woman becomes a symbol of emancipation and power, while still reflecting back to itself and calling on us to be mindful of the difficulties that face Roma women. For all these reasons, understanding the performance of the Gypsy female role in the commedia dell'arte tradition, and in the modern theater of a performance artist like Franca

Rame, is of service both to the reinterpretation and reconstruction of the female gender in performance, and to the revalorization of the Gypsy woman in the collective imaginary and, hopefully, in actual reality as well.

For the commedia woman, whether the actress, or the character, often living at the margins of society, the female Gypsy offers both an image that she can identify with, an image that may bring her comfort, and a sense of solidarity in suffering, or an image that she may dream to become, in terms of its associations with freedom. For the male artist or character, on the other hand, the female Gypsy has often been an object of desire, an object of the gaze, a sexual object to possess. Bizet's celebrated Carmen and Hugo's mesmerizing Esmeralda are there to prove it. A look at this vertigo of theatrical representation, from the point of view of the female experience and creativity, urges us to be mindful not only of *how* we look at a Gypsy woman, but also of *who* is looking at a Gypsy woman.

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# NOTES

1. See Cesare Molinari, *Theatre Through the Ages*, and *La Commedia dell'arte*. See also the study by Gustave Attinger on the "spirit" of the commedia, the studies of Pierre-Louis Duchartre and Louise Clubb, the entries to the commedia dell'arte in d'Amico's *Enciclopedia dello Spetacolo* and the comments of Luigi Rasi in his study on the Italian actors in the commedia dell'arte.
2. See Fernando Taviani and Mirella Schino, *Il segreto della Commedia dell'Arte*. In this study, Taviani and Schino argue at length that the great "secret" of the commedia is that women performers had a crucial role precisely in that aspect of the genre, which accounted largely for its "mythical" quality, namely improvisation. For the most revolutionary perspectives on this topic, see the articles by Kathleen McGill about the role of women in the development of the art of improvisation in the commedia dell'arte: "Improvisatory Competence and the Cueing of Performance," and "Women and Performance: The Development of Improvisation by the Sixteenth–Century Commedia dell'Arte."
3. See Edward Sullivan's article on "Jacques Callot's *Les Bohémiens*."
4. Ibid.
5. See Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*. He discusses various forms of popular culture and entertainment, including the roles of women and other marginalized groups, including Gypsy women, during the period of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. He also discusses the oral culture of the times versus the culture of the book, and the fact that women, partly due to their exclusion form mainstream society, and partly because of high rates of illiteracy, had developed a powerful alternative oral culture to compensate for this exclusion.
6. See his study, *Scottish Gypsies under the Stewarts*, 60–62.
7. See the article by Edward Sullivan, "Jacques Callot's *Les Bohémiens*." Sullivan also gives a brief and precise history of the Gypsies and the various legends connected to their origins. For more recent data and perspectives on the Roma people and their history see the study by Khiuchuko Khristo and Ian Hancok. *A History of the Romani People*. See also the study of Angus Bancroft *Roma and Gypsy-Travelers in Europe: Modernity, Race, Space, and Exclusion*.
8. See the study by Angus Fraser on "Juridicial Economy Among Fifteen and Sixteenth Century Gypsies."
9. See the article by Matluck Brooks entitled "Women and the Dance in Seville's Processions during the Golden Age," 5.
10. See the articles of Kathleen McGill on the role of women in the commedia dell'arte. See also Anne MacNeil, Melissa Vickery Bareford, Taviani and Schino on the associations between courtesans or sexual promiscuity and actresses or female performers during the Renaissance.
11. This and the previous three quotes are from A. G. Paspati's article called "Memoir on the Language of the Gypsies, as Now Used in the Turkish Empire," 144 –50.
12. See Margaret Rosenthal, *The Honest Courtesan*. Rosenthal's study offers a complex picture of the lives of sixteenth century Venetian courtesans, and, in particular, of the life and poetry of the famous courtesan poetess Veronica Franco. See also the studies by Anne MacNeil and Melissa Vickery-Bareford on the famous sixteenth century actress Isabella Andreini. She was famous for her performing genius, her erudition, her poetry, as well as for her proverbial "virtue." Both MacNeil and Vickery-Bareford discuss, at length, the ways in which Andreini managed to negotiate her public and private persona and to cunningly subvert accepted norms of femininity and conventional gender roles

through her art. Finally, see the book by Mary Beth-Rose on *Women in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.*

13. Quoted in Macritchie 54.
14. See Callum Carmichael, "Gypsy Law and Jewish Law, which discusses the regulations and laws within these cultures that regulate every day life and the relations between men and women.
15. See the work of Ian Hancock, David Macritchie, and Walter Weyrauch about the various forms of persecution, marginalization, and oppression of the Gypsies throughout the centuries to nowadays. With regard to the trope of the migrating or wandering women in early modern Europe, see the book by Deanna Shemek. *Ladies Errant: Wayward Women and Social Order in Early Modern Italy.* See also Toby F. Sonneman "Mysterious Wanderers: The Migrating Metaphor of the Gypsy," for an interpretation of the creation of tropes about the migrating Gypsy.
16. See the anthology by Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, *Violence in War and Peace*; the study by Lora Jo Foo, *Asian American Women: Issues, Concerns, and Responsive Human and Civil Rights Advocacy.* See also the study by J. E. Asbury, "Violence in Families of Color in the United States." as well as the study of Steinmetz and Pellicciaro, "Women, Ethnicity, and Family Violence: Implications for Social Policy."
17. See Claude Cahn *Roma Rights: Race, Justice, and Strategies for Equality* Also see Jeff Timmerman on the conflicts between Gypsy laws and international human rights. Also a seminal study on exploding stereotypical images of Gypsies in Russia and the connections between such images and their unjust treatment in society is the study by Alaina Lemon, *Between Two Fires.*
18. In an oblique manner the study by Susan Glenn called *Female Spectacle* is also pertinent for fascinating insights into the connections between the social emancipation of women and their participation in public life through performance and spectacle.
19. Melissa Vickery-Bareford and Ann McNeil are two scholars who wrote full-fledged book-sized studies about Isabella Andreini and her contributions to the development of improvisation and the creation of a new image of the Renaissance woman. Other critics who wrote about her are Ferdinando Taviani and Mirella Schino, Kathleen Mc Gill, and Cesare Molinari in his studies on the commedia dell'arte and *Theater through the Ages.*
20. This is the role that brought Isabella to the height of her fame as an actress and remained in history as a tour de force of improvisatory performance. Also included in Flaminio Scala's scenarios. Described in detail by Giuseppe Pavoni, a witness to the wedding.
21. See the book by Antonio Tabucchi. *Gli Zingari e il Rinascimento. Vivere da rom a Firenze.*
22. "Al mio paese non si lavora la terra, sono luoghi selvaggi, terre sterile," 398.
23. "sempre nelle città, l'ho tenuto in compagnia di gentildonne e gentiluomini," 458.
24. See *The Cambridge Companion to Aphra Behn*, Derek Hughes and Janet Todd, eds.
25. See Joseph Farrell, *Dario Fo and Franca Rame* 26.
26. See Antonio Scuderi, "Improvisation and Framing in the Fo-Rame Collaboration" 176.
27. In Valeri, 11.
28. See the study by Claudia Maera *Carnivalesque Disruptions and Political Theater*: *Plays by Dario Fo, Franca Rame and Caryl Churchill.*
29. See Zoran Lapov, "The Romani Communities in Italy. The Case of Tuscany Region with Special Attention to the City of Rome." Lapov states that, presently, the Romani population in Italy amounts to approximately 110,000.
30. New Age travelers or Peace Convoy are a peculiarly British social phenomenon, consisting of people who often espouse New Age and neo-pagan beliefs, and who travel

between music festivals and fairs in order to live in a community with others who hold similar beliefs. Their transport and homes consist of vans, lorries, buses, and caravans.

31. The term "mise en abime" or "mise en abyme" is a French concept, literally meaning "placing in the abyss," and connoting the idea of an image inscribed within another image, a work of art represented inside another work of art, an actor playing a character who plays another role, or theater within theater.
32. See Judy Little, "Humoring the Sentence: Women's Dialogic Comedy," in the collection edited by Linda Morris, entitled *American Women Humorists.* See also the chapter by Luciana d'Arcangeli on the carnivalesque techniques used by Franca Rame in her theater: "Franca Rame Giullaressa," in Valeri's *Franca Rame: A Woman on Stage.*
33. See Serena Anderlini D'Onofrio's article on "Rame and Fo's Theater Partnership" in Walter Valeri, *Franca Rame, A Woman on Stage.* And in her doctoral thesis entitled "Gender and Desire in Contemporary Drama: Lillian Hellman, Natalia Ginzburg, Franca Rame and Ntozake Shange" Anderlini interviews Franca about the balancing of professional and family life.
34. See the book by Joseph Farrell *Dario Fo and Franca Rame: Harlequins of the Revolution.* The book traces Fo and Rame's leftist activities and the connection between their political activism and their use of commedia style comedy and techniques. Fo learned most of his improvisational methods from Rame.
35. See the interview taken by Anderlini in her doctoral dissertation for Franca's own telling of this horrible story.
36. This play is included in the collection of plays called *Female Parts.* Franca has always acted this piece with complete detachment, as she is giving a chilling account of the experience.

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# Chapter 10

# Theater of the Underworld

## Spectacle and Subculture in Hugo's *Notre-Dame de Paris*

*Aimee Kilbane*

Victor Hugo's 1831 novel *Notre-Dame de Paris 1482* is well known for portraying issues of nineteenth-century cultural relevance under medieval guise, but one important and overlooked example of this is the strong presence of the bohemian, or Gypsy, in its two incarnations: one from the fifteenth century, in which the novel is set, and the other from the nineteenth century, when it was written.[1] The expression *bohémien* results from the fact that when Gypsies first arrived in France, they were believed to be from the country of Bohemia.[2] Hugo's character Esmeralda represents the traditional European image of the Gypsy as a traveling, racially other outsider, a figure that was becoming an object of fascination in the nineteenth century as exoticism and the Orient were increasingly in vogue.[3] The second representative of the bohemian in the novel is Pierre Gringoire, a stereotypical Romantic artist who chooses to live among the Gypsies as an alternative to bourgeois life, which he rejects for its lack of appreciation

of his art.[4] Both of these "bohemian" figures act as mediators between the bourgeois world and the *Cour des Miracles*, the criminal underworld of Paris inhabited by *truands* (beggars and thieves). *Notre-Dame de Paris* is a novel that dramatizes encounters between two apparently opposite cultures, juxtaposed in the following ways: foreign and domestic, outsider and initiate, mobile and immobile, spectacle and spectator. The contact between these different cultures ultimately demonstrates that they are the same in structure, but with the social hierarchies reversed to serve different interests.

The significance of the bohemian in this novel, as a figure that crosses between two seemingly different worlds—the bourgeois and the marginal—is that it elicits the public's ambivalence toward the foreign, and its fear of the cultural hybridity that results from contact between cultures. The bohemian is unsuccessfully relegated to the confines of theater, as an exotic spectacle to be gazed upon and consequently rendered unthreatening. The urge to dramatize the foreign simultaneously neutralizes and draws attention to the potential for real, unmediated contact.

Bohemians have figured in the French literary imagination since the fifteenth century, when the anonymous writer of *Journal d'un bourgeois de Paris* (*A Parisian Journal 1405–49*) recorded their arrival in Paris in 1427. The Gypsies described by this diarist were reportedly from Lower Egypt, and in order to return to the Church, they were ordered by the Pope "that for seven years they should go to and fro about the world without ever sleeping in a bed," as penance for having abandoned Christianity when attacked by the Saracens. When they arrived in Paris, they were not allowed in the city, "but were lodged at La-Chappelle-St.-Denis by the authorities" (216) to protect the citizens of Paris from these unknown outsiders, even though they carried letters from the Pope to gain acceptance wherever they traveled. They are thus connected with both transgression and contact with the holy, each dependent on the other for its definition: in order for the holy to be revered, the transgressive must be spectacularized and feared; in order for the Gypsies to serve as an example, their outsider status had to be accentuated.

The Gypsies were quite an attraction while they were in Paris: "You never saw greater crowds going to the Lendit benediction than went flocking to La Chappelle to see them while they were there. People went from Paris, from St. Denis, and from all around the city" (217). They were known for the rings in their ears, their poverty, their

sorcery, and fortune-telling. They were also associated with crime: "it was said that when they talked to people they contrived—either by magic arts or by other means, or by the devil's help or by their own skill and cunning—to make money flow out of other people's purses into their own. I must say I went there three or four times to talk to them and could never see that I lost a penny, nor did I see them looking into anyone's hands, but everyone said they did" (219).

These intriguing outsiders were feared and mistrusted, and despite, or because of, such skepticism, the narrator and (according to his account) nearly every other Parisian visited the Gypsies multiple times. The same images continue to be associated with Gypsies today: their draw as a spectacle, rootless existence, and association with crime and magic. This attraction to the outsider in the form of a spectacle, and the presence of the crowd that it provokes, is central to *Notre-Dame de Paris*, where the visible nature of the link that connects the familiar and the unknown comes into focus. The Gypsies are a connection to another land and time; throughout the novel, spectacles revolve around links and borders that suggest something foreign, but do not actually deliver it.

Nineteenth-century writers and artists typically romanticized Gypsy life because it was nonbourgeois and non-Western.[5] The imagery of vagabondage, constant movement, and travel was attractive because it seemed the opposite of the stagnancy associated with bourgeois life. In addition, many romantics identified with the centuries-old position of Gypsies as pariahs; they were permanent outsiders, a self-imposed trait of the Romantic generation. The Romantics were also interested in cultures that they could consider uncorrupted by modern life, and the Gypsy became a domestic example of this. A result of this, writes Jean-Paul Clébert in *The Gypsies*, is that Gypsiology "became a branch of ethnology only in the 19th century, at the time when the need for an *interior* exoticism, under the influence of Romanticism, showed itself. People had before their eyes authentic examples of the 'noble savage,' of 'uncouth fellows'" (xvii). Though the word *bohémien* had traditionally contained negative connotations, the new use of the word came into vogue at the same time as did the artistic identification with and representation of Gypsies in a positive light. One need not travel far away for contact with the foreign, and the new Romantic bohemians, exiles from the bourgeoisie, had an "authentic" model to imitate at home.

The unconventional lives of artists in the 1830s caught the attention of local observers and journalists, who thought they resembled Gypsies for their nomadic lifestyle. The expression "bohemian" to describe people or places considered to be youthful, artistic, or unconventional, is generally attributed to the French writer Félix Pyat, who used the word in his entry "Les Artistes," included in the *Nouveau Tableau de Paris* of 1834, to describe Romantic artists and writers in Paris at that time: "La manie ordinaire des jeunes artistes de vouloir vivre hors de leur temps, avec d'autres idées et d'autres mœurs, les isole du monde, les rend étrangers et bizarres, les met hors la loi, au ban de la société; ils sont les Bohémiens d'aujourd'hui" (8–9).[6] There is, however, evidence to suggest that *bohème* had a connotation beyond reference to Gypsies before the nineteenth century.[7] The terminology may have existed previously, but it was its application to nineteenth-century artists and writers in Paris that gave it lasting international meaning and recognition. Even if the term *bohémien* to refer to artists and writers had not yet invaded the popular vocabulary of 1831, it is significant that, in *Notre-Dame de Paris*, Hugo presents a young writer, Pierre Gringoire, who is led into the underworld via his fascination with the Gypsy Esmeralda. Given the importance of Hugo's work among the artists and writers of his time, particularly those younger than he, it is likely that his work influenced what was to follow later in the century in terms of the centrality of the bohemian to the cultural imagination. Hugo's popularization of the already-emerging fascination with the figure of the bohemian certainly contributed to the elaboration and endurance of this image. The fact that a bohemian character is central to a novel written immediately before the adjective "bohemian" was becoming so prominent and important within the emerging discourse of artistic life and contemporary culture in Paris deserves critical attention.

The first sentence of *Notre-Dame de Paris* draws attention to the fact that the novel is concerned with two time periods, for the distance between them is literally spelled out: "Il y a aujourd'hui trois cent quarante-huit ans six mois et dix-neuf jours" (37) since the events that begin the novel took place: January 6, 1482.[8] Precise times are set in both centuries, so that the conditions at the time of the telling of the tale are historicized as much as the events of the narrative themselves, which situates the novel as much in the nineteenth century as in the fifteenth. Hugo uses the figure of the bohemian to bridge the gap between the two centuries, for these mobile, transient figures were

prominent in the cultural imagination and life in both periods. They also serve to illuminate the ways in which the bourgeoisie of both centuries approaches contact with the foreign: via the spectacle. The movement of the bohemian is itself theatrical, and the novel uses this figure to further explore and make a larger statement about the function of the spectacle in the nineteenth century: it is a substitute for actual contact with a perceived threat. The novel's combined focus on the bohemian and the spectacle shows that theater is based on divisions, and when its borders are revealed as vulnerable, panic ensues. The novel exposes the bohemian's mobility as dangerous, for the bohemian has infiltrated the consciousness of the general population, and manipulated the boundaries of theater by bringing it into the street.

In *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, Stallybrass and White describe the role of theater in the context of its relationship between the bourgeoisie and the excluded other: "[the bourgeoisie] *uses* the whole world as its theatre in a particularly instrumental fashion, the very subjects which it politically excludes becoming exotic costumes which it assumes in order to play out the disorders of its own identity" (200). Though this comment refers specifically to colonialism, the presence of Gypsy culture as a domestic exotic in Hugo's novel serves a purpose similar to that described by Stallybrass and White. They describe another function of theater as reducing "the 'Other' to a frightening or comic spectacle set over against the antithetical 'normality' of the spectator" (41), but go on to make the distinction that if such divisions exist, they are unstable (42). It is not simply low culture that is feared by professional or bourgeois classes, but hybrid figures that result from the contact of high and low culture that can, in some way, participate in both worlds (112). Esmeralda is such a hybrid figure, and it is precisely her ability to both absorb and transit between multiple cultures that is threatening to her spectators.[9]

The unknown origin of Gypsies is highlighted in *Notre-Dame de Paris*, as Esmeralda is referred to interchangeably as *l'égyptienne*, *la tsigane*, and *la bohémienne*, all expressions used to signify a Gypsy, though implying different places of origin. She is truly a hybrid figure, as she does not know what is native to her, as opposed to what she has picked up in her travels. Though called Egyptian, Bohemian, and Indian, she sings in Spanish and plays a Basque tambourine.[10] She mentions that she has been in Paris only one year (151), yet crowds chant her name everywhere she goes. She is at home wherever she

travels, though always foreign, for she is indigenous to nowhere. This hybridity is even visible in her clothes, "son costume moitié parisien, moitié africain" (334), half familiar, half exotic.[11] She is known because she is an outsider, which ironically also makes her familiar and provides her with a function and space to inhabit at the same time. She is an apt symbol of boundary crossing, given her easy passage from one world to the next, and an exotic object of intrigue. Esmeralda functions not only as mediator between familiar and foreign; in terms of the structure of the novel, she is the link that brings all of its characters together, and that sets nearly every element of the plot in motion.

As a novel that is concerned with boundary crossing and its relationship to the spectacle, *Notre-Dame de Paris* narrates the literal movement of its characters through the physical terrain of Paris. The fact that boundaries may be crossed on the domestic front, in such a limited geographic space, implies the presence of multiple identities inhabiting the same space, as was the case in nineteenth-century Paris: "Vingt années de guerre, pendant lesquelles des millions de paysans français furent mobilisés et déplacés dans toute l'Europe, produisirent bien des déracinés, changèrent des coutumes, brisèrent des liens locaux" (Marchand 19).[12] The existence of the foreign at home, represented in this novel by the bohemian, is a source of both fear and desire. The novel is filled with crowds forever in search of a spectacle, the more horrific the better (for example, tortures and executions), but the focus on the theatricality of the foreign suggests a fear of what lies behind the sanctioned boundaries of theater.

The novel begins during Carnival (the *jour des rois* and the *fête des fous*), a time when boundaries and hierarchies are typically dissolved. As Mikhail Bakhtin describes in *Rabelais and His World*, during the middle ages Carnival festivities "built a second world and a second life outside officialdom, a world in which all medieval people participated more or less, in which they lived during a given time of the year"(6). But in *Notre-Dame de Paris*, the crowd's reluctance to completely abandon itself to the chaos of Carnival betrays a sense of fear that belies a lack of confidence in the stability of the social order. The status quo is not firmly in place. Those normally on top of the hierarchy—for example, the king or the bourgeoisie—display signs of fear. The pretense of Carnival here is false, because the events are designed to contain the expected disorder of the public, but the unscripted appearance of Esmeralda will introduce something that cannot be

controlled. This hybrid figure represents the real possibility of obscuring the boundaries of hierarchy, the real moment of Carnival, but one that is not sustainable in the novel.

The first character introduced on the day of Carnival is the crowd, "la foule des bourgeois et des bourgeoises," the "badauds de Paris," who go to the *Palais de Justice* to witness the proceedings.[13] We are also introduced to a kind of spectator who prefers to watch from above the crowd: "Aux portes, aux fenêtres, aux lucarnes, sur les toits, fourmillaient des milliers de bonnes figures bourgeoises, calmes et honnêtes, regardant le palais, regardant la cohue, et n'en demandant pas davantage; car bien des gens à Paris se contentent du spectacle des spectateurs, et c'est déjà pour nous une chose très curieuse qu'une muraille derrière laquelle il se passe quelque chose" (39).[14]

To keep such a distance suggests a fear of coming too closely in contact with the spectacle, or with the masses of spectators. There is something to fear not only from the spectacle, but from proximity to those who dare to watch. The fact that the wall that divides the spectacle from the outside world is of interest suggests that these members of the bourgeoisie are intrigued by boundaries because of what they imagine or fear might exist behind them. To focus on the boundary is also to focus on the containment of the spectacle, to make sure that a physical barrier keeps exotic elements separate from the ordinary.

Links, as well as boundaries, are images of importance in the novel. The narrator focuses on the primitive stage setup for Gringoire's mystery play, performed as part of the festivities, and is particularly shocked that the ladder that links the backstage area to the place of performance is visible: "Une échelle, naïvement placée en dehors, devait établir la communication entre la scène et le vestiaire, et prêter ses roides échelons aux entrées comme aux sorties" (43–44).[15] This ladder draws attention to what is invisible behind the spectacle: the dressing room. This space that is supposed to be private is highlighted, though not exposed. Attention is drawn to a place where hidden activity occurs. The ladder serves as a link between front and backstage, between the sanctioned spectacle and the dressing room, where the changing of costumes takes place, making it a space of transition. Though the existence of a backstage area is not a secret, the ladder is a symbol of the mystery behind the spectacle because, as a link, it promises access to what is off-limits. Such an exposure of the link domesticates the illusions of theater, for the elements of mystery and surprise are compromised. The ladder also draws attention to its

own importance—it is both self-referential (the link itself, like Esmeralda, is an object of intrigue), and a reminder that there is something beyond it that is not being seen. The image of the ladder is central to the text because it points to the fact that the function of the spectacle is that it be contained within itself, to satisfy curiosity by alluding to something beyond it, without enabling contact. While the extreme visibility of the ladder at Gringoire's performance may point to the lack of elegance of this particular production, it calls attention to one function of theater: to provide a substitute for contact with the foreign. Esmeralda is in the same position as the ladder, in that she is highly visible, and alludes to an off-limits or foreign world.

After Gringoire's play is repeatedly interrupted, the remainder of the crowd is diverted by the presence of Esmeralda, dancing outside of the palace. The appearance of Esmeralda is what makes it entirely impossible for his play to continue: someone has stolen the ladder needed to access the stage, in order to climb to a window to watch Esmeralda dance. There is no longer access from the sheltered to the exposed; the link is gone, so is the show. The link is no longer in the service of the theater; it now permits access to the outside, a space beyond containment, the space that Esmeralda inhabits. In using the ladder, the spectator risks becoming an actor. This is the only moment in the novel that resembles Carnival as idealized by Bakhtin, where actors and spectators merge: "[C]arnival does not know footlights, in the sense that it does not acknowledge any distinction between actors and spectators. Footlights would destroy a carnival, as the absence of footlights would destroy a theatrical performance. Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people. While carnival lasts, there is no other life outside it" (7). The fact that Carnival can only be sustained briefly during its sanctioned celebration indicates a society too unstable to participate in a suspension of law and order. Esmeralda inspires spectators to abandon the confines of the theater for the street, demonstrating that passage between borders is possible and can be accomplished by anyone.

When Gringoire loses control of his own performance and follows Esmeralda into unknown territory, he finds himself in the *Cour des Miracles*, where the protective costumes of the bourgeois world are shed. His encounter with this community of outcasts serves several functions in this text: it develops his likeness to the nineteenth-century romantic artist and bohemian, which makes him familiar to

readers of that century and adds humor to the frightening events that follow; it also shows that crossing into other territory is dangerous when theater is unavailable to mediate difference; finally, his experience exposes that what is most dangerous about the foreign is its resemblance to the familiar. The inhabitants of the *Cour des Miracles* are hostile to him because he is an outsider to this community; even the underworld, supposedly a refuge for outcasts, does not recognize outsiders as part of their community, thus mirroring the bourgeois world.

Gringoire enters a place where the hierarchy is reversed, where those who would likely be apprehended by the police in the daytime are now in control. He is outside of the jurisdiction of the law as he knows it and, as a result, finds himself in danger. He has been led by the Gypsy, and by his vague desire to leave his own world, into a world so apparently foreign that things are not immediately recognizable to him based on the signs he is familiar with from his world. However, it will soon be evident that this new world is foreign only in appearance, and that, though his initial crossing places him in danger, the new world he discovers is much like the one he has left.

His journey into the underworld shows that romantic wandering can be dangerous for bourgeois subjects, when he finds himself in the *Cour des Miracles*,

> où jamais honnête homme n'avait pénétré à pareille heure . . . égout d'où s'échappait chaque matin, et où revenait croupir chaque nuit ce ruisseau de vices, mendicité et de vagabondage toujours débordé dans les rues des capitals . . . hôpital menteur où le bohémien, le moine défroqué, l'écolier perdu, les vauriens de toutes les nations . . . mendiants le jour, se transfiguraient la nuit en brigands; *immense vestiair*e en un mot, où s'habillaient et se déshabilliaient à cette époque tous les *acteurs de cette comédie éternelle* que le vol, la prostitution et le meurtre jouent sur le pavé de Paris. (126–27, my emphases)[16]

This passage presents criminal activity as theater (which, according to Bakhtin's definition, precludes a state of Carnival: where there is theater, there is no chaos or public license), and shows that every principal character in the novel belongs in the *Cour des Miracles*: Esmeralda as *bohémienne*, Claude Frollo as a fallen monk (*moine défroqué*), Jehan Frollo as a lost schoolboy (*écolier perdu*), and Gringoire and Phoeubus as rogue and scoundrel (*vauriens*). It is a place where those who are not what they seem to be can shed the images they adopt for the

bourgeois world. These two worlds that appear so drastically different are the same in reverse, interchangeable. Gringoire has entered a kind of backstage, or dressing room ("immense vestiaire"), where the marginalized of the daytime world discard their costumes and postures and take control of their own territory or space, where they may govern according to their own interests.

As foreign as the *Cour des Miracles* and the *truands* seem to Gringoire, their world resembles the mainstream world, with the exception that in the *Cour des Miracles*, their interests are served, rather than ignored or pushed aside. Gringoire becomes the spectacle, not them (Gringoire has recognized many of his captors as participants in the procession of the *pape des fous* from earlier that day), and they plan to show as little mercy to Gringoire as Gringoire's world shows to them. He is accused of breaking the laws of the *royaume de l'argot*, whose king, Clopin Trouillefou (a beggar who interrupted Gringoire's play that morning) tells him:

> Tu es entré dans le royaume d'argot sans être argotier, tu as violé les privilèges de notre ville. Tu dois être puni, à moins que tu ne sois . . . voleur, mendiant ou vagabond. . . . Chose toute simple, messieurs les honnêtes bourgeois! comme vous traitez les nôtres chez vous, nous traitons les vôtres chez nous. La loi que vous faites aux truands, les truands vous la font. C'est votre faute si elle est méchante. . . . Je vais te faire pendre pour amuser les truands. (132)[17]

Trouillefou's statement that Gringoire is treated no differently in the *Cour des Miracles* than the *truands* are treated in Gringoire's world is proven later in the novel, when Quasimodo and Esmeralda are both punished unjustly. The crowds that assemble to watch the torture of Quasimodo and, later, the display of Esmeralda in front of the cathedral where she was to be tortured, show that to hang Gringoire for the purpose of amusing the *truands* is really no different than such punishment in the bourgeois world. In both instances, lives are taken in public for the amusement of the crowd, another form of theater.

Gringoire's journey into the underworld of medieval Paris shows the danger involved in crossing into foreign territory, although beyond the threatening exterior, this new world functions much like his own, and he ultimately adopts the *Cour des Miracles* and the life of a *truand*. He serves as a guide for the readers to approach the more frightening content of the novel, and what is perhaps most frightening about his experience is the ease with which he abandons one

identity in favor of another. What makes Gringoire an appropriate guide is his unthreatening and familiar relationship to the reader, so that his morphability may be understood as threatening: if Gringoire, once a bourgeois and accidental tourist, can become a *truand*, then so might the reader. The ease of his transition points to the fact that if a bourgeois can become bohemian, then a bohemian can become bourgeois. Both identities are unstable.

*Notre-Dame de Paris* consists of predominantly marginal characters, yet one glaring exception to this tendency—the introduction of three gossiping bourgeois women—has been largely ignored, or dismissed as digressive.[18] Such an anomalous segment in the novel is certainly not arbitrary; the legend of the Gypsies' arrival in France, as well as the personal histories of Esmeralda, her mother, and Quasimodo, which are provided by the conversation between these women, are not simply melodramatic digressions, but pivotal to the story. Their conversation reveals that Esmeralda's mother is La Gudule, the occupant of the *trou aux rats*, a public cell inhabited for centuries by various "femmes affligées, mères, veuves ou filles, qui auraient beaucoup à prier pour autrui ou pour elles, et qui voudraient s'enterrer vives dans une grande douleur ou dans une grande pénitence" (269).[19] She condemned herself to a life of grief and penitence when her infant daughter (Esmeralda) was stolen by Gypsies and replaced with the deformed Quasimodo. She is known for her vehement hatred of Gypsies, particularly Esmeralda.

Why this change in narrative technique? Why is the story of the current resident of the *trou aux rats* left to these three women, who are so far from such a condition? Their narrative points first to their fear of Gypsies and anything that might threaten their comfort and social position, and second, to the role of the bourgeoisie as the containers and tellers of history, which reinforces their position of power and their potential to manipulate facts and determine what will be remembered.[20] In their ability to frame and disseminate events as they please, they participate in the same kind of containment and separation as the *bourgeoises* mentioned earlier, who watch spectacles from their windows above, and focus on barriers.

Mahiette, visiting Paris from Reims, captivates and terrifies her two friends by telling stories of Gypsies, demonstrating their appeal as entertainment. The three women are on their way to see Quasimodo tortured, then to offer a *galette* (cake) to La Gudule in the *trou aux rats*. Their agenda includes the spectatorship of two wretched individuals,

with the purpose of ridiculing one, while offering charity to another. They specifically seek out violence and poverty in the form of spectacle, their only permissible access to the foreign. Both of these acts accentuate the distance between these women and the unfortunate, and such reassurance constitutes, for them, an act of leisure.

Like the narrator, who assumes the role of tour guide in directing the readers through the topography of medieval Paris, these women are time travelers. They are described in appearance and habit as resembling nineteenth-century bourgeois women. Their purpose is to provide the readers with background information; they do not affect the plot in any way. The story they relate is one of fear and anxiety, and it is significant that this unnerving information comes from a source familiar to nineteenth-century readers. Like the characters in the novel, the reader is faced with the uncanny discovery that the foreign is more familiar than expected, that what is troubling is located at home. The premise of a tourist visiting Paris stresses the presence of the foreign within the city. One of Mahiette's guides tells her, as they hear Esmeralda's tambourine, "doublez le pas et traînez votre garçon. Vous êtes venue ici pour visiter les curiosités de Paris. Vous avez vu hier les flamands; il faut voir aujourd'hui l'égyptienne" (277).[21] The sights of Paris are themselves foreign, and just passing through, like Mahiette or any other tourist.

Mahiette's concern that her son Eustache might be stolen by Gypsies is the vehicle that allows for the stories to be told, but the inclusion of this boy in the novel also introduces an important undercurrent of the novel: anxiety over the state of youth, which translates into anxiety over the future. The fact that Esmeralda, the symbol and embodiment of all that the other characters—including her mother—expect of a Gypsy is not a Gypsy by birth, fuels the fear that any child may adopt the feared characteristics of the Gypsy. Mahiette is anxious that her son could become the very thing that she most fears: a force that threatens the stability of her comfortable existence. This is, in fact, the very thing that has happened to Gudule. She unknowingly loathes her own daughter, who is the most visible symbol of what she hates and fears: Gypsies, who stole this same daughter. For Gudule, the intimate resides in what is most abhorred. The fact that Esmeralda was not "born" a Gypsy, and that not even her mother recognizes her in her Gypsy costume, demonstrates the increasing difficulty in distinguishing the foreign from the domestic. Origins are not secure, which is a particular source of anxiety for the

bourgeois, who hold their position in society due to their fortune, not birth; should they lose their fortune, they lose their power and their identity.

That Esmeralda should emerge as a cautionary tale from a bourgeois mother worried about her own son's safety in the presence of Gypsies is not unusual, given the time and circumstances under which Hugo was writing. The year before *Notre-Dame de Paris* was published, Hugo's play *Hernani* was performed for the first time, and its controversial début is often referred to as the birth of both Romantic and bohemian youth culture in France, and is also remembered for the extent to which the bourgeois public was scandalized by the antics of the young Romantics during these performances. The opening of this play brought attention to the differences between the bourgeoisie and the emerging youth culture that was both flamboyant (in dress, antics) and eager to shake up the expectations of the theater-going public.[22]

*Notre-Dame de Paris* brings attention to the fear inspired by the spectacle of crossing boundaries, and the figure of the Gypsy embodies this transitional activity. The cathedral after which the novel is titled is itself a spectacle that terrifies, "Quae mole sua terrorem incutit spectantibus" (156).[23] The cathedral is also described as a work of transition, linking one period of history, arts, and science to the next, another version of the mediating link that is at work throughout the novel. And like the primary mediator of the novel, Esmeralda, the cathedral is a hybrid structure, bringing together different historical peoples and times: "Notre-Dame de Paris n'est pas de pure race romaine . . . ni de pure race arabe. . . . C'est un édifice de la transition" (160–61).[24] The same description could refer to Esmeralda, and this connection is made explicit when Gringoire speaks of "toute sa tribu qui la tient en vénération singulière, comme une Notre-Dame" (333).[25] She is as much of a spectacle as the cathedral, and regarded as ambivalently by the people. The importance of Esmeralda as a mediating figure of transition is certain, since she shares such a description with the cathedral, the title of the novel.

The result of bringing different worlds into contact, with the help of a mediator, is not a positive one, as the fate of Esmeralda, the character that could bridge these two worlds, is tragic.[26] Focus on the spectacle and appearance is an inadequate substitute for contact with alterity. *Notre-Dame de Paris* demonstrates that projecting the failures of home onto a monstrous other that inhabits an alternate universe

only serves to make the familiar as ugly as the fabricated foreign. The fact that the crowds in this novel are compelled to approach their fear, albeit in the form of a spectacle, indicates an urge to dissolve the false separation of foreign and domestic, doomed to failure by the distraction of the spectacle. Nineteenth-century Paris was a world even more fixated on the spectacle than the fifteenth-century world described in the novel, and on mediating figures such as the bohemian—a new, updated, and more commodified bourgeois version. The nineteenth-century reader, in consuming a novel about medieval Paris and its underworld, could easily register the inscription of his own time within its pages. For the novel demonstrates that, like the different geographies of medieval Paris through which the characters navigate, many of the differences between the two time periods addressed exist only superficially, in appearance.[27] Like the cathedral that continues to span the centuries, only the surface has changed, the structure is the original: "toutes ces nuances, toutes ces différences n'affectent que la surface des édifices. . . . De là la prodigieuse variété extérieure de ces édifices au fond desquels réside tant d'ordre et d'unité. Le tronc de l'arbre est immuable, la végétation est capricieuse" (164).[28] This passage points to why a version of the same is found in the exotic. The appearance may reflect the passage of time and the effects of foreign influences, but the structure remains untouched. What is fundamental to the city, like the cathedral, is here defined as the coexistence of foreign elements and mutability ("capricieuse") as requisite for life ("végétation"). The novel shows that what these two periods of transition have in common is a public divided between reverence and fear of the foreign, which has, as one consequence, the unstable relationship with the foreign at home, in this case, the Gypsies.

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## NOTES

1. See Seebacher 1051, or Ward 48, for characterizations of *Notre-Dame de Paris* as a nineteenth-century novel in medieval costume.
2. As the historian Sauval wrote of the Gypsies of medieval Paris in his history of the city of Paris (1724), "We called them Bohemians because they traveled to France via Bohemia the first time they came" (518, my translation).
3. See Said, *Orientalism*, and Clébert, *The Gypsies* xvii.
4. This was a typical sentiment of the Romantic generation, as Paul Bénichou explains: "Between ideally sovereign Art and actually triumphant Commerce they saw no possible accommodation, and they greeted the advent of the bourgeoisie with anger and despair" (298).
5. See Brown, *Gypsies and Other Bohemians* 11–14 and 20.

6. "The typical obsession of young artists to want to live outside of their own time, with different ideals and morals, isolates them from the world, makes them foreign and strange, puts them beyond the law, banished from society; they are the Bohemians of today" (my translation).
   Seigel (16–17) and Martin-Fugier (226) both attribute the first use of the expression bohemian in this sense to Pyat.
7. See Chotard 7, Berthier 358, and entry for "Boheme" in *Le Dictionnaire de l'Académie* (1694).
8. "It is three hundred forty-eight years, six months, and nineteen days ago today" (9). All quotes from *Notre-Dame de Paris* are from Walter Cobb's translation, unless otherwise noted.
9. Many scholars have commented on the importance of hybridity in this novel. Brombert stresses the inclusion of hybrid constructions in the novel, and claims that, for Hugo, "hybrid status corresponds to the highest promise of modern art" (52), though Hugo lamented that the public was not yet ready for it. See also Spires 47, and Zarifopol-Johnston 47–48.
10. Spain, and the Spanish Gypsy, were objects of reverence for the romantic generation. Olin Moore points out that Cervantes' story *La Bohémienne de Madrid* was an early inspiration for Esmeralda. See also Charnon-Deutsch, 55.
11. "her half-Parisian, half-African costume" (254).
12. "Twenty years of war, during which time millions of French peasants were mobilized and displaced all over Europe, produced many people without roots, changed customs, and broke local ties" (my translation).
13. "The crowd of bourgeois men and women"; "the rubbernecks of Paris" (my translations).
14. "Doors, windows, and roofs swarmed with thousands of happy bourgeois looking calmly yet soberly at the Palace or at the crowd, and desiring to do nothing more; for most of the good people of Paris are quite content with the spectacle of spectators—indeed, even a wall behind which something is happening is to us an object of interest" (11).
15. "A ladder, placed outside in full view of the audience, formed the connecting link between stage and dressing room, serving also for entrances and exits" (15).
16. "which no honest man had ever penetrated at such an hour . . . a sewer from which there escaped every morning, and to which there returned every night to stagnate that stream of vice, poverty, and vagrancy that ever flows through the streets of capitals . . . a sham hospital, where the Gypsy, the unfrocked monk, the discredited scholar, the good-for-nothings of every nation . . . beggars in the daytime, transformed themselves at night into robbers; in short, an immense dressing room, where dressed and undressed at that time all the actors of this eternal comedy which robbery, prostitution and murder enact on the pavements of Paris" (82).
17. "You entered the kingdom of Argot without being an Argotier, you have violated the privileges of our city. You must be punished, unless you are a . . . thief, a beggar, or a vagabond. . . . A very simple matter, messieurs the honest burghers! Just as you treat our people among you, so we treat yours among us. The law which you mete out to the Truands, the Truands mete out to you. If it is bad, that's your fault . . . I'm going to hang you for the amusement of the Truands" (86–87).
18. Zarifopol-Johnston refers to the "digressive and explanatory elements" (59) of the novel, and mentions, in particular, the chapter "Histoire d'une galette," which I will discuss here, as an example of such digression.

19. "women in affliction—mothers, widows, or maidens, who should have occasion to pray much for themselves or others, and who should wish to bury themselves alive on account of great misfortune or some severe penitence" (201).
20. Louis Maigron notes that one of the few ways in which *Notre-Dame de Paris* resembles the historical novel in the tradition of Walter Scott (which was Hugo's original conception of the novel, or at least how he sold it to his publisher, see Seebacher 1052) is that it employs one character to represent an entire group, or class (332–33). As the only representatives of the bourgeoisie whose characters are developed, these women are representative of a class that is referred to frequently in the novel. Their function in the story should thus be carefully examined.
21. "Double your pace and bring your boy! You came here to see all the sights of Paris. Yesterday, you saw the Flemings; today you must see the little Gypsy" (207).
22. See Gautier 113, for a description of the opening of *Hernani*.
23. "dont la masse terrifie ceux qui la contemplent" (680); "Which by its mass inspires terror in the spectators" (107).
24. "Notre-Dame, then, is not of purely Romanesque origin . . . nor of purely Arabic origin . . . Notre-Dame is a structure of transition" (111).
25. "her whole tribe, who hold her in singular veneration, like the Blessed Lady" (253).
26. Brombert reads the assault on the cathedral to save Esmeralda as symbol of revolution of 1830; both events are failures because "the populace is not ready; it is not yet aware of its historical mission" (56).
27. For discussions of the significance of the novel's historical setting due to similarities between the end of Louis XI's reign and the beginning of the July Monarchy, both described as periods of transition, see Brombert 55–56, and Nash 186–87.
28. "all these gradations, all these differences affect only the surface of the structures. . . . . Hence the prodigious external variety of these edifices; in the main structure of each there dwells much order and uniformity. The trunk of the tree is unchanging, the vegetation is capricious" (114).

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# Chapter 11

# Welcome Pictures, Unwanted Bodies

## "Gypsy" Representations in New Europe's Cinema

*Dina Iordanova*

The May 2004 enlargement of the European Union established the Romanies (Gypsies) as "new" Europe's most sizeable ethnic minority. Even before this coveted date, immigration officials in the West were busily bracing themselves for the anticipated Gypsy influx that was to occur when more internal frontiers were removed within Fortress Europe. One of the preparation measures was the controversial "pre-screening" of passengers landing flights to London carried out by British officials at the airport in Prague. As if accidentally, mostly Romanies were singled out and barred from flying to the United Kingdom. Exposed by Romani journalists in the Czech media, this practice became the subject of an embarrassing investigation and was eventually condemned as unlawful in British courts.

While the official European rhetoric is of abolition of borders, in reality, the inherently migratory and itinerant culture of the Romanies is faced with double standards and multiple other barriers. Gypsies

may be a welcome facet and precious asset in Europe's assortment of metaphoric exoticisms, yet the possibility of actual arrival of ethnic Romanies in Europe proper causes panic among colonial officials, and is treated as a feared invasion that should be methodically suppressed. Actors of Romani origin, for example, regularly have problems with visas and travel when invited to film festivals. At the time when historians investigate the controversy surrounding Leni Riefenstahl's questionable use of Gypsies kept in the concentration camp of Maxglaan as extras for her film *Tiefland* (*Lowlands*) (Germany, 1940/1950), Romani actors today are given a similarly appalling treatment. They are hailed in the West only as images on the screen and are welcome as long as they do not show up in flesh and blood.

The long-standing cinematic interest in the colorful Romani culture has repeatedly raised questions of authenticity versus stylization, of patronizing and exoticizing. Even when genuinely concerned about the Roma predicament, filmmakers have exploited the visual sumptuousness of their nonconventional lifestyles. Often allowing for spectacularly beautiful magical-realist visuals, the films featuring Romanies have used recurring narrative tropes, like the one of passionate love that suspends all rational reasoning and pragmatic actions. Filmmakers have intentionally enhanced the cinematic celebrations of freewheeling Roma with added excitement, often allowing for spectacularly beautiful magical-realist visuals accompanied by correspondingly Gypsy music and dance. Gypsy films have been recycling virtually the same narrative tropes for decades: passionate and self-destructive obsessions; "feast in time of plague" attitudes; mistrust to outsiders; coerced urbanization, forced integration, and imposed conversion away from seminomadic lifestyles.[1]

Given this context, it appears that the representation of Romanies in European cinema would best be explored in a way that links it to current affair issues. In postcommunist times, the Romani population of Eastern Europe was affected by excessive impoverishment and resurgent racism. Some of the worst cases of institutional bigotry, human rights abuses, and violent pogroms were reported here. The complex social situation of the Roma in the periphery of today's Europe has been the subject of many international documentaries and feature films, expressing concern of their socioeconomic well-being and the growing racial hatred they face daily. The socially critical *Marian* (1996), for example, tells the story of a Roma boy whose life evolves around petty crime and excessive punishment, and tracks

down an inevitable pathway from juvenile delinquency to prison. Equally gritty realities are depicted in a range of recent Hungarian films, often with strong documentary power, such as Ildikó Szabó's *Child Murders* (*Gyerekgyilkosságok*) (1993), János Sázsz's *Woyzeck* (1994, based on Georg Bűchner's play), and Bence Gyöngyössy's *Gypsy Lore* (*Romani kris – Cigánytörvény*) (1997), the story of which replicates a King Lear–type plot. Here, the romantic allure of Gypsy charms, passions, and fortune-telling has been increasingly demystified; the esoteric fascination with Gypsies has given way to an increasing worry over racism and double standards. Documentary filmmakers have put out a growing number of "Romani"-themed films, which feature social exclusion, poverty, and discrimination. With varying degrees of success, some of these recent films have attempted to substitute the traditional excessive exoticism with rough realism. In addition, documentary filmmakers have tried to highlight various aspects of Romani history and recent migrations, as well as the relationship within this dynamically changing diaspora.

Yet, even though many films tend to sympathize with the plight of the Roma and question the social framework of transnational minority policies, the exploitation of the "Gypsy" within mainstream cinema still goes on, and the pattern of presenting the interaction between Roma and *gadjé* within the familiar old clichés is as pervasive as ever. Even more, a number of these "Romani predicament" films have, in fact, become a new variation of "Gypsy exotica." These form an emerging subgenre of "Gypsy films" that appears focused on social concern, and is thus "politically correct," yet nonetheless remains as exploitative and stereotypical as its generic predecessors.

Two recent examples represent the rough realist trend, on the one hand (Želimir Žilnik's 2003 documentary *Kenedi Returns Home*, made on a shoestring budget in Serbia), and the trend of "politically correct Gypsy passion films" on the other (here represented by Robert Adrian Pejo's 2004 feature *Dallas Among Us* a.k.a. *Dallas Pashamende*, a Romania-set coproduction of Germany, Austria, and Hungary).

Želimir Žilnik, a veteran of the Yugoslav Black Wave and the Oberhausen festival, has worked on socially awkward topics since the 1960s; he was among the first documentarians to make films on the muted issue of the *Gastarbeiter* (guest workers in Germany) as early as 1972, long before German writer Günter Wallraff became engaged with the theme. In his guerrilla-style documentary *Kenedi Returns*

*Home* (which follows his aptly titled 2001 film *Fortress Europe*), the director powerfully brings to light the anti-Romani racism. According to him, the prevailing attitude toward Roma in Europe today can be summed up with the sentence: "I am not a racist but I hate Gypsies."

Žilnik follows around the self-styled Rom taxi driver, Kenedi, who is trying to assist several Gypsy deportees on the morning they are dumped at the airport in Belgrade. After a ten-year-long sojourn in Germany, these families have just been extradited to former Yugoslavia. Parents and children have been pulled out of their beds in Stuttgart and Baden-Baden just before dawn: An immigration squad has broken into their flats at two a.m., pretending there is an emergency, they have been given half an hour to pack, then are driven to the airport, loaded onto a JAT charter plane, and sent "home" by daybreak. On "arrival" in Serbia, they face a desolate ordeal: no place to go to, money and documents left behind in the rush of expulsion without warning; the children are fluent in German but have no clue of the idiom of their newly found Serbian fatherland. It may sound like deportations from the 1930s, but it is happening today; a German immigration official admits that his is a "shitty work." Why the rush to throw these people out? They are Romanies and belong to Germany as little as they belong to Serbia. But Serbia is outside "Europe," therefore, this is where, in the logic of European Union bureaucrats, Gypsies ought to be.

Radically critical films like Žilnik's are singular occurrences, however. More often than not, documentaries have been unable to abandon a certain patronizing attitude to their vulnerable Romani subjects. As a result, even the "best intentions" documentaries lose out to those commercially conscious films that continue building on the exoticized and romanticized image of the Gypsy.

One such film is *Dallas Among Us*, a film that claims to be driven by social concern, but is, in fact, just a variation of the "Gypsy passion" strand. The film's protagonist, Radu, an emancipated Rom who works as a teacher in the Romanian capital, returns to his childhood home to arrange for the funeral of his father. The "home" is a shack located in the center of a surreally looking slum, a desolate favella sited at the outer edge of a colossal garbage dump; the locals earn their living scavenging through the garbage and reselling whatever useable items they can find. There is neither running water nor electric power; the inhabitants ironically call the place "Dallas." Witnessing the devastation and the extreme poverty that plague these people

(who nonetheless try to maintain a dignified existence), Radu, the urbanized "expatriate," overcomes his initial reluctance and feels a reawakened sense of belonging and solidarity with his marginalized, fellow Romanies. He resumes the relationship with his childhood sweetheart Oana, gradually regains sense of his lost identity, and decides to stay. But it all ends up in a tragedy when, predictably, Gypsy passions come running high.

By all accounts, *Dallas Pashamende* appears to be a politically correct work of a socially concerned individual, who, like Emir Kusturica fifteen years earlier, has given up on his comfortable New York existence to "immerse" himself in the miserable lives of East European Gypsies for several weeks. So why would one describe Robert Adrian Pejo's film as exploitative? For many reasons, but, most of all, because while claiming to be entirely driven by the universal concern about weak people and poverty, the film is more preoccupied with taking advantage of the framework of Gypsy passions and surreal imagery. The "Gypsyness" it presents is manipulative and improbable, the people in the frame are calculatedly filthy and precociously oversexualized; their bizarre environment is enhanced by a range of recycled familiar magic-realist image-quotes from Emir Kusturica and Tengiz Abuladze.

Whatever the plot details, the typical "Gypsy" narrative revolves around presumptions that are implied rather than spoken: Gypsy love can be nothing but all-consuming passion; Gypsies are in possession of love secrets that are out of reach, yet perpetually desirable for the dominant ("white") ethnicity. It is structured around a worn-out stereotype. But, as it is a lucrative and well-selling stereotype, commercially minded producers are eager to put out more of this sort of politically correct weepies and, if need be, disguise them as socially concerned and committed cinema. Clearly, these plots have more to do with the trouble that inhibited "white" Western sexuality experiences in accommodating its own "dark" passions than with the real Romani culture. One can easily claim, then, that it does not make sense to pay much attention to films like *Dallas*. But then, if this (significantly large and still growing) body of work was overlooked, would not the very core of the issue—the quintessential instances of Romani (ab)use as "metaphoric material" by mainstream cinema—be overlooked as well?

For the time being, it is unlikely that the image of the captivating swarthy Gypsy lover would be replaced in popular imagination by the

image of a muddy and hungry Romani child. As long as cinema's key function is to deliver entertainment, it is unlikely that the socially conscious trend attempting to correct the record on the Romanies will prevail. "Gypsy exotica" and "Romani predicament" type of films will most likely continue existing side by side. The use of the Gypsies as "metaphoric material" will go on for as long as it sells. At least today there is a chance to make it known that "screen Gypsies" and real Romanies have very little to do with each other.

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## NOTE

1. For a variety of articles on the representation of Romanies in international cinema see the special issue of *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media* guest edited by Dina Iordanova, 44.2 (Fall 2003). To purchase paper issue: http://wsupress.wayne.edu/journals/framework.htm; Editorial available at: http://www.frameworkonline.com/latest442.htm.

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