

## ABSTRACT

Title: THE GYPSY AS TROPE IN VICTORIAN  
AND MODERN BRITISH LITERATURE.

Abigail Rothblatt Bardi, Ph.D. 2007

Directed by: Dr. William A. Cohen, Associate Professor  
University of Maryland College Park

Since their arrival in the British isles in the early sixteenth century, the Romani people, known as Gypsies, were the objects of a complex mixture of both persecution and desire. Although early legislation reflects concerns about their alleged thievery and vagrancy, little factual historical information exists about them, and their identity is constructed in British discourse in large part by their functions in literature. In the nineteenth century, the stereotype of the wild, exotic Gypsy evolves into an established trope that can be readily deployed in texts as a challenge to normative forms of property ownership, gender, sexuality, and national identity.

This dissertation takes as its central focus a twentieth-century text, Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* (1928), in which an aristocratic man lives for 400 years, turning into a woman midway through, and absconding with a band of Gypsies. Here, gender is famously interrogated, but the novel also calls attention to the fundamental instability of norms regarding property distribution, erotic desire, and British national identity. Through the lens of *Orlando*, the dissertation examines a variety of nineteenth- and

early-twentieth-century texts in which Gypsies or Gypsy figures (characters with Gypsy-like qualities) appear and disturb the social order. Chapter One shows how, in works by Emily Brontë, Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Arthur Conan Doyle, and Kenneth Grahame, Gypsy figures, sometimes in small or cameo roles, imperil the distribution of property through primogeniture. Chapter Two examines the ways in which Gypsies destabilize gender in novels by Sir Walter Scott, Charlotte Brontë, and Elizabeth Gaskell. Chapter Three considers the way they signal non-normative erotic desire in works by Jane Austen, Matthew Arnold, George Eliot, T.S. Eliot, and D.H. Lawrence. Finally, examining national identity in novels by George Borrow, Wilkie Collins, and Bram Stoker, as well as George Eliot's narrative poem *The Spanish Gypsy*, Chapter Four argues that while the British national project involves the abjection of "others" in order to shore up the body politic, this project is doomed to failure because Gypsies, as internal others, are ultimately inextricable from this body.

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AND MODERN  
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By

Abigail R. Bardi.

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Advisory Committee:  
Associate Professor William A. Cohen, Chair  
Associate Professor Elizabeth Loizeaux  
Assistant Professor Jason Rudy  
Professor Richard Cross  
Professor Richard Price

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## Introduction

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, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*<sup>1</sup>

In Virginia Woolf's 1928 novel *Orlando*, an Elizabethan aristocrat, in the midst of a lifespan of 400 years, turns quite casually from a man into a woman. During the interval of this strange gender transition, the eponymous protagonist spends a brief interlude traveling with a "gipsy tribe" (140). In depicting the Gypsies' ambiguous role in Orlando's transformation from landed, sexually profligate Elizabethan man to disinherited, chaste Victorian woman, Woolf draws upon the long history of representations of the Romani<sup>2</sup> people, whose existence on the margins of British society was recorded from the time of their arrival in the sixteenth century in a variety of literary and historical registers. This dissertation examines the way in which these historical representations construct the "Gypsy" as a trope in British literature as it is manifested in multiple texts throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Building upon Woolf's seemingly offhand placement of the Gypsies at the heart of the contestations of Orlando's economic, gender, sexual, and

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<sup>1</sup> p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> The question of what terms to use for the Romani people is a vexed one. Throughout their history in Europe, multiple terms have been used for them—"Gipsies," "Egyptians," "Zincali," "Tsigane," "Travellers," "Zigeuner," "Sinti," etc. The World Romani Congress has recommended the term "Roma" or "Rroma," while the Romani people of Britain call themselves "Romanichal" or "Romnichel," a subset of the Roma "nation." In this study, wherever possible, I have adopted the somewhat arbitrary practice of using "Romani people" to refer to the actual people and the term "Gypsy" to refer to the fictional representations of that group. While I was assured by Yaron Matras, editor of *Romani Studies*, that the term "Gypsy" is perfectly acceptable in any case, it is difficult to know whom to regard as an authority on this matter; the question of who is authorized to speak for the Roma/Romanies/Gypsies is just as vexed as the issue of terminology.



national status, this study will explore the significance of the Gypsy figure as a marker of these contestations.

A primary assumption here is that the reason Gypsies have been so available as a signifier in nineteenth and early twentieth-century British literature<sup>3</sup> in texts ranging from Sir Walter Scott's *Guy Mannering* (1815) to D.H. Lawrence's *The Virgin and the Gipsy* (1930, posthumous) is that despite their being the focus of intense scrutiny since their arrival in the British isles, very little accurate information about the Romani people has historically been available to non-Romanies (Gadže). This absence of data has rendered Gypsies peculiarly available for signification: as figures whose mere presence seems to have provoked anxiety in the European populations in the course of their long diaspora from northern India, they have traditionally been the repository of whatever anxieties Gadže populations have wanted to project onto available others. Even the process of their naming is indicative of this lack of information: they were initially known as "Egyptians," from which the term "Gypsies" is derived, because their place of origin was unknown or misconstrued and a myth was projected upon them.

From these exoticized beginnings onward, the Romani people were, in the words of Charles G. Leland, the first president of the Gypsy Lore Society,<sup>4</sup> thought to be "a mysterious race" about whose origins "nothing is known" (331). In his 1882 work *The Gypsies*, Leland sets out to dispel this mystery; like other "Gypsiologists"

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<sup>3</sup> Gypsies also appear in a variety of British texts prior to the nineteenth century, such as Ben Jonson's *The Gypsies Metamorphos'd* (1621), Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), and Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones*. However, the trope appears to have been consolidated in the nineteenth century, as this study will argue.

<sup>4</sup> Leland was president of the GLS from 1888 to 1892.

of his day as well as most contemporary scholars, Leland traces the Romanies' roots to India,<sup>5</sup> and he examines their "pursuits and habits" to bolster his case:

They were tinkers, smiths, and farriers.

They dealt in horses, and were naturally familiar with them.

They were without religion.

They were unscrupulous thieves.

Their women were fortune-tellers, especially by chiromancy....

They made and sold mats, baskets, and small articles of wood.

They have shown great skill as dancers, musicians, singers, acrobats;

and it is a rule almost without exception that there is hardly a

traveling company of such performers or a theatre, in Europe or

America, in which there is not at least one person with some

Romany blood....(332)

Despite his being a purported "Romany Rye," i.e., a Gadžo who studies and/or travels with Roma and is thus sympathetic to them, Leland's list is a compendium of aspects of the Gypsy stereotype, which he romanticizes: "Gypsies are the human types of [the] vanishing, direct love of nature, of this mute sense of rural romance, and of *al fresco* life...despite their rags and dishonesty," he continues. "Truly they are but rags themselves; the last rags of the old romance which connected man with nature" (13). Underlying his description are the assumptions that the Romanies' itinerant lifestyle represents a challenge to the mainstream and that they are a transgressive foreign

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<sup>5</sup> "[T]here appears to be every reason for believing with Captain [Richard] Burton that the Jāts of Northwestern India furnished so large a proportion of [Gypsy] emigrants or exiles who, from the tenth century, went out of India westward, that there is very little risk in assuming it as an hypothesis, at least, that they formed the *Hauptstamm* of the gypsies in Europe" (Leland 331).

body within Britain that is constructed in racial terms:<sup>6</sup> according to Leland, this race of Indian immigrants, to which one belongs if one possesses “some Romany blood” in whatever quantity, functions as a separate society, with its own rules and customs, its own economic practices, in a romantic contradistinction to modern life.

Yet at the same time that Leland, like many other nineteenth century writers, portrays Gypsies in a lyrical register, his discussion of them suggests an underlying negativity—about their alleged “unscrupulous” thievery, dishonesty, nomadism—much at odds with this romantic view. To Leland, Gypsies may be romantic, but they also, to paraphrase Julia Kristeva in *Powers of Horror*,<sup>7</sup> disturb “identity, system, order”; they do not “respect borders, positions, rules” (4). As a foreign body whose origins are disputed, yet who have inhabited Europe for centuries, they are, in Kristeva’s words, “in-between, ambiguous, composite” (4). However sentimentally Gypsies are to be regarded, their ambiguous, contested state creates anxiety among Gadže; “neither subject nor object,” they are, in Kristeva’s terms, “a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside.” They are “quite close” but “cannot be assimilated”; the Gypsy figure “beseeches, worries, and fascinates desire” (1).

It is worth noting here that in this regard, the history of the Romani people in the British Isles in some ways parallels that of other minorities who have been

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<sup>6</sup> While Deborah Nord astutely calls attention to the vagueness of the term “race” in the nineteenth century (*Gypsies* 20), the issue of Romani “blood” continues to inform discussions of Gypsiness to the present day. As anthropologist Judith Okely, whose 1983 study *The Traveller-Gypsies* was hugely influential, explained to me, the issue of whether or not British “Travellers,” as her study terms them, are in fact a “race” is a significant factor in the allocation of state benefits. Okely’s well known “scepticism concerning the Gypsies’ alleged single Indian origin” (Okely, *Traveller-Gypsies* 8) and therefore about their status as a cultural entity in diaspora, i.e., a “race,” has evoked heated controversy (Okely, personal interview).

<sup>7</sup> Kristeva’s 1982 study of “abjection” draws upon the work of anthropologist Mary Douglas, whose 1966 *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* examined the relationship of concepts of purity to questions of hygiene and cleanliness.

perceived as foreign bodies within Britain. The Jews, for example, were from the time of their arrival in the British Isles during and after the Norman Conquest accorded a separate legal status: this ranged from “a special, indeed literally, a privileged, legal position” to their complete expulsion in 1290 (Brand 1138). Although they were unofficially allowed to return in 1656, they were still regarded as “strangers” and “foreigners” (Katz 145) and were, as Michael Ragussis has noted, subject to repeated attempts at “conversion” whose discourse was “formulated...in terms of national identity” (8). Ragussis “locate[s] the ideology of (Jewish) conversion, which stands behind...variants of ‘The Jewish Question,’ at the center of a profound crisis in nineteenth-century English national identity” (8).<sup>8</sup> In *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, Terry Eagleton places the Irish in a similarly vexed relation to Englishness, characterizing them as a “monstrous unconscious” that “is a site of ambivalence,” both “raw, turbulent, and destructive” and “a locus of play, pleasure, fantasy, a blessed release from the English reality principle” (9). Eagleton characterizes Britain and Ireland as “[a]t once too near and too far, akin and estranged, both inside and outside each other’s cognitive range,” and the Act of Union of 1800 as not only a “sexual coupling” but also “a peculiarly incestuous form of congress, in which the border between difference and identity, alienness and intimacy, is constantly transgressed” (128). Roma, then, are only one of multiple populations, including those whose presence in Britain constituted “reverse colonization,” who were the site of projected anxiety and abjection.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> In a book review entitled “Is a Jew English?” Peter Stansky remarks, “Do some English still regard English Jews, even converted English Jews, as somehow ‘foreign’? I suspect so” (283).

<sup>9</sup> See Joseph Childers’ discussion of late nineteenth-century “alien acts” and the concomitant “antifilth and antiforeign rhetoric that resonates” through the literature of that period (201).

What distinguishes representations of Romanies from those of Jews and other populations whose British identity has historically been contested is the manner in which Gypsy figures operate both as threatening foreign “others” who evoke or embody anxiety and, paradoxically, as powerful objects of desire or identification; as such, they are less “objects” than “abjects,” i.e., parts of the body that the body attempts to expel.<sup>10</sup> At the same time that Gypsies are figured in terms of desire, the texts in which they appear attempt if not to abject them entirely, to incorporate and thus tame “Gypsiness” in ways that enable the resurrection of the status quo.<sup>11</sup> This dissertation will argue that as the Gypsy trope is both solidified and complicated over the course of the long nineteenth century, in the texts examined here it becomes a marker for the traits traditionally associated with Gypsies and the perceived threats they constitute to property, to gender, to sexuality, and to national identity.<sup>12</sup> These multiple contestations, all legible in *Orlando*, are so tacitly understood in these texts that the mere mention of the word “Gypsy” lets loose a tide of instability in one or more of these areas, and that it is the project of the texts Gypsies inhabit to abject them in order to restore the order that they have disturbed. As the trope is solidified by its literary deployments, it becomes more powerful: the more Gypsies come to be associated with qualities that destabilize social norms through their roles in these texts, the more the trope operates as a shorthand for this sort of destabilization.

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<sup>10</sup> For an interesting discussion of the Jew as a site of envy, see Joseph Litvak’s “Jew Envy.”

<sup>11</sup> I am indebted here to Joseph Childers’ interesting argument that Sherlock Holmes’ drug use serves as a method of inoculating him against a loss of Englishness: his “dalliances with exotic drugs” constitute “the ingestion of the other” that works as a vaccine enabling him to “push the limits of Englishness” (217).

<sup>12</sup> Deborah Nord calls this “a well-established shorthand of evocation” (*Gypsies* 16).

To understand the roots of the Gypsy trope in the British texts considered here, it is useful to examine the earliest references to them: the early legislation that arose immediately in response to their arrival in the British Isles. This legislation constitutes a narrative in which the specific anxieties associated with Gypsies from the time of their arrival in the British Isles are legible, and suggests that from the beginning, the most powerful association with the Gypsy figure was concern about their challenges to property, an anxiety from which others appear to have flowed.

I. “Many Outlandysse People”: Historical Overview

The long history of the “Egyptians”<sup>13</sup> in the British Isles, which began in the early 1500s,<sup>14</sup> first in Scotland in 1505 and then in England in 1514 (Mayall, *Gypsy Identities* 56),<sup>15</sup> can be mapped in the anti-Egyptian legislation that immediately sprang up against them. According to historian David Mayall in *Gypsy Identities 1500-2000: From Egipcians and Moon-men to the Ethnic Romany*, this legislation soon complicated concepts of “race” and grew to encompass lifestyle considerations: “[i]nitially the Egyptian Acts were directed specifically at those coming into the realm and calling themselves Egyptians, but...also came to include other persons calling themselves Egyptians (1554), counterfeit Egyptians (1562), any who

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<sup>13</sup> “If they be Egyptians,” said the Elizabethan dramatist Thomas Dekker, “sure I am that they never descended from the tribes of any of those people that came out of the land of Egypt” (qtd. in Mayall, *Gypsy Identities* 67-8).

<sup>14</sup> Recent DNA findings have complicated this theory: “Scientists studying ancient migration sampled Anglo-Saxon skeletons from Norwich and found a man with Romani DNA. The surprise identification challenges conventional histories of the Roma people and Romani language, thought to have originated in India and to have reached Europe in the 15th and 16th centuries. The sampled cemetery dates from before the mid 11th century, at least 400 years earlier” (“DNA Surprise: Romani in England 400 Years Too Early,” *British Archaeology* 89 (July-August 2006)). The hypothesis offered to explain this apparent contradiction is not an earlier wave of migration but the presence of Romani slaves among the Vikings.

<sup>15</sup> Mayall’s account notes that these dates are far from definitive.

frequented their society or behaved like them (1562), and any who for one month at any one time or at several times was in their company (1562)” (61). This legislation, which began at the time of their arrival in the British isles and has continued in various iterations well into the present day, clearly spells out the nature of the “habits and pursuits” with which the Romanies were associated and implies that they were blamed for a variety of destabilizing social phenomena, most particularly, crimes against property.

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 a mere eleven years after their first recorded appearance in England, banned the Romanies from England entirely. The statute stated that “many outlandyshe People callynge themselves Egyptians”<sup>16</sup> had “by crafte and subtyltie<sup>17</sup>...deceived the people of theyr money, and also hath comytted many and haynous felonyes and robberies...” (22 Hen. VIII. c. 10. (1530-1)).<sup>18</sup> 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. (1530-1)).<sup>19</sup> Evidently, their merely “beynge in thys Realme” was sufficient grounds for conviction for theft and larceny, and an appropriate response to their presence was to confiscate their goods in turn. If a Justice of Peace, Sheriff, or “Eschetour” were to

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<sup>16</sup> The Romanies’ representations of themselves as having come from Egypt calls to mind the *Saturday Night Live* sketch in which the Coneheads claim to have come from France.

<sup>17</sup> This “crafte and subtyltie” had to do with the traditional occupations of itinerant Gypsies: “[T]hey by Palmestres coulde telle menne and womens fortunes.”

<sup>18</sup> *Statutes of the Realm*, 1530-1: 327.

<sup>19</sup> *Statutes*, 327.

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. 1530-1). The legislation reveals that from their very first appearance in "the Realm," Gypsy identity was synonymous with economic "deception" and "robberies," i.e., criminal acts against property.

Prior to the nineteenth century, when legislation began to characterize Romanies as unclean and to focus on their alleged need of hygienic measures, the other major concern of legislation against them was their nomadic lifestyle, which ran counter to the system of property ownership through which the feudal system was transformed throughout Europe after the Middle Ages. It was at precisely the historical moment that England began to move toward cementing the redistribution of land into fenced, private spaces<sup>20</sup> that the Romani people arrived and for the next four hundred years, served as a convenient vehicle for the consolidation of British identity in a process of abjection through which, as Kristeva suggests, the body and, by inference, the body politic are shored up.<sup>21</sup> Presumably, by ridding itself of rogues and vagabonds, whose numbers included Romanies as well as 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 could never be truly separate from the abjecting subject.

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<sup>20</sup> As Mayall notes, the enclosure movement would gather force and its impact on the Romani travelers would be increasingly apparent, reaching its apogee in the early part of the nineteenth century (*Gypsy-travellers* 20). See also *Gypsy Identities* (58).

<sup>21</sup> See Mayall, *Gypsy Identities*, for a useful discussion of vagrancy as a logical consequence of "economic and demographic changes which contributed to increasing landlessness and the insecurities of wage labor" (58), beginning in the sixteenth century, the time of the Romanies' arrival.



Indeed, the history of anti-Gypsy legislation can be read as a narrative in which a unified British population repeatedly attempts unsuccessfully to reject portions of itself in order to create a sense of its own discrete wholeness, attempts that are doomed to failure.

Both the Jews and the Romanies, as well as the Irish from the time of the Great Famine, have historically been perceived as being in diaspora, which implies a form of wandering and homelessness, and Romanies were especially identified with itinerancy. In the language of legislation, they are depicted as vagrants living on the margins of society, and as noted above, the 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."<sup>22</sup> Nearly every one of these statutes mentions the words "vagabonds" (albeit with a variety of spellings), "wandering" and often, "beggars" and "rogues."<sup>23</sup> The years 1560 to 1640 were a peak period for nomadism and thus for anti-nomadic laws that abated only when poor laws changed and made it economically advantageous to

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<sup>22</sup> In 1551-2, a similar act aimed at "Tynkars and Pedlars" forbade traveling (*State Policies* 23); "Punishments included enslavement, branding, and chains" (Mayall 23). An overview of anti-Gypsy legislation compiled by Mayall in *English Gypsies and State Policies* lists acts of 1530-1, 1547, 1549-50, 1551-2, 1562, 1572, 1597-8, 1739-40, 1743, 1783, 1822, 1822, 1824, 1835, and 1889 that explicitly or implicitly restrict the movements of traveling Gypsies. In *Gypsy Identities*, Mayall alludes to additional legislation in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>23</sup> 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-Gypsy statute, was the "Rogues and Vagabonds Act" (Mayall, *English Gypsies* 24-5). Of course, not all "vagabonds," let alone "rogues," were Romanies: according to Mayall, the nomadic Roma "joined a migrant and itinerant population of early modern England that was diverse, fluid, and periodically very numerous" (*Gypsy Identities* 57).

return itinerants to their places of origin (*Gypsy Identities* 58). Although the Romani people had evidently been nomadic since their departure from India,<sup>24</sup> they happened to arrive in Scotland and then England and Wales 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 (and “counterfeit” Gypsies, i.e., non-Romani travelers with Gypsy-like lifestyles) were part of this greater fraternity and came to represent the kind of itinerant living “outside the margins” legible in so many literary depictions of them.<sup>25</sup>

Attempts to curtail the Romanies’ “wandering” continued well into the nineteenth century, with a conflation between “rogues” and “vagabonds” and periodic

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<sup>24</sup> According to *The Patrin Web Journal*, the first wave of the Indian diaspora occurred in 430-443 C.E. with the importation of 10,000 Luri musicians to the Persian kingdom (<http://www.geocities.com/Paris/5121/timeline.htm>). Donald Kenrick traces the beginnings of Indian migration through Persia to the reign of Ardashir the Shah of Persia (224-241 C.E.), who colonized northern India. Ian Hancock places the Romanies migration from India as “some time between AD 800 and AD 950” (*Pariah Syndrome* 7); and as noted earlier, Judith Okely and others are skeptical of the theory of Indian origins. This study does not take a position on the exact time frame of Indian origin.

<sup>25</sup> See Celeste Langan’s discussion of “Romantic vagrancy” in which she reads wandering in the work of William Wordsworth as “a representational practice particularly concerned with those aspects of vagrancy susceptible to analogy and subsequent idealization: first, the mobility that appears to guarantee to the vagrant a residual economic freedom, despite his or her entire impoverishment; second, the speech-acts that appear to consolidate a residual political identity. The poet and the vagrant [who is “the poet’s double”] together constitute a society based on the twin principles of freedom of speech and freedom of movement” (17). While Wordsworth himself seems somewhat horrified by Gypsies in his eponymous poem about them (see David Simpson’s “Figuring Class, Sex, and Gender: What Is the Subject of Wordsworth’s ‘Gypsies’?”), Langan’s argument that “Romantic vagrancy” represents “economic freedom” in spite of “impoverishment” is particularly apt in terms of the Gypsy trope.

attempts to weed out “counterfeit” Gypsies.<sup>26</sup> This conflation is registered in such legislation as the 1822 Vagrancy Act, “An Act for consolidating into One Act and amending the Laws relating to idle and disorderly Persons, Rogues and Vagabonds, incorrigible Rogues and other Vagrants in *England*” (3 Geo IV, c. 40, 1822). Mayall notes an entry from *The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* defining a gypsy (small G) as “a person who habitually wanders or who has the habits of someone who does not stay for long in one place” (qtd. in *Gypsy Identities* 253). However, Romani scholar and activist Ian Hancock, who is himself Romani, and anthropologist Judith Okely agree in disputing 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. “The Travellers’ [her preferred term] 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 [his preferred term], 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” (105).<sup>27</sup> For the many writers for whom the wandering Gypsy figure would

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<sup>26</sup> Patricia Fumerton argues that this conflation is erroneous and traces it to the “rogue pamphlets” of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, when pamphleteers played on anxieties about poverty, which often led to vagrancy: “They capitalized on and assuaged such ambivalence by transforming the *fact* of a vagrant economy grounded on a shifting mass of itinerant labor into the *fiction* of role-playing [i.e., disguised] rogues” (her emphasis; 218).

<sup>27</sup> Behlmer points out that concern about “vagrancy” in Victorian England “may have reflected heightened concern about the problem rather than demographic reality” (233). He also notes, “Comparatively few people roamed the Victorian countryside simply for the sake of movement” (231).

come to constitute a trope, Hancock's admonitions run completely counter to their conceptions of romantic roaming Romanies.<sup>28</sup>

In the nineteenth century, while continuing to attempt to regulate the Romanies' movements with the 1824 Vagrancy Act, the 1835 Highways Act, and the 1876 Commons Act, legislation began to appear that attempted to address public health: the 1889 Infectious Diseases (Notification) Act and the 1891 Public Health (London) Act reflected increasing attention to sanitary conditions among travelers. According to Thomas Acton,<sup>29</sup> whereas "Elizabethan racialism [racism] against Gypsies took the form of expulsion and genocide... Victorian racialism, though it often persecuted in a straightforward manner, took its most effective mask in the attitude of sincere benevolence" (103). The impetus for this shift in focus to "benevolent" concerns about hygiene can be traced to the efforts of one "reformer," George Smith "of Coalville": the lobbying efforts of Smith (who insisted on appending "of Coalville" to his name (Acton 107)) had an enormous effect not only on legislation, for which he agitated tirelessly, but on the way Gypsies were viewed.<sup>30</sup> Smith's motives toward the Romani population, which built upon his efforts to combat child labor and to regulate canal boat-dwellers,<sup>31</sup> are suggested by his statement, "It is not creditable for us as a Christian nation to have had for centuries these heathenish tribes in our midst" (qtd. in Acton 108). While Smith's purported aim was to help Romani children, both Acton and Mayall make clear that Smith's

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<sup>28</sup> See, for example, the Billy Joe Shaver song, "Willy the Wandering Gypsy and Me" (1973), which interestingly conflates the Gypsy trope, the cowboy trope, and the trope that is Willie Nelson.

<sup>29</sup> Acton is Britain's only professor of Romani Studies.

<sup>30</sup> Behlmer remarks on the lack of "serious opposition" to Smith prior to 1884, "when his first Movable Dwellings Bill went before the House of Commons," and notes that Smith's 1883 book on Gypsies "intrigued a growing audience with its tales about the godless folk who fed their children half-hatched blackbirds, abused their donkeys, and committed incest" (247).

<sup>31</sup> This culminated in the Canal Boats Act Amendment Bill of 1884 (Mayall, *Gypsy-travellers* 133).

attitude toward Romanies was “uncompromising in its opposition and condemnation” (Mayall 134). Not surprisingly, Smith repeatedly attempted to substitute his view of Romanies as a squalid and troublesome people for the “romantic” views of novelists:

To dress the satanic, demon-looking face of a Gipsy with the violet-powder of imagery only temporarily hides from view the repulsive aspect of his features....The dramatist has strutted the Gipsy across the stage in various characters in his endeavor to improve his condition. After the fine colours have been doffed, music finished, applause ceased, curtain dropped, and scene ended, he has been a black, swarthy, idle, thieving, lying, blackguard of a Gipsy still. (Qtd. in Mayall, *Gypsy-Travellers* 134)<sup>32</sup>

Smith’s incessant lobbying for legislation to regulate “the Gypsy problem”<sup>33</sup> may have ultimately been unsuccessful in a legislative sense—none of his bills became law--and may have indirectly contributed to the formation of the Romani-ophile Gypsy Lore Society in 1888, whose members were affronted by Smith’s claims.<sup>34</sup> However, Mayall argues that Smith was strikingly successful in his attempts to keep the negative portrait of Gypsies fostered by this legislation in the public eye (*Gypsy-Travellers* 149), and Acton notes that although Smith “died as he had been born, in poverty and relative obscurity,...most of the objects of [Smith’s] bills were, in fact, incorporated in various Acts by 1936” (120).

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<sup>32</sup> With friends like Smith, as the saying goes, who needs enemies?

<sup>33</sup> Behlmer notes that “[b]etween 1885 and 1894 supportive MPs introduced nine versions of [Smith’s] Movable Dwellings Bill” (249).

<sup>34</sup> According to Acton, Smith “alienated the ‘experts’ on Gypsies: they took exception to the insults he heaped on Gypsies, and the way in which he plagiarized their writings without acknowledgment....[Smith] in turn loudly proclaimed that his intention was not to ‘tickle the critical ears of ethnologists and philologists’, and accused the ‘writers of unhealthy, misleading, romantic nonsense’....” (109).

By the end of the nineteenth century, the two strains within literary and legislative representations of Romanies—the Romantic Gypsy figure depicted by literature and Gypsology on the one hand and the “idle, thieving” “heathen tribe” depicted by Smith on the other hand—were in clear opposition, commingled in the trope of the Gypsy, which embodies this complexity: as Mayall says, Gypsies “could be welcomed as entertainers and vendors of small wares almost simultaneously with being greeted as ‘gyppos’ and treated with disdain, contempt, and fear” (*Gypsy-Travellers* 97).<sup>35</sup> Although in literature, the Romantic view often appears foremost, even when the Gypsy figure is depicted as an object of desire, at the same time, a powerfully negative set of assumptions underpins it.

Because the Romani people have been famously subaltern, possessing a fabled reticence among non-Romanies as well as very little written history or literature of their own until quite recently,<sup>36</sup> what is left to us of their history are these records of the cocktail of the abjection reflected in legislation and the desire reflected in literature, each mirroring and bordering the other: to borrow from Kristeva again, “Thus braided, woven, ambivalent, a heterogenous flux marks out a territory that I can call my own because the Other, having dwelt in me as *alter ego*, points it out to me through loathing” (10). For Gadže, the Romanies represented this sort of exoticized Other, possessing the interesting quality of being simultaneously foreign and indigenous; despite all the research into their culture on the part of George

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<sup>35</sup> This paradox is reminiscent of the roles of Jews and African Americans in the U.S., where both groups have dominated the entertainment industry while simultaneously being subject to various forms of racism. See also Joseph Litvak’s “Jew Envy” in which he discusses Horkeimer and Adorno’s writings on “the elements of Anti-Semitism” and suggests that “[e]nvy in general tries to refigure the desirable as the despicable” (83).

<sup>36</sup> As Janet Lyon has remarked, “The fabled insularity of ‘Gypsy’ communities was proof of a radical alterity” and the “literary ‘Gypsy’ is a ‘multivalent’ *gadže* (non-Romani) creation” (518).

Borrow and the generation of “Gypsiologists” that succeeded him, both in Britain and on the Continent, they remained fundamentally inaccessible, and their identity was complicated—made “mysterious,” in Leland’s terms—by the lack of accurate information about them.<sup>37</sup> It is the Romanies’ very voicelessness that has enabled the mythic Gypsy to function as a convenient receptacle for whatever malaise is floating on the *zeitgeist*. From the fortune telling of the drag-clad Mr. Rochester in *Jane Eyre* (1847) to the horse-dealing in *Lavengro* (1851) to the door-to-door vending and tinkering of the Gypsies in *The Virgin and the Gipsy* (1930), the trope of the Gypsy embodies this curious ambivalence: the Gypsy functions as both Romantic “alter ego” and object of “loathing,” and is peculiarly available for signification as a result of the dearth of information about them that might contravene it.

## II. Critical History

While they have virtually no written history of their own prior to the twentieth century, the study of the Romani people by others has a long tradition that is almost precisely concomitant with Romanticism, beginning, it is generally agreed, with the 1787 ethnological work of German linguist Heinrich Grellman (Nord, *Gypsies* 7) and the 1816 “historical survey” by John Hoyland, both of whom emphasized Romanies’ “racial” characteristics.<sup>38</sup> The writings of George Borrow (*The Zincoli* (1841), *Lavengro* (1851), and *The Romany Rye* (1857)) popularized the study of Romanies in Britain and indirectly led to the creation of the Gypsy Lore Society and its journal in

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<sup>37</sup> See Mayall, *Gypsy Identities*, for a discussion of contestations and multiple constructions of Gypsy identity by non-Romani groups.

<sup>38</sup> For a concise discussion of the history of Romani scholarship, see Mayall, *Gypsy Identities*, Chapter Six, “The Origins of the Real Romany: From Heinrich Grellman to the Gypsy Lorists.”

1888.<sup>39</sup> Other British scholars of note include Charles Godfrey Leland (first president of the Gypsy Lore Society and author of *The Gypsies*, 1882), Francis Hindes Groome (co-editor of the *Journal of Gypsy Lore* and author of *In Gypsy Tents*, 1880), John Sampson (president of the Gypsy Lore Society 1915-16 and author of *The Wind on the Heath* 1930), and Brian Vesey-Fitzgerald (*Gypsies of Britain* 1944). The *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* has been published, off and on, since its founding and recently evolved into *Romani Studies*; other important recent works are Ian Hancock's *The Pariah Syndrome* (1987) and *We Are the Romani People* (2002), as well as his numerous articles; the work of Angus Fraser (*The Gypsies* 1992); and of Gypsy Lore Society stalwarts Donald Kenrick, Thomas Acton, Colin Clark, and others. Judith Okely's 1983 anthropological study *The Traveller-Gypsies* is a controversial but important text. The studies of historian David Mayall, *Gypsy-travellers in Nineteenth-Century Society* (1988) *Gypsy Identities 1500-2000: From Egipcians and Moon-men to the Ethnic Romany* (2004), are crucial to an understanding of the historical background of the Romani population of Britain.

On the other hand, the history of critical writing on Gypsies in literature is surprisingly short. George K. Behlmer's article, "The Gypsy Problem in Victorian England" (1985), investigates the historical conditions behind the "romantic praise and systematic harassment" directed at Gypsies in the late nineteenth-century and "examine[s] the articulation of these conflicting views of Gypsy culture" (232) in the discourse of the period. Perhaps the most seminal critical work on Gypsies is the 1992 *Critical Inquiry* article by Katie Trumpener, "The Time of the Gypsies" in

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<sup>39</sup> See Deborah Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination* (Chapter 5), and Angus Fraser, "A Rum Lot," for an account of the founding and influence of the Gypsy Lore Society. The Society still exists, with headquarters in Cheverly, Maryland.



which Trumpener examines the fictionalization or “literarization” of the Romani people and the “racism and Orientalism historically surrounding the Western construction of the ‘Gypsy Question’” and succeeds in her goal “to open up a field of theoretical and literary inquiry” about them (848). Her article considers a vast range of literary works in which Gypsies (the term she favors when discussing “‘ordinary’ cases of fictionalization” (847 fn.)) figure and indeed, provides as good a bibliography of these works as any subsequently published. The article’s scope is encyclopedic, which is both its strength and its weakness, and it makes a significant contribution by calling attention to the disjunction between the literary Gypsy figure and the actual Romani people, whose tragic fate in German concentration camps she details, as well as in examining the “literarized” Gypsy figure in multiple works.

Two other important critical studies of Gypsies in British literature have been produced by Deborah Nord: “‘Marks of Race’: Gypsy Figures and Eccentric Femininity in Nineteenth-century Women’s Writing” (1998) and *Gypsies and the British Imagination: 1807-1930* (2006). In “Marks of Race,” Nord examines works by the Brontës and George Eliot in terms of what she calls the “aberrant” or “unconventional femininity” of their protagonists, which she traces to their association with “the gypsy figure” (190). In *Gypsies and the British Imagination*, Nord revises this argument, expanding it to include “gender heterodoxy” as well as a comprehensive catalogue of works including Gypsies, but continues to argue that “The eccentric female, whether heroine or author, imagines herself a Gypsy as a way of escaping from the exigencies of conventional femininity. The Gypsy’s habitual swarthinness [i.e., marks of race] becomes a marker not simply of foreignness, of non-

Englishness, but of heterodox femininity as well” (14). Nord’s book is valuable in its consideration of a wide swath of literary works and in her examination of the way Gypsies and Gypsiness are represented in them.

There have also been two comprehensive dissertations on Gypsies in British literature: Michelle Mancini’s *The Pursuit of Gypsiness in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (2000) and Michele H. Champagne’s “*This Wild Gypsy Dream*”: *The Gypsy in the Nineteenth-Century British Imagination* (2002). Mancini’s dissertation examines the “divided aims” in nineteenth-century Britain, in which “a determination to comprehend the essence (origins, history, and present conditions) of real gypsies” works against “an equally urgent desire to retain gypsiness itself as pure essence” (5), manifesting itself in the paradox reflected in Matthew Arnold’s poem “The Scholar-Gipsy” (1853) in which it is suggested that “to be in a position to offer authoritative knowledge about gypsies requires one to become, in one way or another, something of a gypsy, even as being a gypsy implies being someone who refuses to offer knowledge about gypsies” (6). Mancini traces the quality of “gypsiness” in works ranging from Arnold, Sir Walter Scott, George Borrow, and George Eliot to the less obvious choices of G.P.R. James *The Gipsy* (1835) and Charles Dickens’ *Barnaby Rudge* (1841). Mancini’s work also contains a useful discussion of the founding of the Gypsy Lore Society, many of whose members embodied “Gypsiness”: she notes that while “Borrow had similarly claimed...a kind of gypsiness...but the founders of the Society discovered the only thing more gypsy-like than a single Romany Rye was a complete confederation of them” (390). Champagne’s dissertation historicizes Gypsies as “vehicles of a middle-class escapist fantasy” (7) that “reveal[s] moments

of Orientalist and imperialist middle-class self-positioning” (171), and she traces their representations in a variety of nineteenth-century works.<sup>40</sup>

### III. The Gypsy as Trope: An Overview

Building upon these studies of the roles of Gypsies in British literature, this dissertation will move beyond considerations of representation and will examine the operation of the Gypsy trope in a variety of British works from the nineteenth century through the lens of its later iteration in Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando*, arguing that the properties of the trope were so well understood that it could be drawn upon even as a passing reference and deployed to enact a threat to the status quo.<sup>41</sup> As anti-Gypsy legislation indicates, from the time of their arrival in the British isles, Anglo-Romanies were considered a threat to property; while property is an overarching concern, within that lies anxiety about other key issues of the nineteenth century: gender, sexuality, and national identity, categories upon which each chapter will focus but which, inevitably, will overlap each other.

In reanimating the Gypsy figure, Woolf has created a laboratory setting, as it were, in which the trope functions as a “Rosetta stone” with which to interpret the functions of Gypsies in earlier texts. Because *Orlando* is so open in its interrogation of property, sexuality, gender, and national identity, it acts as a useful window through which to discern the ways in which Gypsies function in nineteenth-century

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<sup>40</sup> These works include William Wordsworth’s “Gipsies,” *Guy Mannering*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Jane Eyre*, *The Mill on the Floss* and *The Spanish Gypsy*, and the works of George Borrow, which will also be discussed herein.

<sup>41</sup> Nord alludes to this phenomenon in passing in her discussion of the Sherlock Holmes story, “The Adventure of the Speckled Band”: “Conan Doyle depends on and never dispels the image of marauding Gypsies that he can conjure up with little more than a word or two” (16).

novels to unsettle social mores in these areas. The “gypsy tribe” with whom Orlando travels after his/her transition from male to female echoes Gypsies’ deployment in a variety of British works, in which they play roles, both large and small. This dissertation will examine the specific iterations of the trope in these works and will trace its repercussions in multiple registers, focusing on its effects on the distribution of property, on gender roles, on sexuality, and on the construction of national identity. Whereas previous studies have paved the way by firmly establishing the complex dichotomies inherent in representations of Gypsies, the contest between desire on the one hand and persecution on the other,<sup>42</sup> this study reads the trope as signalling an operation that is performed on texts in which the presence of Gypsies or Gypsy figures (i.e., not always literal Romanies) functions in multiple ways to destabilize social mores.

Chapter One, “Gypsies and Property,” will begin by establishing the function of the Gypsy trope as a marker of disturbance of the status quo, examining Gypsies’ role in destabilizing the distribution of property. Beginning with *Orlando* and the problem of his/her inheritance, this chapter will examine the ways in which Orlando’s period with the “gypsy tribe” reflects larger concerns about property in the narrative and depicts the Gypsies as agents of the destabilization of Orlando’s relationship with ancestral property, as well as the role of his/her problematized gender in circumventing that inheritance. Similarly, in *Wuthering Heights* (1847), the Gypsy figure of Heathcliff heralds the destabilization and redistribution of the properties that serve as the novel’s cornerstones, including the eponymous Heights: because of

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<sup>42</sup> This binary is reflected in reflected in the “conflicting views” that Behlmer notes, the “romantic praise and systematic harassment” (232) to which Romanies have historically been subjected.

Heathcliff's presence in the text, which causes the redistribution of property from his first appearance, the Earnshaw family's hereditary capital is diverted and nearly lost to the family, and it is only by the eradication of this transgressive influence that it can be restored. After locating the functions of the Gypsy trope in both of these works, the chapter turns to three novels by Dickens, *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841), *Great Expectations* (1861), and *Bleak House* (1853), and identifies a similar function there, arguing that even a passing reference to Gypsies, such as little Nell's run-in with an encampment of Gypsies in the woods, is sufficient to signal an overturning of the status quo governing property distribution; when Nell's grandfather's capital is commandeered by the evil dwarf Quilp and results in their financial ruin, it circumvents the customary inheritance plot, resulting in "de-heritance" from the family fortunes. In *Great Expectations*, inheritance is the site of multiple misunderstandings facilitated by the presence of Estella, whose mother allegedly has "some gypsy blood in her" (360). The itinerant transgressive figures in *Bleak House*, Nemo and Jo, are not, technically, Gypsies, but both are portrayed in terms of the trope: Nemo is described as having "gipsy colour" (195), and Jo lives in the sort of nomadic squalor with which the conditions of Romanies were characterized by "reformers." George Eliot had an even keener, more explicit interest in Gypsies, as evidenced by their appearance in the novel *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) and in the long poem *The Spanish Gypsy* (1868), which will be discussed in Chapters Three and Four, respectively. Chapter One, however, will examine the complex contestation of property in *Middlemarch* (1871-2). Like Nemo, Will Ladislav in *Middlemarch* is frequently referred to as a Gypsy, and he, too, participates as catalyst in the multiple

strands of George Eliot's inheritance plot in which a variety of legacies are misdirected. In Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories "The Red-Headed League" (1891), "The Adventure of the Speckled Band" (1892), "Silver Blaze" (1892), "The Adventure of the Priory School" (1904), and novella *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1901-2), Gypsies signal challenges to property; and finally, the chapter will examine Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* (1908), in which the ancestral property of Toad Hall is temporarily misappropriated, and in which a Gypsy appears, again in passing, to unsettle hereditary distribution.

In Chapter Two, *Orlando* again acts as a central organizing principle: just as gender is performed in the nineteenth century as part of the "ideological work" (in Mary Poovey's phrase) of binarizing gender in order to facilitate the distribution of property, so is Gypsiness performed in a way that operates to destabilize gender in a variety of texts. The chapter begins by discussing the relationship between property and gender in *Orlando*, then turns to the Gypsy trope and its association with gender ambiguity and destabilization, examining how the connections between unstable gender and Gypsiness are manifested in several nineteenth-century works: Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* (1860), George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), and George du Maurier's *Trilby* (1894). Examining Sir Walter Scott's *Guy Mannering* (1815), it argues that its famed Gypsy, Meg Merrilies, functions as an ur-Gypsy whose androgynous archetype firmly establishes the Gypsy figure in the nineteenth-century popular imagination. Traces of Merrilies can be found in Mr. Rochester's performance of transgendered Gypsiness in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), which appears to borrow from Scott in assuming some of the challenges to

gender legible in Merrilies. The chapter then turns to the passing references to Gypsies in Brontë's depiction of a painting of Cleopatra in *Villette* (1853), which appears to cause the breakdown of gender in all who gaze upon her. Finally, the chapter examines the gender anxieties manifested in Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South*, reading them in terms of protagonist Margaret Hale's "Gypsiness."

Chapter Three will examine the Gypsy as an erotic trope and will argue that the trope functions as a signal for sexual transgression, a process in which in being infected with sexual desire, a character is contaminated with Gypsiness. Once again, the chapter will begin by considering *Orlando*, in which Orlando's sex change is ushered in by a sexual affiliation with a Gypsy figure: "Rosina Pepita, a dancer, father unknown, but reputedly a gipsy" (132). Reading the much-contested Gypsy scene in Jane Austen's *Emma* (1816), this chapter will argue that Gypsies signal a threat to the heterosexual marriage paradigm that ensures the hereditary distribution of property. In Matthew Arnold's 1853 poem "The Scholar-Gipsy," the Gypsy trope works to signal desire, in this case, homoerotic, that transgresses the status quo. The chapter will then discuss Maggie Tulliver's escape to the Gypsies in George Eliot's *The Mill and the Floss* and its parallels with her later elopement with Stephen Guest. In the twentieth century, in T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922) a Gypsy, Madame Sosostriis, serves as a catalyst for homoerotic desire; in D.H. Lawrence's *The Virgin and the Gipsy* (1930, posthumous), the desire for the Gypsy that infects the "virgin," Yvette, is clearly heterosexual, but it certainly transgresses the status quo.

Finally, Chapter Four examines the Gypsy trope in terms of the construction of national identity, arguing that in constructing the Gypsy as an Other and then

abjecting that other, the works considered abject the “foreign” Other and demarcate a national space. Once again, this chapter turns to *Orlando* and examines its construction of British identity as hybrid, as complex and permeable in its way as Orlando’s gender. George Borrow’s autobiographical novels (or novelistic autobiographies) *Lavengro* (1851) and *The Romany Rye* (1857) depict Gypsies as one of many exoticized Others in Britain, all which are abjected by Borrow’s narrative on behalf of English (as opposed to British) identity; yet the roots of this monolithic national identity are as complicated by Danish and Germanic invaders as those in *Orlando*. In Wilkie Collins’ proto-mystery novel *The Moonstone* (1868), the mystery is solved and the status quo resolved by the actions of a character who is a “half-Gypsy” (a definition that assumes that Gypsy identity is racial); the chapter will argue, however, that other important factors in the novel function as Gypsy figures whose Gypsiness must be abjected in service of the marriage plot, which is critical to procreation and ergo Englishness. George Eliot’s dramatic poem *The Spanish Gypsy* (1868) moves the discussion of national identity to Spain in the time of the Inquisition and embraces the notion of a Gypsy homeland; while the “Zincali” or Spanish Gypsies themselves opt for this homeland, their would-be departure leaves Spain a complicated mixture of ethnicities that argue against the possibility of a monolithic cultural identity. Finally, the chapter will consider Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897) in light of theories of “reverse colonization” and will argue that the “Szgany” who help Dracula are a crucial component of his plan to invade Britain and pollute its national identity.



#### IV. Disco Dialectics

While in the majority of the works I will consider, the presence of Gypsies, or of figures with whom Gypsiness is associated, may not appear at first glance to be significant to the plot, and indeed, in some they merely make cameo appearances, I argue that it is their very seeming lack of consequence that is the key to a reading of the trope: if they are not important to the plot, what are they doing there? It is the contention of this dissertation that it is precisely the apparent extraneousness of the Gypsy figures in these works that is the key to their function: they act as signals of multiple challenges to the status quo, a sort of instant “carnival” (as is much in evidence in *Orlando*, where they punctuate the transformation of gender that destabilizes Orlando’s identity in multiple valences), and that once early nineteenth-century writers such as Scott and Austen had firmly established the trope’s function in *Guy Mannering* and *Emma*, respectively, the reading public understood its significance and by century’s end, did not require further explanation.

One metaphor that seems to encapsulate the way the Gypsy emerges in the nineteenth century as a trope that can be deployed in a shorthand way is the familiar globe of mirrors often found hanging in a nightclub, i.e., the disco ball. When disco balls first began appearing,<sup>43</sup> they were one of many atmospheric devices that lent ambience to public spaces whose function was essentially carnivalesque. The ubiquity of the disco ball in the clubs of the 1970s was a nod to this earlier purpose, but soon became a trope on its own signifying “disco fever.” Initially, the disco ball

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<sup>43</sup> While I have not been able to locate a definitive history of the disco ball, the internet is awash with ball sightings that date back to 1897 and include a 1912 postcard from Wisconsin, the 1927 German silent film *Berlin: Die Sinfonie der Großstadt*, 1930s American ballrooms, and the 1942 film *Casablanca*.

was merely one facet of the décor of these clubs, but eventually, the ball became so synonymous with the concept of disco and its transgressive atmosphere that it came to signify the '70s-style club event. If one were trying to create a '70s ambience on film, for example, one would need only to hang a disco ball to signify this.

However, it is important to note that the disco ball doesn't *cause* a party, *per se*—it merely signals one; yet, what it contributes to the atmosphere does have a subtle causal function at the same time that the ball itself does not possess any inherently festive qualities but only those that have come to be associated with it. Similarly, in the texts they inhabit: Gypsies' mere presence is a signal that as in a disco, social mores, especially the nineteenth-century's highly regulated areas of property, gender, sexuality, and national identity, are being destabilized and overturned. While initially, Gypsies may not have caused this destabilization but merely accompany it, their presence signifies this destabilization so powerfully that they *appear* to cause it and indeed, ultimately, all that is required for this destabilization to occur is their presence, i.e., the shorthand reference to them. In the texts this study will examine, it is thus only by eradicating them, abjecting or at least taming their otherness, as in inoculation, that the status quo can return to normal—in other words, that the transgressiveness they signal can be terminated and the party, as it were, is over.

In the grammar of the nineteenth-century novel, the entrance of a Gypsy figure serves as a squinting modifier, as it were, a pivotal trope that throws everything the Victorians held dear—inheritance, binary gender roles, repressive sexuality, and British national identity—out of whack. These four foci are often interwoven: in the

case of *Orlando*, property and gender are indissolubly linked, as are property and sexuality—since primogeniture depends on heterosexual reproduction within the confines of marriage—as are property and national identity. This dissertation will argue that in each of the works considered here, sometimes in the center, sometimes off to the side, the trope of the Gypsy hangs like a disco ball, glittering in the light.

## Chapter One: Gypsies and Property

By attaching capital to figures of exotic and doomed races, or particular identities and intensities of sexual desire slated for extinction, the Victorian novel arranges the death or abjection of circulation, and thus the endless life of property beyond it.

--Jeffrey Nunokawa, *The Afterlife of Property* (15)

### I. "From the Gipsy Point of View": Gypsies and Property in *Orlando*

Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* (1928) is manifestly a novel about gender: in it, a young man changes, in the course of a 300-year-plus lifespan, into a woman.<sup>44</sup> As Orlando moves from carrying on flirtations as an ambassador in the Turkish court to watching a sailor fall from a mast-head at the sight of her ankles, gender is repeatedly interrogated and shown to be far less stable than the rigid binaries of the nineteenth century, against which Woolf and other members of the Bloomsbury Group reacted.<sup>45</sup> What is less clear is that *Orlando*, like so many of its nineteenth-century predecessors, is a novel about property, and about the way the apparent solidity of ownership of an inherited ancestral estate such as Orlando's, modeled on Vita Sackville-West's Knole in Kent,<sup>46</sup> could dissolve from the clarity of primogeniture into ambiguity, turmoil, and litigation. As gender is revealed in *Orlando* to be as

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<sup>44</sup> Karen Lawrence has called it "a narrative of boundary crossings—of time, space, gender, sex" (253). See "Orlando's Voyage Out."

<sup>45</sup> For a discussion of the nineteenth-century project of dichotomizing gender, see Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*.

<sup>46</sup> 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 Victoria's 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).

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.<sup>47</sup> 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<sup>48</sup> and runs away with a "gypsy tribe" (140), seeking respite from the exacting demands of gender and ownership and the complicated relationship between the two.<sup>49</sup>

The "tribe," with whom Orlando absconds, whose exotic lifestyle<sup>50</sup> provides not only escape but disguise, encapsulates virtually all of the traditional stereotypes that inform the Gypsy trope. 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 for Orlando. When Orlando leaves the court and joins them, they are camped on "high ground outside Broussa,"<sup>51</sup> living in the mountains that Orlando had often seen from the Embassy in Constantinople and where he (a man, at that point) had "longed to be" (140). Orlando, now female, joins them in their 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"

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<sup>47</sup> As Karen Lawrence puts it, in *Orlando*, "desire is polymorphous, the heterosexual paradigm of adventure destabilized" (252).

<sup>48</sup> 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 "awa with the gypsy laddy."

<sup>49</sup> 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).

<sup>50</sup> "Don't speak of the 'gypsy lifestyle,'" Hancock warns, "but refer instead to 'the Romani way of life'" (*We Are the Romani People* 105).

<sup>51</sup> This geographical detail perhaps reflects both their outsider status and their high moral ground with respect to property, as well as a kind of "Gypsy sublime."

(141).<sup>52</sup> The Gypsies serve as a perfect antidote to Orlando's vexed relationship with property, which has been complicated by her new gender; and the Gypsies, who appear to be beyond gender, present an escape from this, too: as Orlando reflects, "the gipsy women, except in one or two important particulars, differ very little from the gipsy men" (153), and they are repeatedly referred to in gender-neutral terms as "the gipsies," "[a]ll the young men and women," "the elders," as if both sexes acted in perfect unison; it is only when plotting her death that the "young men" act as an entity distinct from the women (151).<sup>53</sup>

The connection between property and gender is established when Orlando's own legal status becomes marginalized, much as the Gypsies are 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

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<sup>52</sup> 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" (253) and examining "the important relationship between travel and female desire" in the discourse of Woolf and Sackville-West (256).

<sup>53</sup> Chapter Two will return to a discussion of gender in *Orlando*.

three sons, which sons now declaring that their father was deceased, claimed that all his property descended to them. (168; my italics)<sup>54</sup>

It would appear that here, it is only the certainty of gender that enables property to be held absolutely; once gender is destabilized, a person's 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). Because Orlando is a person of no clear gender, his/her 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," stable conventions of property ownership and distribution are similarly imperiled.

The chapter argues that the trope of the Gypsies in *Orlando* sets up a paradigm from which we may extrapolate about the functions Gypsies serve: when a Gypsy figure enters a text, social mores that govern the distribution of property—adherence to clear gender boundaries and to sexual mores that facilitate heterosexual reproduction—are understood to be under siege. In *Orlando*, the presence of the Gypsies signals a challenge to gender that mirrors Orlando's own situation and provides a model for a genderless society; and it is within the terms of this model that

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<sup>54</sup> 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).

the mores underlying the distribution of property and their philosophical underpinnings are overturned. Not only do rigid gender binaries dissolve among *Orlando's* Gypsies, but the ownership of private property, which is the mainstay of the aristocracy and of British national identity, is held in contempt and thus undermined. This chapter will examine the implications of the function of the Gypsy trope in destabilizing property and its ownership and distribution in the mainstream of Victorian fiction, moving from Emily Brontë, Charles Dickens, and George Eliot, to the Sherlock Holmes stories of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and finally to the children's classic, *The Wind in the Willows*, in which Gypsiness is an object of both Romantic desire and parody. In each of these texts, the Gypsy trope performs multiple functions: by embodying values that run counter to nineteenth-century social norms, Gypsy figures become a kind of shorthand for the destabilization of these norms and as such, function as instant catalysts in these texts, creating instability that can only be countered by their ultimate abjection.

When Orlando joins the Gypsies, his/her gender has already been destabilized: prior to fleeing the Turkish court, the young man Orlando has already awakened and found himself to be a woman—but even this transformation is open to question. Indeed, in *Orlando*, and elsewhere in Woolf's *oeuvre*, gender is *always* in abeyance, ebbing and flowing: while after her transition, Orlando lives as a woman—and most significantly, dresses as a woman<sup>55</sup>—it is never clear that in any meaningful way she is completely female. When she meets her husband-to-be, Shelmardine, she exclaims, “You’re a woman, Shell!” and he, recognizing her ambiguous condition, replies,

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<sup>55</sup> See Karen Lawrence's discussion of “the erotics of dressing and cross-dressing that...preoccupy the narrative” (260).



“You’re a man, Orlando!” (252). Although Orlando has become female in the physical and therefore the legal sense, the narrator notes at the time of his/her transition that Orlando had “become a woman—there is no denying it. But in every other respect, Orlando remained precisely as he had been. The change of sex, though it altered their [i.e., the male and female Orlando’s] future, did nothing whatever to alter their identity” (138). This concept of gender appears to look forward to that of Judith Butler, who argues,

Assuming for the moment the stability of binary sex, it does not follow that the construction of ‘men’ will accrue exclusively to the bodies of males or that “women” will interpret only female bodies. Further, even if the sexes appear to be unproblematically binary in their morphology and constitution...there is no reason to assume that genders ought also to remain as two. (10)

Like Butler, Woolf has prised apart the essentialist identification of physical sex with gender and revealed all its complications: while Orlando may be female in the physical sense, her transition to femaleness in terms of gender is far less sudden and more complicated.<sup>56</sup>

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

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<sup>56</sup> I am reminded here of a transsexual friend who had been living as a woman for years. When she finally went to Europe for “the operation,” upon her return, people consistently questioned her about how it felt to finally be a woman. She replied that she had been a woman prior to the operation and simply continued to be one.

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).<sup>57</sup> At the same time that Orlando’s gender comes loose and remains forever in dispute (despite whatever 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 a contested state, the “gipsy tribe” with whom he/she escapes both serves as a catalyst for this change and embodies principles that emblemize Orlando’s newfound ambiguities. Upon awakening as a woman, Orlando has changed sex but not gender, and he/she appears gender-neutral until “she” returns to European society, dressed in confining female garments. Prior to this return, the Gypsies have offered her a transitional period between maleness and femaleness by themselves rejecting principles of binary gender and of property 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

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<sup>57</sup> Although Woolf could not have known this in 1928, Knole was eventually taken over by the National Trust (Glendinning 326).

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 embodied here: she reflects on the unisex clothing of the Gypsies and concludes that “[p]erhaps the Turkish trousers, which she had hitherto worn had done something to distract her thoughts” i.e., from gender (153).<sup>58</sup> 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; her time with them functions as a transitional period more significant than the change from one physical sex to another.

Thus at the same time that the Gypsies’ appearance in the text marks the beginnings of gender’s instability, it also functions to destabilize the valorization 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

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<sup>58</sup> Lawrence notes, “The erotic possibilities suggested by the more androgynous Turkish clothes and their associations with the titillation of role-playing...contribute to fascination, in *Orlando*, with dress-up and cross-dressing” (258); however, she identifies Orlando’s gender-neutral apparel as Turkish when in fact it is the garb of the Gypsies.

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 more striking than Orlando's sex change, utterly destabilizes the notions of property that inform not only aristocratic families such as Orlando's and Sackville-West's, but the nineteenth-century novel. In his study of "fears...about the powers of the commodity" (3) and their consequences in four representative Victorian novels, Jeffrey Nunokawa notes that anxiety about capital and the commodity is a "major theme"<sup>59</sup> "whose modern and postmodern variations have resonated no less consequentially in the years since" (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 in which there is not so much an "afterlife" of property as a counter-life in which property is unimportant. As Orlando realizes that the Gypsies are not only unimpressed with her aristocratic heritage but also embarrassed for her about it, she is mortified,

seized with a shame that she had never felt before. It was clear that

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<sup>59</sup> Specifically, of "the third quarter of the nineteenth century" (3)

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<sup>60</sup> 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....(147-8)

Here, Woolf's Gypsies deconstruct all the assumptions on which the landed aristocracy is based 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; though it must be noted that the narrator's overly earnest tone can never be construed to directly reflect Woolf's own

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<sup>60</sup> Here Woolf, no doubt in jest, reflects the mistaken belief that the Romani people originally came from Egypt.

views, still, in linking the deconstruction of traditional assumptions about property with assumptions about gender, she is at the very least calling both into question. As parodic a text as *Orlando* is, it reflects some of the serious interrogation of gender evident in Woolf's other work, such as the contemporaneous "A Room of One's Own."

In *Orlando*, then, Gypsies have performed a function: when they appear in this text, the main character's gender and thus, his/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 nineteenth-century society—and specifically, of the nineteenth-century novel—to stabilize are destabilized. *Orlando* provides a useful paradigm for this operation: first, "his Lordship, Orlando, Knight of the Garter, etc. etc." falls into a trance after having married (judging from a document found in his room) "Rosina Pepita, a dancer, father unknown, but reputedly a gipsy" (132); then, Orlando awakens as a woman, and is rendered property-less by this transition (137). Deborah Nord has argued that "gypsydom" "function[s] imaginatively as an 'escape' from English conventionality at the borders of English society itself" ("Marks" 189). While Gypsies in nineteenth-century British literature do offer or trope escape, they also foment destabilization throughout the texts they inhabit, and their transgressive presence works to overturn the conventional notions of sex, gender, and property whose construction is the

“ideological work,” in Mary Poovey’s phrase, of the British nineteenth-century.<sup>61</sup> A Gypsy has only to turn up in a text and all bets are off.

## II. “A Dark Skinned Gipsy In Aspect”: *Wuthering Heights*

If in *Orlando* Gypsies signal the destabilization 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 the eponymous Heights, a problem that is rectified only by his death.<sup>62</sup> While 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.

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” (32).<sup>63</sup> From the beginning, Heathcliff causes the displacement of property, taking the place of the

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<sup>61</sup> *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England*.

<sup>62</sup> Deborah Nord calls Heathcliff “a mutant gene that, once let loose in the line of Earnshaws and Lintons who follow him, changes everything” (“Marks” 197).

<sup>63</sup> In his introduction to the novel, Christopher Heywood calls Heathcliff “a child of Africa” (42), and says that while Heathcliff is “[m]isread as a Gypsy, Lascar, castaway, and prince of India and China” he is “a son of Ham” (53). In *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, Terry Eagleton reads Heathcliff as “quite possibly” Irish, but admits that he “may be a gypsy, or (like Bertha Mason in *Jane Eyre*) a Creole, or any kind of alien. It is hard to know how black he is, or rather how much of the blackness is pigmentation and how much of it is grime and bile” (3). I would argue that Brontë has carefully left Heathcliff’s race and nationality indeterminate.

whip Catherine had requested, which Mr. Earnshaw lost “in attending on the stranger,” and causing the breakage of Hindley’s violin (32). 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?” (32); Heathcliff is thus accused in the same sentence of usurping the legitimate Earnshaw children’s claim to sustenance *and* of being a Gypsy.

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” (33).<sup>64</sup> From the beginning, Heathcliff occupies an ambiguous position within the family as both stranger and sibling. Similarly, his ethnicity is unclear; though he is repeatedly referred to by others as a Gypsy, his antecedents are never determined, though during his introduction to the family, according to Nelly, he “repeated over and again some gibberish that nobody could understand” (32), which bespeaks foreign origin; as Liverpool is a port, it could be argued that he has come from another country<sup>65</sup>, but it is equally possible that his “gibberish” is Romani.<sup>66</sup> Emily Brontë has not offered

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<sup>64</sup> Nord has read Heathcliff’s adoption as a variation on the traditional “bastard plot” (“Marks 191) and has suggested that Heathcliff may in fact be Earnshaw’s illegitimate son (*Gypsies* 10), a hypothesis enacted in the 1970 film of the novel.

<sup>65</sup> Just as 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 (“Slavery: *Idée Fixe* of Emily and Charlotte Brontë” (113-21).

<sup>66</sup> One of the markers of Gypsiness, as evidenced in *Lavengro*, is their allegedly unintelligible language; in *The Old Curiosity Shop*, for example, Nell witnesses an “encampment of gipsies” who speak “a jargon which the child did not understand” (323).



enough evidence to allow us to ascertain Heathcliff's ethnicity with any certainty; his "darkness" argues equally well for origins in India, Africa, America, England's Romani population,<sup>67</sup> and, as Charlotte Brontë notes 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"<sup>68</sup> (xlii) 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 indicates that Emily Brontë had no intention of creating a clearly demarcated racial identity for him, but preferred him to remain ambiguous, as something that, in Kristeva's terms, must be abjected so that "identity, system, and order" may be reinstated (4).

Despite his evident ethnic ambiguity, however, Heathcliff is repeatedly referred to by other characters as a "gipsy,"<sup>69</sup> in this context perhaps simply a synonym for "dark, ambiguous other." Lockwood describes him as "a dark-skinned gipsy in aspect, in dress and manners a gentleman" (5), and Joseph calls him "that fahl, flaysome devil of a gipsy" (75). 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

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<sup>67</sup> 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.

<sup>68</sup> The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "Lascar" as "An East Indian sailor," and "afreet" as "An evil demon or monster of Muslim mythology." The *OED* locates a reference to the latter term in Byron's *Giaour*; since the influence of Byron on *Wuthering Heights* has often been noted, Charlotte may, consciously or not, have been implying this connection.

<sup>69</sup> In 'This Wild Gypsy Dream': *The Gypsy in the Nineteenth-Century British Imagination*, Michelle Champagne makes the case for Heathcliff's Gypsiness and "historiciz[es] him in terms of the position of Britain's Gypsy population in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century" (20).

Mr. Earnshaw about the beatings Hindley has given him.<sup>70</sup> 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” (34). 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.<sup>71</sup>

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, and in Van Ghent’s words, their “raw, inhuman reality of anonymous natural energies” vs. “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?” (43).<sup>72</sup> 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

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<sup>70</sup>Horse trading is “an ancient part of the Romani tradition,” and even today, local authorities are attempting to ban the traditional fairs at which horse trading is done (the fair at Stow-on-the-Wold was granted its charter in 1476) because of alleged “disruption to the local community” (Jake Bowers, “Gypsy Kings”). It could be argued that the trade with Hindley is further evidence of Heathcliff’s Gypsy credentials.

<sup>71</sup> In contemplating Heathcliff’s “gypsy lack of origins,” Dorothy Van Ghent suggests that “Heathcliff might *really* be a demon” (154; her emphasis).

<sup>72</sup> Here, we see the conflation of Gypsiness with itinerancy—“scouring the country.”

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”<sup>73</sup>), Brontë ensures that Heathcliff’s ethnicity remains ambiguous, having Mr. Linton identify him as “a little Lascar, or an American or Spanish castaway,”<sup>74</sup> and Mrs. Linton sums up by terming him “[a] wicked boy, at all events...and quite unfit for a decent house!”(43). 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 Gypsiness 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.<sup>75</sup>

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 plough-boy?”” (81). 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” (82). The word “treasure” implies that he has continued to regard Heathcliff as an object or property, refusing to recognize that Heathcliff has disrupted the commodification that

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<sup>73</sup> The *Oxford English Dictionary* records this obsolete definition of “Gipsie” from 1635.

<sup>74</sup> See footnote 67.

<sup>75</sup> 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. The 1970 film version of the novel suggests that Heathcliff and Catherine consummated their relationship while perambulating the moors.

characterized his youth. Heathcliff's transformation is reflected in his appearance, which 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" (83). The claims of both nature and nurture are evident here: Heathcliff cannot shed his ethnic darkness or ferocity, the "black fire" in his eyes, but 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" (83); the "ploughboy" has been transformed into a gentleman, i.e., someone who owns property, and his appearance both reflects his acquisition of property in his three years away, the exact nature of which is never made explicit, and presages his subsequent acquisition of the two central properties in the novel, Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange. The implication here is that while a Gypsy/vagrant, as Heathcliff initially is, like the Gypsies in *Orlando* does not own property, a faux gentleman can indeed do so, but his central Gypsiness, 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 (139)) 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 the trappings of the gentry, unlike in *Orlando*, where beneath the veil of costume lies an ambiguous mix of genders,

Heathcliff's essential Gypsiness/deviltry cannot be erased by costume: similarly, his ownership of property is ultimately as transient and false as his status as a gentleman.

But in the short term, Heathcliff's primary function is to destabilize the distribution of property along the normal hereditary lines: as *Wuthering Heights* progresses, it becomes clear that the central method of his revenge on everyone who has crossed him is to strip them of their assets. The second half of the novel, which begins at 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, which are freed 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. In *Orlando*, Gypsies mysteriously serve to punctuate, if not facilitate, Orlando's transition from male property-holder to female/property, but in *Wuthering Heights*, Heathcliff's Gypsiness is intrinsic to the disturbance of ownership. If it is his alleged Gypsy identity that causes everyone to reject him, which renders him unsuitable as a mate for Catherine (as does, it can alternatively 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 Irish boy from the streets of Liverpool, per Eagleton, 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.

To return to the consideration of anti-Gypsy legislation (see "Introduction"), this anxiety about Heathcliff may be read as an aspect of more general fears about Gypsies' vagrancy. Heathcliff's fundamental transience, landlessness, and subsequent peregrinations are the source of the instability of property in the novel: his disappearance, during which he amasses enough money to become a gentleman, is never even explained; all we know is that he has wandered away and then returned with capital that has perhaps been acquired through unscrupulous means. If one of the root concerns of anti-Gypsy legislation was anxiety about property, i.e., the redeployment of land and other capital that Gypsies' itinerancy was alleged to lead to, Heathcliff's wandering has precisely the effect on the Earnshaws and Lintons that anti-Gypsy legislation appears designed to prevent: his itinerancy results in the usurpation of property that ought to have been distributed via primogeniture but which, instead, falls prey to an unorthodox and unjust pattern of distribution in which capital, temporarily reallocated to someone who has no hereditary right to it, trumps

heredity. It is only by extinguishing this temporary “Gypsification” of capital that the social mores that have been abrogated by Heathcliff can be set to rights.

### III. “Some Gipsy Blood in Her”: Gypsies in Dickens

While I do not intend to argue that *all* nineteenth-century novels about property have Gypsies in them, it is interesting to note that of the four “representative works” in which Jeffrey Nunokawa investigates anxieties about property in *The Afterlife of Property*, two by Dickens, *Little Dorrit* and *Dombey and Son* contain Gypsy figures: *Little Dorrit* contains one bona fide Gypsy (Pancks, a fortuneteller); *Dombey and Son* contains a “counterfeit gipsy” (“[a] withered and very ugly old woman, dressed not so much as a gipsy as like any of that medley race of vagabonds who tramp about the country, begging, and stealing, and tinkering and weaving rushes....” (400)).<sup>76</sup> A surprising number of Gypsies or Gypsy-like characters turn up in canonical Victorian novels in which property and its distribution are at risk (i.e., arguably, *most* Victorian novels): for example, in *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841), *Great Expectations* (1861), and *Bleak House* (1853),<sup>77</sup> Gypsy figures appear, albeit sometimes in minor roles, to perform a destabilizing function.

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<sup>76</sup> Although the other two works he considers, *Daniel Deronda* and *Silas Marner*, do not contain Gypsies, issues of race and national identity are central to *Daniel Deronda*. It could be perhaps argued that the absence of Gypsies in those novels might be explained by the ways in which the figures of the Jew and the miser perform functions similar to those of Gypsies.

<sup>77</sup> Gypsies, or rather, counterfeit-Gypsies or half-Gypsies, play key roles in several other important canonical Victorian novels concerned with property: *Jane Eyre* (1847), which I will discuss in Chapter Two; Wilkie Collins’s *The Moonstone* (1868) (see Nicholas Saul, “Half a Gypsy: the Case of Ezra Jennings in Wilkie Collins’s *The Moonstone*”), which I will discuss in Chapter Four; and, it can be argued, Thomas Hardy’s *The Return of the Native* (1878), in which the “reddleman” Diggory Venn can be read as a counterfeit Gypsy whose appearance at the beginning of the narrative sets in motion the complex disturbance of property in the novel.

*The Old Curiosity Shop* functions as a model for this function of Gypsies in a text. After taking flight from the evil, loan-sharking, sexually predatory dwarf, Quilp, and charting a picaresque course out of London, halfway through the novel, the novel's famous heroine, Little Nell, stumbles upon a "gypsy encampment" in the woods and discovers that her grandfather, who has already lost all his money to Quilp, is gambling there (i.e., losing the last shred of his capital). This interlude appears to be a set piece whose characters play only a minor part in the rest of the novel. However, it is this pivotal scene that changes the course of events, causing Nell to have to rescue her grandfather from his "keen and cunning" companions (319) and the multiple threats to capital they represent, and to return to the "new uncertainties and anxieties of their wild and wandering life" (325) in order to keep him from an act even worse than gambling, the theft of Mrs. Jarley's money. This encounter in the "encampment" with Jowl, his money-worshipping colleague, Isaac List,<sup>78</sup> and an unnamed Gypsy man,<sup>79</sup> is the catalyst that turns Nell from a picaresque heroine into a "wild"<sup>80</sup> wanderer, in contradistinction to her more controlled wandering with Mrs. Jarley's caravan of wax-works.

Indeed, had the pair remained on the road with Jarley's Wax-Work, their journey would perhaps not have been so destructive; Mrs. Jarley suggests the possibility of a benign, comparatively respectable form of wandering that is antithetical to the chaotic flight from the Gypsy, Jowl, and List that Nell undertakes to

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<sup>78</sup> In a 1958 *PMLA* article, "Dickens' Archetypal Jew," Lane reads Isaac List as a Jew, considering him in terms of Dickens' generally somewhat anti-Semitic depictions of Jewish characters.

<sup>79</sup> While the Gypsy man is the only one of the three identified as such, it is possible that all three are Gypsies, as they are heard "to talk in a jargon which the child did not understand" that is perhaps Romani (323).

<sup>80</sup> As Chapter Four will note in connection with George Borrow, "wild" is often a code word for Gypsiness.



avoid the moral turpitude and threats to property brought about by her grandfather's gambling addiction.<sup>81</sup> Mrs. Jarley's milieu is the polar opposite of the Gypsy encampment, as the description of her caravan indicates, and provides a brief haven for Nell and the grandfather:

It was not a shabby, dingy, dusty cart, but a smart little house upon wheels....Neither was it a poor caravan drawn by a single donkey or emaciated horse....Neither was it a gipsy caravan, for at the open door...sat a Christian lady....And that it was not an unprovided or destitute caravan was clear from this lady's occupation, which was the very pleasant and refreshing one of taking tea (201).

Mrs. Jarley's caravan exudes a faux-bourgeois gentility and comfort that places her in the middle class of travelers, who constitute a diverse group, sociologically. The roads of the rural-industrial wasteland that Nell and her grandfather traverse are inundated with wanderers of all types who range from performers of various degrees of respectability to con artists and thieves, Gypsies and counterfeit Gypsies.<sup>82</sup> At the beginning of their journey, the pair of fugitives, driven from home by a crisis in capital—Quilp's requisitioning of all their belongings, curiosities and otherwise, which were collateral for the grandfather's gambling debts—happen continually upon "gipsies" and their camps, but the encounter with the gamblers at the Gypsy encampment punctuates their journey at mid-point, creating a watershed between the

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<sup>81</sup> Matthew Rowlinson makes a similar point about Master Humphrey and the grandfather in "Reading Capital with Little Nell" (360).

<sup>82</sup> In *Rogues and Vagabonds: Vagrant Underworld in Britain 1815-1985*, Lionel Rose estimates that in 1806, "among England's 10,000,000 people there were some 70,000 tramps, beggars, gypsies and the like, together with 10,000 wandering performers and dubious pedlars, and 10,000 lottery ticket touts...." (3).

benign, Pickwickian adventures with Jarley's Wax-Work and their deteriorating situation, culminating in the vision of hell they encounter as they seek shelter in a factory where they sleep on heaps of ashes.<sup>83</sup>

Arguably, it is the leg of the journey that occurs after the encounter with List et al., in which Nell is chilled, drenched with heavy rain, subjected to "intolerable vapours" (330) on a barge, and the "dense dark cloud" of the factory (341), that leads to her death—and it is her death that prevents her from receiving her financial due, either from the grandfather, who has gambled away all their resources in a deluded attempt to amass more capital for Nell, or from the "single gentleman," her grandfather's itinerant younger brother who wishes to share his wealth with both of them. "Let us be beggars," Nell says to the grandfather when she proposes that they flee from Quilp (80), and this is precisely the effect that their flight has on them, as they grow entropically poorer and poorer in the course of their travels. The decline in the grandfather's and thus Nell's fortunes, initiated by Quilp's impounding of their property, is hastened by the machinations of the Gypsy and counterfeit-Gypsy gamblers, who figuratively pound the last nail in Nell's coffin by revealing to her the depths to which her grandfather is willing to stoop in the hopes of amassing capital.

Throughout *The Old Curiosity Shop*, property is in a constant state of dislocation: the grandfather's ostensibly unselfish desire to increase Nell's wealth paradoxically results in their ruin; the hoarded, fetishistic "curiosities" of his shop end up in the hands of Quilp; Nell's defender Kit is wrongfully imprisoned when a five-pound note is planted on him by Quilp's conspirators. In the end, virtually the only

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<sup>83</sup> Dickens is careful to differentiate between the malefic Gypsy encampment of List's crew and the others Nell has encountered by pointing out that List's camp contained "no women or children, as she had seen in other gipsy camps they had passed in their wayfaring" (318).

major characters left standing, not only alive but capitalized, are the tenacious Kit (for whom a “good post” is ultimately procured (554)) and Richard Swiveller (who unexpectedly comes into an annuity from a deceased aunt (504)), and their wives. Thus, while the novel follows the conventional comedic marriage plot, it does so at the expense of the heroine who is in the center of the narrative. Unlike *Wuthering Heights*, which restores all property to its rightful lineage and thus recuperates the marriage plot in its second generation, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, like *Orlando*, maps a plot of *de*-heritance in which a brief encounter with a Gipsy derails the passage of capital to its rightful heirs. While Gypsies are not central to the plot, their cameo presence functions as a signal that property has been destabilized, as if in a world where Gypsies constitute a constant underlying threat to property in a literal sense and to social norms on a larger scale, the rules that govern society, rules that dictate that a grandfather should take care of his granddaughter instead of the other way round, have been suspended.

Gypsy figures play a more critical, though perhaps less obvious, role in Dickens’ *Great Expectations*, another novel to which the displaced distribution of property is central. The novel’s title intimates that the fundamental force driving its main character, Pip, is the expectation of not only wealth and upward mobility but also romance with the object of his affections, the mysterious Estella. As a *Bildungsroman*, *Great Expectations* traces Pip’s economic development, his transitional arc from “common labouring boy” (73) to gentleman and then, ultimately

halfway down the class system again, to clerk. At each stage of Pip's progress, Gypsies contribute directly to his fate.

At their first meeting, Miss Havisham demands that Pip and Estella play cards; upon discovering that the only game Pip knows is "beggar my neighbour," Miss Havisham instructs Estella to "Beggar him" (73). This is precisely what happens in the course of the novel: the same forces that cause Pip's financial success ultimately beggar him again. Pip is made into a gentleman by an unknown benefactor and then, ultimately, brought back down again when he discovers that the benefactor was in fact the convict, Magwitch, who had decided to reward Pip for aiding his escape years before. Magwitch's desire to extend economic benefits to Pip is an adoptive form of primogeniture; he explicitly sees Pip as a son: "'Look'ee here, Pip. I'm your second father. You're my son—more to me nor any son. I've put away money, only for you to spend'" (298). Magwitch's rhapsodic declarations to Pip cement his role as faux-father of Pip-as-gentleman, a connection Pip initially abhors and rejects, but comes to accept. In accepting Magwitch as his father—"I will be as true to you, as you have been to me!" (407)—Pip buys into Magwitch's family tree in which Gypsiness, or at least counterfeit-Gypsiness, is implicated in his criminality: in tracing his formative years and explaining to Pip his life "[i]n jail and out of jail, in jail and out of jail, in jail and out of jail" (319), Magwitch reveals his parentage:

I've been carted here and carted there, and put out of this town and put out of that town, and stuck in the stocks, and whipped and worried and drove....I first became aware of myself, down in Essex, a thieving turnips for my living. Summun had run away from me—a man—a

tinker—and he took the fire with him, and left me wery cold. (319)

The existence Magwitch describes here is that of a Gypsy, or at least an oppressed itinerant, and he is evidently the child of a tinker. While not all tinkers were Gypsies, many Gypsies did support themselves with “tinkering,” i.e., mending metal utensils (Mayall 42), and the *OED* notes that “tinker” is often “synonymous with ‘vagrant’ [and] ‘gypsy,’” especially in Scotland and northern Ireland.

With his economic “adoption” of Pip, Magwitch attempts to create his own criminal’s version of primogeniture, but because of the checkered past he outlines, his attempt is doomed to failure. In fact, it is precisely his emotional connection to Pip that causes Magwitch to return to England and be re-arrested, and it is this turn of events that causes Pip’s economic downfall since, as Pip realizes, when Magwitch is captured during his visit to see his “dear boy,” all his capital would be “forfeited to the Crown” (407). If it is Magwitch’s criminality and/or Gypsiness that enable him to acquire assets, beginning with turnips, these same qualities—his compulsion to “wander” back to England, despite the risks involved—cause the loss of his property.

The other character who plays a key role in raising and then dashing Pip’s “expectations” is Estella, who has been schooled in heartlessness by the vindictive Miss Havisham. Not only is the orderly process of inheritance subverted by Gypsiness in this novel, but the marriage plot is as well: Estella herself is revealed to be a Gypsy, at least in part, when Pip discovers that she is the child of both Magwitch and Molly, Jaggers’ murderous housekeeper. As Pip meets Molly, he is reminded of the witches in *Macbeth*, recalling the vague occultishness we have seen in Brontë’s depiction of Heathcliff and in Orlando’s strange transformation; Pip imagines her

face “rising out of a cauldron,” and “[y]ears later,” he says, he caused “a face that had no other natural resemblance to it other than it derived from flowing hair, to pass behind a bowl of flaming spirits in a dark room,” presumably at a séance (205). Wemmick identifies Molly as a Gypsy: as he recites her case history to Pip, he describes her Old Bailey trial for murder, at which Jaggers got her acquitted, and says, ““She was a very handsome young woman, and I believe had some gipsy blood in her”” (360). This aura of Gypsiness, like that of Heathcliff, would seem to account for a variety of aberrant behaviors that are tinged with the occult.<sup>84</sup>

If Magwitch is the son of a tinker and Molly has “some gipsy blood,” Estella’s Gypsy pedigree is well established. She is also the adopted child of Miss Havisham, who has subverted any possibility of Estella serving as a conventional heroine in a marriage plot by “[stealing] her heart away and put[ting] ice in its place” (366). At Miss Havisham’s death, Estella is her sole heir, apart from a “little coddleshell” for Matthew Pocket (423); thus, as in *Wuthering Heights*, a vaguely Gypsy foundling has displaced the rightful heirs to property and dislocated the conventional pattern of romantic love.

Unlike in *Wuthering Heights*, however, this dislocation is never entirely reversed. The original ending of *Great Expectations*, which was changed on the advice of Edward Bulwer Lytton,<sup>85</sup> reveals Dickens’ initial plan for the arc of the plot: his intention was initially to show that in the end, Pip has freed himself of all the novel’s Gypsies. In abjecting them, he is thus able to practice his own faux-

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<sup>84</sup> Deborah Nord has noted the connection of Gypsiness with “unconventional, even aberrant, femininity” (“Marks” 190), a term that describes both Molly and Estella.

<sup>85</sup> While it is often supposed that Dickens changed his ending “for the market,” in Oscar Wilde’s phrase about the death of Little Nell, Edwin M. Eigner has argued that Bulwer Lytton’s objection was that “disagreeable or unpleasant elements have no place in a novel and especially in its ending” (106).

primogeniture: when he meets Estella, he is in the company of “little Pip” (440). In the original version, Estella still possesses “her own personal fortune” (440); now that Pip is Gypsy-free and the marriage plot with Estella aborted, fortunes are no longer in entropy, and Estella can remain married (to a “Shropshire doctor”) without ill consequence, and has acquired a heart due to her own suffering (440). In the original ending, Pip has thrown off all the Gypsies in his life and is finally able to prosper.

On the other hand, while Dickens’ rewritten ending implying that Pip and Estella ultimately marry does, in effect, settle Miss Havisham’s capital on Pip, by this time, it has been much diminished by the effects of Estella’s marriage to Drummle. In this ending, all that remains of Satis House and all that remains of Miss Havisham’s estate, is the ground itself: ““The ground belongs to me. It is the only possession I have not relinquished,”” Estella says. ““Everything else has gone from me, little by little”” (438-9). Like the entropic fortunes of *The Old Curiosity Shop* and of *Bleak House*, to which we will turn next, the wealth that was assumed to promise great expectations to Pip dissolves in confusion, its displacement set into motion in quite a literal way by Gypsy figures whose sinister occult and criminal tendencies, two bulwarks of the Gypsy stereotype, infuse the novel.

In terms of this argument, one would expect to find a Gypsy in *Bleak House*, the quintessential novel about the subverting of inheritance and the entropy of capital. *Bleak House*’s parallel narratives (one in first-person and one in third) complicate the task of locating the operations of Gypsy characters on plot, since there are two parallel plots to do with property—one that traces the rise of the orphan Esther

Summerson and one that traces the fall of Lady Dedlock—whose complex intersection does not appear to hinge on any explicitly Gypsy characters. However, two significant, though relatively minor, characters possess what can be read as Gypsiness, and these Gypsy-inflected characters are, as we have seen in *Orlando* and the other novels considered above, central to the multiple strands of economic displacement whose course the novel maps.

Both of these characters—Nemo and Jo—begin, as is typical of the novel, in one of the two parallel narratives—the Lady Dedlock plot—but ultimately cross over to the other one. The first of these to appear, “Nemo” (Latin for “nobody” (fn. 1018)), is introduced almost immediately, in Chapter Two (“In Fashion”), when Lady Dedlock sees his “law-hand” on some papers and inquires of Mr. Tulkinghorn, her husband’s lawyer, whose handwriting it is, an act that sets in motion the narrative arc in which she is the protagonist, and that ultimately results in her ruin (26-7). As the portrait of Nemo is pieced together by increments, we discover first that he is the opium-addict legal-copier who boards with Mr. Krook, whose “Rag and Bottle Warehouse” contains, among other things, papers in “law-hand.”<sup>86</sup> Nemo is not a Gypsy, but a former army captain who was once engaged to Lady Dedlock, well before her aristocratic marriage, and who fathered a child with her that turns out to be Esther Summerson, the protagonist of the first-person part of the novel’s dual narrative. By the time he actually makes an appearance in the novel, he has died of an overdose; however, descriptions of him reveal that though he was once respectable,

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<sup>86</sup> The presence of Miss Flite, one of the plaintiffs in the lawsuit “Jarndyce and Jarndyce,” at Krook’s is one of the earliest points at which the two narratives begin to intersect.



he has descended into persecuted itinerance: when Jo,<sup>87</sup> the street-sweeper (who like Nemo has only one name), is introduced to the novel as a witness at the inquest, he testifies that “the dead man (whom he recognised just now by his yellow face and black hair) was sometimes hooted and pursued about the streets” (177-8). While the “yellow face” may be consistent with Nemo’s illness, yellowness is also often associated with Gypsies, most notably in a variant of the ballad of “Johnny Faa,” “Seven Yellow Gypsies.”<sup>88</sup> The implication of Gypsiness is underscored in Tulkinghorn’s description to Lady Dedlock of Nemo’s condition before his death: “He had lived so wretchedly, and was so neglected, with his gipsy colour, and his wild black hair and beard, that I should have considered him the commonest of the common” (195). Wildness, black hair, being pursued in the streets, and wretched poverty can all be read in terms of the Gypsy trope. Tulkinghorn’s association between “gipsy colour” and commonness indicates that in his deterioration post-Lady Dedlock, Nemo/Hawdon’s class status took a dramatic plunge at the same time that his former lover was ascending to the aristocracy; all that is left of his capital after his death is “an old portmanteau” (195), now empty, and, having fallen into the wrong hands, the packet of old letters through which Nemo is identified as Captain Hawdon.

Lady Dedlock’s association with this “wretched being,” as she calls him (195), initiates the chain of events that lead to her undoing. Her curiosity about Nemo’s handwriting gives rise to further investigation, which is noted by

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<sup>87</sup> The *OED* defines “Jo” as “variant of Joe, Portuguese coin.” Later, Jo is given a coin by Lady Dedlock.

<sup>88</sup> Recorded, for example, by Martin Carthy on *Prince Heathen* (1969). One variant of “The Raggle Taggle Gypsy” contains the lyric, “What care I for my money-o/I’d rather have a kiss of the yellow gypsy’s lips”: see also the Waterboys’ album *Room to Roam* (1990). See also Christine A. Cartwright, “Johnny Faa and Black Jack Davy: Cultural Values and Change in Scots and American Balladry.”

Tulkinghorn, who then uses it against her. In the end, Lady Dedlock's economic good fortune is reversed because of her past association with someone who has turned into a Gypsy-figure. Her rise and fall are the primary focus of the novel's third-person narrative, yet have surprisingly little direct impact upon the other narrative, the *Bildungsroman* of Esther Summerson; despite the fact that she turns out to be Lady Dedlock's daughter, Esther appears relatively unscathed by Lady Dedlock's undoing. However, it is possible to read the Dedlock narrative as a failed inheritance plot, in terms of Esther, since if Lady Dedlock had not given in to her curiosity about Hawdon/Nemo, she might still have discovered that Esther was her daughter and found a way to discreetly make her an heir to the Dedlock fortune. But with Lady Dedlock's death, no inheritance can pass to Esther (as Guppy insinuates that it might have (465)), and Nemo's death has little impact on Esther's relationship to the fortunes of the Jarndyces (in whose suit Sir Leicester Dedlock plays some part). As in *Great Expectations*, Gypsiness has disrupted legitimacy and ergo the distribution of what might otherwise have been hereditary wealth.

The other Gypsy figure in the Chancery portion of the novel crosses over into Esther's narrative far more dramatically. While like Nemo, Jo the sweeper is not explicitly a Gypsy, the conditions under which he lives suggest that if not an actual Roma, he, like Nemo, is Gypsy-like: Jo is the kind of vagrant Victorian reformers were later so focused on in such legislation as the Moveable Dwellings Bill of 1885 that was, in the words of a contemporary Parliamentarian, "aimed, not so much at genuine gipsies, as at people who pretended to be gipsies—people who were a great annoyance to those amongst whom they lived, and people who lived, to a great

extent, by ‘spoil’” (Mr. Kenny, qtd. in Mayall 131). Mayall also cites an 1880 newspaper reporter’s comments on the faux-Gypsies of Lamb Lane, in London:

For the genuine Gipsy tribe, and their mysterious promptings to live apart from their fellows in the lanes and fields of the country, we have a sentimental pity; but with such as these Lamb-lane people, off-scourings of the lowest form of society, we have no manner of sympathy; and we hope that a gracious Act of Parliament may soon rid English social life of such a plague. (131-2)

The streets from which Jo has come are even more undesirable and pestilential than those of Lamb Lane and are a far cry from the romantic open road of the literary Gypsy; Jo is a squatter at “Tom all-Alone’s,” a squalid street with ruined houses that are, by Dickensian coincidence, also “in Chancery,” i.e., litigation, part of the estate of Jardyce and Jarndyce (whether Tom was Tom Jarndyce, from whom Esther’s patron John Jardyce has inherited Bleak House, or someone who lived in the street, the narrator is uncertain):

It is a black, dilapidated street, avoided by all decent people; where the crazy houses were seized upon, when their decay was far advanced, by some bold vagrants, who, after establishing their own possession, took to letting them out in lodgings. Now, these tumbling tenements contain, by night, a swarm of misery. As, on the ruined human wretch, vermin parasites appear, so, these ruined shelters have bred a crowd of foul existence that crawls in and out of gaps in walls and boards; and coils itself to sleep, in maggot numbers....(256-7)

According to the narrator, Jo has been turned “wild,” like a dog (259), and like the street in which he lives, not to mention the Jarndyce fortune, is in the process of degeneration. Whether or not Jo is a member of a “genuine Gipsy tribe” or is simply a vagrant, is not clear—certainly not to Jo, who in his own words “don’t know nothink” (257); however, Gypsiness is implied further by his vernacular, an incomprehensible (to Lady Dedlock) argot of the sort noted among Gypsies by George Borrow in *Lavengro*: “I am fly,’ says Jo. But fen larks, you know! Stow hooking it!” “What does the horrible creature mean?” Lady Dedlock exclaims (261).<sup>89</sup>

Not only is Tom all-Alone’s home to vagrants, but it is the site of pestilence: “There is not a drop of Tom’s corrupted blood but propagates infection and contagion somewhere” (710). The street is “undrained, unventilated, deep in black mud and corrupt water...and reeking with such smells and sights that [Mr. Bucket], who has lived in London all his life, can scarce believe his senses.” Along the street are “fever houses” from which people “have been carried out, dead and dying ‘like sheep with the rot’” (358). These are not the “moveable dwellings” targeted by the legislation of 1885, but Dickens’ description foreshadows the anti-Gypsy screeds of infamous “reformer” “George Smith of Coalville”: for example, in an 1879 letter to *The Daily Chronicle*, Smith describes a Gypsy encampment in south London as “a pitiable spectacle of some 60 half-naked, poor Gipsy children, and 30 Gipsy men and women, living in a state of indescribable ignorance, dirt, filth, and misery, mostly squatting on the ground, making their beds upon peg-shavings and straw, and divested of the last tinge of romantical nonsense” and a “mass of human corruption which has been

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<sup>89</sup> *Lavengro*, Borrow’s “novel” of Gypsy life, is replete with run-ins with Gypsies who speak an indecipherable Romany-based cant which Borrow, an auto-didact linguist, translates.

festering in our midst for centuries, breeding all kinds of sins and impurities” (qtd. in Mayall 134-5). The dead being carried out of Tom all-Alone’s like “sheep with the rot” jibes with Smith’s comment that Gypsies “live like pigs and die like dogs” (qtd. in Mayall 135). Of course, London in the nineteenth century was full of poor people living in crowded conditions; what makes Tom all-Alone’s Gypsy-like is the fact that it is populated by cant-speaking vagrants who, as in Smith’s worst fears, spread pestilence into the upper reaches of society: as the narrator remarks, “There is not an atom of Tom’s slime, not a cubic inch of any pestilential gas in which he lives...but shall work its retribution, through every order of society, up to the proudest of the proud, and to the highest of the high” (710). Jo’s breed of poverty is a contagion, and his environment is, like the “moveable dwellings” targeted by the 1885 bill, “a nuisance” that is “injurious to the health of inmates,” in the words of that bill (Ch. 72 48 & 49 Vict., 1885).

The pestilential nature of Tom all-Alone’s is one of the reasons for the profound impact of Jo upon the Esther plot, since it is Jo who gives the deadly disease, probably smallpox, to Charley, from whom Esther, in turn, catches it. While the disease itself does not have a direct effect upon Esther’s fortunes, it impacts heavily upon her, causing her to lose her good looks and, presumably, marriageability; furthermore, it serves as a metaphor for the general contagion within the novel in which the Chancery suit penetrates all strata of society and literally drives its plaintiffs mad. It is the disease of Chancery, rather than smallpox, that derails the inheritance and marriage plots of the novel: when the suit is finally settled, the inheritance of Richard Carstone and his now-wife Ada has been squandered in the

endless litigation, and all that is left are bags and bags of papers (974). The ruin of Lady Dedlock, for which Nemo and Jo were catalysts, has eliminated any possibility of Esther inheriting the Dedlock fortune, and Esther chooses the modest means—and aristocratic Welsh bloodline—of Allan Woodcourt over the proposal of her guardian, Mr. Jarndyce, whose fortune, while “considerably reduced” by the terms of the will that has been uncovered and put an end to Jarndyce and Jarndyce, is still in possession of an “interest,” as Mr. Vholes puts it, that is “very handsome” (949). Unlike Pip, Esther opts out of an inheritance plot and into a marriage plot instead; as the loyal spouses of the novel—Esther, Allan, Ada, and Sir Leicester—are left to illustrate, money is ephemeral, entropic, but love—and documents—last forever. It has taken two Gypsy figures to move Esther beyond the reach of questions of heredity and property and into a parallel Bleak House, one that has escaped the multiple threats posed by materiality.

In all three of his works considered here, Dickens seems to abjure the possibilities of the romantic Gypsy stereotype in favor of more quirkily individual depictions of crypto-Gypsies whose marginalized social status and itinerancy pose multiple threats to the status quo, especially insofar as that status quo is propelled by the hereditary distribution of property.<sup>90</sup> In *The Old Curiosity Shop*, Little Nell is forced into itinerancy by the vicissitudes of property distribution and thus becomes a Gypsy figure herself. In *Great Expectations* and *Bleak House*, the distribution of

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<sup>90</sup> While they show fewer explicit signs of Gypsiness than the characters considered here, it would certainly be possible to read Betty Higden and “John Harmon” in *Our Mutual Friend*, both propertyless itinerants, as Gypsy figures who signal, and in Harmon’s case, effect, the instability and the faulty distribution of property in that text, too.

property has a sexual underpinning, since it is the sexual liaisons of Magwitch and Molly and of Lady Dedlock and Captain Harmon that result in the births of the two illegitimate girls whose presence dominates those novels and causes property to be misappropriated. In their cases, Dickens reverses the traditional Gypsy kidnapping plot: both “Gypsy” foundlings are taken in by polite society and raised without Gypsiness; yet, their residual destabilizing force, whether negative, as in Estella’s case, or positive, as in Esther’s, wreaks havoc on everyone around them. In these three works, the Gypsy children, Nell, Estella, Esther, and Jo, and their itinerancy and/or illegitimacy, reveal the dark underside of a society in which rampant sexuality (in the case of the three who are illegitimate) and adult malfeasance result in a society in which children and thus by extension the entire system of property distribution are at risk.

#### IV. “Cursed Alien Blood”: George Eliot’s Gypsies

George Eliot’s interest in Gypsies is attested to by the notable presence of them in two of her works, both of which depict women torn between the demands of their societies and their own Gypsiness: Maggie Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) is merely repeatedly accused of being “like a gypsy,” and Fedalma, in the long poem *The Spanish Gypsy* (1868), is explicitly a Zincali.<sup>91</sup> In *Middlemarch* (1871-2), Dorothea Brooke, too, is a woman torn between the demands of society—specifically, the dictates of her late husband’s will—and her own desires, but in her case, the Gypsy figure is not Dorothea herself but the object of those desires, Will Ladislaw.

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<sup>91</sup> Chapters Three and Four, respectively, will turn to these texts.

In both her works on Gypsies in British women's literature, "'Marks of Race': Gypsy Figures and Eccentric Femininity in Nineteenth-century Women's Writing" (1998) and *Gypsies and the British Imagination: 1807-1930* (2007), Deborah Nord has read both Maggie and Fedalma as figures who are "trapped in a stigmatized femininity that finds its own reflection in no credible image save [those of Gypsies]" ("Marks" 207). Nord sees race, for Eliot, as a "marking" that is necessary to "make the argument for an unorthodox life" ("Marks" 205). For Maggie, identification with the Gypsies, which begins as idealization but turns abruptly real when she runs away with them, only to be returned to her parents, presages her later aborted escape with Stephen Guest, and her attempts at escape "[remain] forever forbidden and blocked" ("Marks" 200). For Nord, Fedalma, too, is another "unconventional woman" ("Marks" 203) who is torn between two irreconcilable opposites—desire for her fiancé, Duke Silva, and loyalty to her father, Zarca, and to the Gypsy people to whom she discovers she belongs; and "the tension in the poem, between celebration of unconventional femininity and unhappy obedience to an exigent inheritance, reflects Eliot's fundamental anxiety about imagining female election or female exceptionalism" (205). Both of these novels also map disruptions of inheritance by Gypsies, though in Maggie's case this inheritance is not so much economic (except insofar as the aborted marriage plot—her thwarted alliance with Stephen Guest—has economic consequences) as familial: as Nord puts it, Maggie "is always denied discovery of her true kin" (202). Conversely, Fedalma's familial "inheritance," taking on the mantle of her Gypsy father, is not disrupted, but her marriage to the Duke is very explicitly derailed by the problem of her Gypsiness when he murders her father.



Another work that Nord identifies as making use of the Gypsy trope is *Middlemarch*, a novel that is explicitly, and in multiple registers, about the distribution of property and the anxiety attendant upon capital. Nord reads Gypsiness in the figure of Will Ladislaw, whose “peripatetic ways, uninhibited manner, and social promiscuity inspire Lydgate, an outsider of a different kind, to refer to Ladislaw as ‘a sort of gypsy’” (*Gypsies* 106). While this is certainly not the most salient feature of Will’s character or his complex ethnicity, Eliot carefully creates a subtle underpinning in which Gypsiness is evoked as an aspect of Will’s generally destabilizing influence on the novel’s many threads.

Other subtle references to Gypsies in *Middlemarch* might easily be missed there, since they are confined to a few seemingly casual utterances.<sup>92</sup> The first of these is an early reference to “young Cranch,” one of the relations who hover around Peter Featherstone in expectation of his death: “When Mary Garth entered the kitchen and Mr. Jonah Featherstone began to follow her with his cold detective eyes, young Cranch turning his head in the same direction seemed to insist on it that she should remark how he was squinting, as if he did it with design, like the gypsies when [George] Borrow read the New Testament to them”<sup>93</sup> (305). This somewhat inscrutable statement (which renders Mary “bilious”) establishes Eliot’s/the narrator’s familiarity with Victorian gypsiology. More significantly, it implies that the narrator reads the “squinting” relations as Gypsy-like figures who are “encamped” while waiting for Featherstone’s death and their resulting acquisition of capital. The reference to Borrow’s Gypsies calls attention to the act of reading, foreshadowing

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<sup>92</sup> Nord also reads *Daniel Deronda* in the context of the “marks of race” she has examined in Eliot’s other work.

<sup>93</sup> The reference is to *The Zincali, or An Account of the Gypsies in Spain* (1841) (846 fn.).

Featherstone's shocking disinheritance of his relatives, and of Fred Vincy, by the will that Mary Garth has refused to destroy, and suggests that as we have seen in Woolf and Dickens, even a cameo appearance by Gypsies can act to destabilize inheritance.

Gypsy-like figures also surface in connection with another of the novel's three interconnected inheritance plots.<sup>94</sup> When Lydgate runs into trouble as a result of accepting money from Bulstrode, whose swindling of Will and his mother out of their inheritance has finally been detected, Dorothea decides to help him, but finds Will and Rosamond together and assumes the worst. As Dorothea, devastated, is contemplating her course of action, she opens the curtains to her room and sees (and for the short-sighted Dorothea, seeing is always significant) "a man with a bundle on his back and a woman carrying her baby" (788). These figures, who are "on the road," i.e., itinerant, cause her to feel "the largeness of the world" and to realize that "she was part of that involuntary, palpitating life, and could neither look out on it from her luxurious shelter as a mere spectator, nor hide her eyes in selfish complaining" (788). While at this point, her course of action "did not yet seem quite clear" (788), it is no doubt this epiphany that causes her to resolve to try to "save Rosamond" (790), and this selfless gesture causes her to be reunited with Will when Rosamond gratefully confesses to her, that "'it was not as you thought'" between Will and her (798).

The appearance of Gypsies at these key moments indicates that as in *Orlando*, their presence has signaled the destabilization of both inheritance and marriages, such

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<sup>94</sup> As Paul Milton points out in "Inheritance as the Key to All Mythologies: George Eliot and Legal Practice," the inheritance plots in *Middlemarch* do not focus on the issue of primogeniture: "Dorothea alludes to the fact that Ladislav's right of primogeniture was revoked by the unjust disinheritance of his mother (305), but none of the three wills involves the direct passage of property to the first-born" (par. 29).

as that between Dorothea and Casaubon. On the other hand, Gypsiness has also catalyzed the marriage plot between Dorothea and Will, which is a kind of mutual “glamouring.” Will, a crypto-Gypsy, is initially “said to be of foreign extraction” (358), and his grandfather was “a Polish refugee who gave lessons for his bread” (365), which caused his family to be disinherited, but this foreignness is quickly conflated with Gypsiness: his mother was “a dark-eyed creature,” Will says, and he “come[s] of rebellious blood on both sides” (366). Mrs. Cadwallader calls him “a dangerous young sprig” and a “sort of Byronic hero” (380). Lydgate’s evaluation is more explicit: “Ladislaw is a sort of gypsy; he thinks nothing of leather and prunella” (436) (i.e., “the leather of the cobbler’s apron and the material of the parson’s gown (prunella)” (848 f.n.). Like Heathcliff, Ladislaw possesses a general kind of foreignness, a hybridity in which numerous anti- or extra-social strains—from the Gypsylike to the Byronic—mark him as Other and hence menacing to the conventional outcomes of the Victorian marriage/inheritance plot.

Will’s Gypsiness and overall quirkiness are underscored by the narrator, who agrees with Lydgate: “As Lydgate had said of him, he was a sort of gypsy, rather enjoying the sense of belonging to no class, he had a feeling of romance in his position, and a pleasant consciousness of creating a little surprise wherever he went” (461-2). His “dangerous aspect” is, however, offset, in the narrator’s view, by his habit of taking “a troop of droll children” on “gypsy excursions...at nutting time” (463).<sup>95</sup> This “oddity” is accompanied by a tendency to go to people’s houses and stretch himself out on their rugs, “an irregularity [that] was likely to confirm the notions of his dangerously mixed blood and general laxity” (463). Will’s foreignness,

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<sup>95</sup> Nowadays, one would find this habit rather dangerous as well.

which is both endearingly odd and yet dangerous, crosses over into the Bulstrode plot arc when it is revealed that Bulstrode's first wife, Mrs. Dunkirk, was Will's grandmother. When apprised of this, Mr. Farebrother remarks to Mr. Hawley, "So our mercurial Ladislaw has a queer genealogy! A high-spirited young lady and a musical Polish patriot [i.e., Will's parents] made a likely enough stock for him to spring from, but I should never have suspected a grafting of Jew pawnbroker" (719). (In fact, there is no evidence that Mr. Dunkirk, Will's grandfather, was a Jew, given that Bulstrode had met him at a "Calvinist dissenting church" (615-6).) Hawley responds, "It's just what I should have expected....Any cursed alien blood, Jew, Corsican, or Gypsy" (719). In positing this Heathcliff-like hybridity, Hawley is constructing ethnic correlatives to Will's strangeness; moreover, one might conjecture that the reason Hawley "expected" these "marks of race," in the phrase Nord has borrowed from Eliot, is that Will has thrown such a dramatic wrench into Middlemarch's economic system: he has been implicated in the downfall of Bulstrode, one of the town's most solid citizens, acting as Gypsy-catalyst to disruptions of inheritance (even though one of the inheritances that is disrupted by Gypsiness is his own, and he is arguably the rightful heir to Casaubon).<sup>96</sup>

In addition, whether Hawley knows it or not, Will has come between two married couples, Dorothea-Casaubon as well as Rosamond-Lydgate. These marital ruptures have played out in economic terms: the tension between the Lydgates is caused by Rosamond's desire to maintain the lifestyle of her own social class;

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<sup>96</sup> See Nord's discussion in *Gypsies and the British Imagination* of the ways in which "numerous characters in the novel allude to [Will] as an alien of various sorts" (106). Nord sees Will's ethnicity as indeterminate but suggests that "the novelist's point seems to be that Will's status as an outsider is both salutary and an incitement to the bigotry of those around him..." (106).

Dorothea's marriage terminates in a codicil to Casaubon's will prohibiting her from marrying Will Ladislaw on threat of disinheritance. As marriage and finance are revealed to be joined seamlessly together, it is Will who has acted as a catalyst for the sundering of both. Though the Lydgates eventually repair their relationship, Lydgate later jokes that it is because Rosamond has, like a basil plant, "flourished on a murdered man's [i.e., Lydgate's] brains" (835). Dorothea and Will, on the other hand, abjure inheritance altogether and marry for love: and it is their son, the heir to Mr. Brooke's estate, whose birth eventually enacts a reconciliation with Dorothea's sister, Celia, and her husband Sir James. Unlike the Lydgates, whose mutually assured destruction serves as counterpoint, the marriage of Dorothea and Will finally overcomes his Gypsiness, or hybridity, or perhaps incorporates it, and triumphs by conjoining marriage *and* inheritance plots in unexpected ways as Dorothea reproduces, not with Casaubon but with Will, and inheritance is passed, again not from Casaubon but from Mr. Brooke. Thus, in the end, Dorothea has contributed to the common good, rectifying the ruptured social order by restoring hereditary capital, one of the "incalculably diffusive" ways in which she operates for the "growing good of the world" (838).

Gypsiness, then, has caused the interruption of several inheritances—Will's from his grandparents; Dorothea's from Casaubon; Fred Vincy's from Featherstone—but has left the community with greater wealth as a result. In Eliot, as in Dickens, Gypsies function as catalysts for the redistribution of wealth, but in a far less sinister register: while in Dickens, Gypsiness must be abjected so that the community can return to normal (Nell, Magwitch, and Joe die, while Estella and Esther abject their

own Gypsiness, perpetuating the status quo by marrying), in *Middlemarch*, Gypsiness is assimilated. In embracing Will's hybridity, Dorothea inoculates herself against further incursions of the foreign, a concept we shall return to in discussing the Sherlock Holmes stories. Although as subsequent chapters will note, Eliot's tragic works *The Mill on the Floss* and *The Spanish Gypsy* do not allow for this kind of positive outcome, the implication in *Middlemarch* is that Will's multiculturalism (since he is not only accused of being a "gypsy" but of a variety of other forms of foreignness), while problematic, is valuable to the body politic. As Nord argues, Will "is an ideal husband for Dorothea, the novel suggests, because of his foreignness, which is inseparable from his artistic spirit, political liberalism, and lack of social snobbery" (*Gypsies* 106). Will's Gypsiness challenges the status quo, but unlike in Dickens, this challenge is salubrious for the community and thus does not need to be abjected, but rather, subsumed.

V. "But What, Then, Did the Gypsies Do?": *Gypsies and Sherlock Holmes*

If by the end of the nineteenth century, Gypsies were firmly established as a trope signaling, among other things, the destabilization of property, it should not be surprising that they appear in several of the Sherlock Holmes stories of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1892-1927), in which misappropriated property plays a central role. Although the majority of Conan Doyle's Holmes stories concern theft of various kinds, the majority of them do not contain Gypsies, so clearly, I do not intend to argue that Gypsy figures *always* accompany the destabilization of property, but rather

that they function as one of the many markers of destabilization from which Conan Doyle draws. In each of the four stories and one novella in which Gypsies appear, “The Red-Headed League” (1892), “The Adventure of the Speckled Band,” (1892), “Silver Blaze” (1894), “The Adventure of the Priory School” (1905), and *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1901-2), Gypsies appear to be inconsequential to the story, except insofar as they function as red herrings; yet their mere presence in the narratives signals the lurking threat of degeneration and atavism which it is Sherlock Holmes’s project to hold in check.

One of the many factors that threaten the social order in the Holmes stories is the impact of foreign elements. In her article “Pathological Possibilities: Contagion and Empire in Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes Stories,” Susan Cannon Harris discusses Conan Doyle’s “identification of disease with Britain’s imperial possessions” and examines “the importance of Holmes’ role as a specialist whose ‘powers’ enable him to allay anxieties about the potentially harmful effects on metropolitan culture of England’s increasingly intimate contact with the peoples and cultures on the peripheries of the Empire” (448). Harris calls attention to the role of “vipers” and other sources of poison to trope the “protean” spread of disease which emanates from Britain’s colonies and threatens the status quo. She states that “Doyle draws on the discourse of medicine precisely because it allows him to represent the disturbances Holmes investigates as ‘alien contagions’ introduced into British society through its contact with other cultures” and sees poison, specifically, as “a metaphor for the physical, moral, and cultural contamination that Britain feared as its empire brought it into closer contact with Asian and African peoples, cultures, and climates”

(449). In “Foreign Matter: Imperial Filth,” Joseph W. Childers discusses the Holmes stories as representative of late Victorian “antifilth and antiforeign rhetoric” and sees their task as “the protection and display of English national identity” (201-2). Like Harris, he reads foreigners, especially those from Britain’s colonies, as provocative threats to the body politic: “[t]he Holmes stories are about saving the national culture and character from being transformed into something menacing and unrecognizable as English” (202); however, Childers argues, the England Holmes and Watson defend “has already been contaminated” and their London is “a backwash of imperial detritus, susceptible to infection from without and sepsis from the pools of filth within” (202). It is as a result of engagement with the “foreign,” both without and within, that “Englishness is most formidable,” Childers says, as “only against the face of foreignness can it show its true mettle” (205).

In the Sherlock Holmes stories, having lost most of their romantic patina, Gypsies appear to constitute one facet of this foreign “pool” that challenges Englishness. As an indigenous “foreign culture,” Gypsies serve as an available marker of a threat to empire, one of the many factors that Conan Doyle represents as spreading various forms of transgressive contagion throughout Britain. In the five Holmes texts in which they are deployed, they are considerably less sinister than some of the other foreign influences Conan Doyle depicts, serving most frequently as “red herrings” that directly mislead the reader. In depicting Gypsies as inherently suspicious characters, Conan Doyle banks on longstanding associations between Gypsies and the misappropriation of property, and he evidently counted on readers to make the obvious assumption that if there were Gypsies in the area, they must have



had something to do with the crime, though in most cases, it turns out that they did not. Despite their apparent innocence of wrongdoing, I would argue that as in such works as *Wuthering Heights*, the appearance of Gypsies signals that property is under siege; whether or not they had anything to do with the threats to property that the stories chronicle, they help create an aura of instability in which such crimes may occur.

The aura of a sinister but ultimately insignificant Gypsy exoticism underpins the 1891 story “The Red-Headed League,” in which Holmes identifies the criminal, John Clay, by his description: “Have you ever observed that his ears are pierced for earrings?” he asks Clay’s employer, who responds, “Yes, sir. He told me that a gypsy had done it for him when he was a lad” (215). No further reference is made to Gypsies in the story, but it is soon revealed that John Clay was the grandson of a Duke who has turned so successfully to a life of crime that Holmes has labeled him “the fourth smartest man in London” (216). Here, heredity has been derailed by a Gypsy figure: the piercing of Clay’s ears has apparently turned him from an aristocrat into a Gypsy-like character who is then capable of extraordinary criminal feats. Clay’s background at Eton and Oxford meld with his Gypsiness to create a master thief; perhaps, in Childers’ terms, Clay’s, like Holmes’s, “Englishness” is “most formidable” after having been “‘touched’ and potentially contaminated by the other” in this manner (205). Clay’s plot to dig a tunnel from a nearby bank to the shop in which he has found employment as an apprentice, coming up with a clever ruse with which to dislodge his employer, is thwarted by Holmes; that the trade Clay has

ironically purported to want to learn is that of pawnbroker underscores the instability of property in Holmes' metropolis.

Gypsies also figure as red herrings in “The Adventure of the Speckled Band,” a story in which Conan Doyle’s Orientalism has attracted critical attention,<sup>97</sup> and in “Silver Blaze,” a story best known for its reference to the “curious incident of the dog in the night-time.” In “Speckled Band,” the murderous Dr. Roylott is portrayed with an “excess” of Orientalist signifiers, as Harris notes, though she argues that they are not “red herrings” but “clues, even though they are technically irrelevant to the murder” (459) because they serve as an indication that the crime—poisoning by serpent—has roots in “India’s obvious and pernicious influence” on Roylott (460). This is all the information Holmes needs to arrive at a solution to the murder and, by inference, to the problem of “reverse colonization” in which the influence of Britain’s colonies threatens to overwhelm it. While Harris notes the story’s Orientalism, she does not remark on Roylott’s association with Gypsies: according to his stepdaughter Helen Stoner, who he attempts to murder, Roylott “had no friends at all save the wandering gypsies, and he would give those vagabonds leave to encamp upon the few acres of bramble-covered land which represents the family estate, and would accept in return the hospitality of their tents, wandering away with them sometimes for weeks on end” (310). In the next sentence, Helen remarks that Roylott “has a passion also for Indian animals” (310), thus identifying Roylott’s colonial influences with those of the “reverse colony” to whom he has ceded the family estate. In a literal sense, Gypsies have occasioned the misappropriation of property—that of “one of the

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<sup>97</sup> See Deborah Nord’s discussion of the “metonymic” function of the speckled band (*Gypsies* 158-62), as well as Rosemary Hennessy and Rajeswari Mohan, “The Construction of Woman in Three Popular Texts of Empire: Towards a Critique of Materialist Feminism.”

oldest Saxon families in England” which has been brought to ruin by “four successive heirs...of a dissolute and wasteful disposition” (309). Orientalism, Gypsyism, familial dissolution, and loss of hereditary property are conflated and appear to present a sort of reverse-colonial “miasma,” a term to which Harris calls attention, that is the real source of the poison that kills Helen Stoner’s twin sister.

Here, the Gypsies, too, are “red herrings,” as everyone, Holmes included, mistakenly identifies the dying woman’s reference to a “speckled band” with the “band” of Gypsies. Holmes ensures that suspicion will fall on the Gypsies when he says,

When you combine the idea of whistles at night [heard by Helen Stoner], the presence of a band of gypsies who are on intimate terms with this old doctor, the fact that we have every reason to believe that the doctor has an interest in preventing his stepdaughter’s marriage, the dying allusion to a band, and, finally, the fact that Miss Helen Stoner heard a metallic clang...I think there is good ground to think that the mystery may be cleared along those lines, too. (314)

When Watson inquires, “But what, then, did the gypsies do?” Holmes responds, “I cannot imagine” (314). And indeed, the Gypsies’ only function in the plot was, as Holmes later admits, “to put me upon an entirely wrong scent” (324). But in a larger sense, the Gypsies *are* implicated in the story insofar as they are part of the miasma of foreignness which in the Holmes stories poses a potent threat to empire.

In “Silver Blaze,” too, Gypsies figure as red herrings. When Silver Blaze, a racehorse with a lofty pedigree, disappears, the Gypsies who roam the “wilderness”

of Dartmoor are the obvious suspects (since Gypsies are known for their horse dealing) but are then exonerated. In this story, Gypsies have a much less ominous presence than in the previous two, as they “always clear out when they hear of trouble” (409), and are not associated here with any other nefarious foreign influences. They do, however, signal the misappropriation of an aristocratic inheritance: that of the horse himself, who is “from the Isonomy stock” and in being stolen, is nearly cheated out of the enormous economic rewards that rightfully come from his bloodline—a kind of equine primogeniture.

In “The Adventure of the Priory School,” too, Gypsies play a cameo role in the misappropriation of property. When the son of the Duke of Holderness disappears mysteriously from his boarding school, Holmes is called upon by the headmaster to investigate and discovers that the boy’s school cap has been discovered in the possession of a band of Gypsies, who have been arrested in connection with the crime. The function of this incident to the plot is to establish the important point that the boy crossed the moor, where the Gypsies claim to have found the cap, as Holmes has theorized; having served their purpose, the Gypsies are not mentioned again, and presumably remained under arrest in perpetuity.

While not guilty of the crime, the presence of Gypsies signals that transgressive forces threaten to undermine customs such as primogeniture which are critical to the social order. Legitimate inheritance is shown to be under siege as the Duke’s son, his “Heir and only child,” is kidnapped by the Duke’s secretary, James Wilder, who is revealed to be the Duke’s illegitimate son. That the distribution of the Duke’s property is worth contesting is established early in the story as Holmes reads a

long encyclopedia reference to the Duke that lists his assets: “Owns about two hundred and fifty thousand acres. Minerals in Lancashire and Wales...Lord of the Admiralty, 1872; Chief Secretary of State for –‘Well, well, this man is certainly one of the greatest subjects of the Crown!’” “The greatest and perhaps the wealthiest,” the headmaster responds (539-40). As a lofty subject of the Crown, the Duke must allocate his property correctly in order to maintain British nationhood. James’s motives are clear; in the end, it is revealed that Wilder has kidnapped the boy out of economic jealousy, as the Duke explains:

You will ask me what was James's motive in doing such a deed. I answer that there was a great deal which was unreasoning and fanatical in the hatred which he bore my heir. In his view he should himself have been heir of all my estates, and he deeply resented those social laws which made it impossible. At the same time he had a definite motive also. He was eager that I should break the entail, and he was of opinion that it lay in my power to do so. He intended to make a bargain with me---to restore Arthur [the kidnapped boy] if I would break the entail, and so make it possible for the estate to be left to him by will. (556-7)

Here, Wilder has called into question laws regarding primogeniture and entail: if he cannot succeed at being made the legitimate heir to the Duke’s property, he plans to force a kind of faux-primogeniture, using blackmail to “break the entail” that otherwise would, in his view, disinherit him. The aptly named Wilder does not respect either the law or the social codes governing the distribution of property;

however, by the end of the story, all the villains, as well as the innocent Gypsies, have been incarcerated, and the social order restored.

In *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, primogeniture has run amok: in addition to a legacy of wealth and property, the Baskerville family hands down a curse via which Baskerville scions are, reputedly, done to death by an enormous hound. That the curse enacts a kind of post-Darwinian atavism is hinted at by the resumé of Dr. Mortimer, who presents Holmes with the case: according to the medical directory Holmes consults, Mortimer is the “winner of the Jackson prize for Comparative Pathology, with essay entitled ‘Is Disease a Reversion?’” He is also the author of “‘Some Freaks of Atavism’ (*Lancet* 1882)” and “‘Do We Progress’ (*Journal of Psychology*, March, 1883)” (577). Given this nod to degeneration, it is hardly surprising when the unsuccessful murderer of Sir Henry Baskerville, heir to the Baskerville fortune, turns out to be a poorly evolved Baskerville relation, son of Rodger Baskerville, younger brother of Sir Charles, who fled with a “sinister reputation” to South America; the son, also named Rodger, married “one of the beauties of Costa Rica,” then, having “purloined a considerable sum of public money,” changed his name and returned to England (690). The Rodgers Baskerville are a “reversion” to an evil Baskerville ancestor, Hugo Baskerville, who is alleged in a 1742 manuscript given to Holmes by Dr. Mortimer to be “a most wild, profane, and godless man” who, in the course of a kidnapping and attempted rape, caused the death of a “young maiden...of good repute” (581). By century’s end, at least in Conan Doyle, inheritance is a mixed blessing: an “old country family” (583) like the Baskervilles can convey both wealth and degeneration to subsequent generations. While their property is still at stake, and

still left to the male lineage of the family, the survival of the noble members of the family—Sir Charles plans a charitable “reconstruction” scheme for the surrounding countryside—is threatened by its atavistically evil offspring.

In the second of the two written narratives Dr. Mortimer gives to Holmes, a current article from the *Devon Country Chronicle*, the death of Sir Charles Baskerville is recounted. The document fails to reveal that Sir Charles’s body was found next to “the footprints of a gigantic hound” (587), but it notes two other things of significance: first, that Sir Charles had made his own fortune in South America and in returning with that fortune to England, had, in the opinion of the *Chronicle*, “restore[d] the fallen grandeur of his line” (583). While Sir Charles is prey to the degeneration of the family, which proves fatal to him, he has managed to restore its hereditary capital, albeit in a foreign land. The other interesting thing the article notes in passing is that Baskerville’s death—he is frightened to death by the hound—has been witnessed by “One Murphy, a gipsy horse-dealer,” who was on the moor at the time, though too much “the worse for drink” to be of much use as a witness. That Murphy is a real Gypsy and not a counterfeit is indicated both by his profession (as noted above, the Romani people in Britain, then as now, are well known to be horse dealers; see Mayall *Gypsy-Travellers* 53-4) and by the fact that Holmes refers to his report as “the gipsy’s evidence” (594). As an inadequate witness, Murphy appears to serve no purpose in the narrative except to establish that Gypsies are in the area, an observation that is echoed later by Mortimer, who mentions that there are “a few gipsies and labouring folk” in “driving distance” of Baskerville Hall (651). But the

presence of Gypsies here signals that the moors are a wild, lawless place in which both inheritance and evolution are destabilized.

By century's end, the romantic image of the Gypsy popularized by Borrow is still extant, as evidenced by the flourishing, if in "fits and starts" (Nord, *Gypsies* 125) of the Gypsy Lore Society, founded in 1888 in an attempt to study and presumably preserve Romani culture from the "decay" caused by modern life (Nord, *Gypsies* 134). But in Conan Doyle, the counter-narrative epitomized by George Smith "of Coalville" in which Gypsies posed a threat to public health, reverses this paradigm in implicating Gypsies in the overall decay of society in which rather than being damaged by the threat to their lifestyle, Gypsies' mere presence poses a threat to the social order. Perhaps there is no contradiction here, as the "Lorists'" enactment of "their fantasy of an Edenic Romany existence" (Nord, *Gypsies* 126) served, perhaps, to "inoculate" them with Gypsiness and thus to stave off the "strange disease of modern life," in Matthew Arnold's phrase,<sup>98</sup> themselves. The wild spaces in the Sherlock Holmes stories, such as Dartmoor in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, may allow for a certain degree of itinerancy—in *Hound*, the moors are occupied by an escaped homicidal maniac, a murderous hound, and for a time, Holmes himself—but the landscape, with its "odour of decay" and "miasmatic vapour" (687) is anything but romantic. By temporarily inhabiting this landscape, Holmes is able to solve the crime, but in the end, he and Watson have returned to the fireside in Baker Street and are contemplating a visit to the opera: the social order has, however temporarily, been restored.

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<sup>98</sup> "The Scholar Gypsy" will be discussed in Chapter Three.



VI. “The Real Thing at Last” : *The Wind in the Willows*

In Conan Doyle, the view of Gypsies as transgressive forces who have joined with the legion of other sinister Others to infect Britain evinced by late-nineteenth-century hygiene legislation appears to have superseded the romantic view of Gypsy life with which it competed throughout the century. At first glance, however, Kenneth Grahame’s children’s classic *The Wind in the Willows* (1908) seems to reverse the growing view of Gypsies as contaminants and to return to the construction of Gypsies as Romantic primitives. This view is espoused by Mr. Toad, who acquires a “gypsy cart” in order to pursue a Borrow-like vision of life on the open road: “There’s real life for you, embodied in that little cart,” Toad exclaims:

The open road, the dusty highway, the heath, the common, the hedgerows, the rolling downs! Camps, villages, towns, cities! Here to-day, up and off to somewhere else to-morrow! Travel, change, interest, excitement! The whole world before you, and a horizon that’s always changing! And mind, this is the very finest cart of its sort that was ever built, without any exception. (15)

But throughout the novel, Toad is an object of ridicule and even satire, and his *Lavengro*-like<sup>99</sup> excursion is, like everything Toad attempts, absurd. While Grahame draws from the conventions of the romantic Gypsy figure, he makes a distinction between Toad’s ridiculous and transient Gypsiological passion, which he satirizes, and the more genuine reverence for nature of Rat and Mole.

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<sup>99</sup> “Grahame knew his *Lavengro*,” says his biographer, Peter Green, in his introduction to the OUP edition (xvii).

Indeed, Toad's Gypsy idyll rapidly palls: when Rat and Mole attempt to coerce him into doing his share of the work of traveling, Toad is suddenly "by no means so rapturous about the simplicity of the primitive life" (18). His hedonistic capitalism soon causes him to reject the "Life Adventurous" (16) in favor of modernity: he falls in love with a motor car that speeds past, running the cart off the road and into a ditch. Toad rhapsodizes, "What dust-clouds shall spring up behind me as I speed on my reckless way! What carts shall I fling carelessly into the ditch in the wake of my magnificent onset! Horrid little carts—common carts—canary-colored carts!" (20). The road accident is illustrative of the encroaching of industrial capitalism upon the sanctity of the forest, literally overturning "primitive life" in much the same way that the wash of steam-launches has often splashed "too near the bank" and incurred Rat's wrath (20). If Toad's brief passion for the "primitive life" is Romanticism, it is in a different register from Rat and Mole's Wordsworthian pantheism. While Rat and Mole share a mystical vision of Nature that is informed by the "kindly demigod" Pan (76-7), Toad's pseudo-romanticism is soon revealed as shallow and materialistic, a form of mere consumerism.

Although Toad's vehicular acquisitiveness seems decidedly *nouveau riche*, his fortune has evidently been inherited—it is referred to as his "ancestral hall" (67), and described in real estate terms as "an eligible self-contained gentleman's residence, very unique; dating in part from the fourteenth century, but replete with every modern convenience" (83). While it is not clear that Toad Hall has belonged to the Toad family since the fourteenth century, Rat accuses him of "squandering the money your father left you" (61), suggesting that as in nearly all the other novels we

have examined, *The Wind in the Willows*, too, maps the near-misappropriation of ancestral property, punctuated by the appearance of Gypsies. The episode with the Gypsy cart, which takes place early in the novel, marks the beginning of a series of misadventures that culminate in the take-over of Toad Hall, in Toad's absence (he is jailed for stealing a motorcar) by stoats and weasels, the "Wild Wooders." Peter Green reads the weasel insurrection as an illustration of the principle that "when the gentry [i.e., Toad] betray their responsibilities, they forfeit their rights," and then "[t]he floodgates will burst and a proletarian tide pour in" (xviii). Once again, Gypsiness has signaled a threat to property, and in a strange way, has brought it about, since it is Toad's Gypsy aspirations—his desire for the open road coupled with thievery (of which Gypsies were traditionally accused) that cause him to be jailed, which creates an opportunity for the weasels to move in: as Rat puts it diplomatically, "[W]hen you—disappeared from society for a time, over that misunderstanding about a—a machine, you know--...they got very cocky, and went about saying you were done for this time! You would never come back again, never, never!" (126). Thus, a "band of weasels, armed to the teeth," as well as "a body of desperate ferrets" enter Toad Hall, and "a company of skirmishing stoats who stuck at nothing occupied the conservatory and the billiard room, and held the French windows opening on to the lawn" (126-7). The juxtaposition of the Wild Wooders' desperate proletarian encroachment and the gentility of billiards and French windows is comic, no doubt intentionally (though perhaps, *Wind* is often more comic than intended), but also reveals Grahame's "social anxieties," as Green puts it, "his irrational (but widely shared) terror of revolution and mob violence" (xviii). Viewed in the light of similar

anxieties, albeit about foreigners, in Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories, it is possible to see Toad's Gypsiness as the first step in the process of letting down his class that enables this proletarian insurrection: in letting go of the property that signifies his aristocratic heritage, Toad imperils his most visible class marker.

Indeed, in the course of the novel, Toad becomes less aristocratic and more Gypsy-fied. In the final stages of his journey, counter to his romantic idyll with the canary-colored cart, Toad does indeed have to live on the road by his wits, such as they are, which he does by stealing a horse<sup>100</sup> in stereotypical Gypsy fashion. Stopping to rest, he comes upon a "dingy gipsy caravan" (114) that is quite antithetical to his own canary-yellow cart, which was "shining with newness" (15). A Gypsy man is cooking a pot of stew that causes Toad to become aware of his hunger, as the stew exudes "one complete, voluptuous, perfect smell that seemed like the very soul of Nature taking form and appearing to her children, a true Goddess, a mother of solace and comfort" (114). While on the one hand, the dinginess of the cart reveals Toad's previous flirtation with Gypsiness as shallow, faux-romantic frippery, this Gypsy and his caravan, the narrator implies, are the genuine article, like Toad's hunger: "Toad now knew well that he had not been really hungry before. What he had felt earlier in the day had been a mere trifling qualm. This was the real thing at least, and no mistake" (114). The "real thing" here is Toad's Gypsiness: he has lived on the road, stolen a horse, and now contemplates whether to "fight...or cajole" the Gypsy man (114). Luckily, the Gypsy man surprises Toad with an offer to buy his horse (Toad "did not know that gipsies were very fond of horsedealing" (114)); this trade

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<sup>100</sup> At this point, Toad is dressed as a washer-woman: see Chapter Two for a discussion of Gypsy figures' functioning to destabilize gender.

enables him to partake of breakfast and gives him a “handful of silver” (131), restoring him to his class so effectively that he later contemplates delivering an address on the subjects of “Horse-dealing, and how to deal—Property, its rights and its duties—Back to the Land—A Typical English Squire” (145) but is prevented from this immodesty by the other animals.

While Toad’s first encounter with Gypsiness reveals the hollowness of his Borrowesque desire for the road, his second<sup>101</sup> infuses Toad with sufficient Gypsiness himself that he is able to regain his position and restore the social order, taming the Wild-wooders to such an extent that the “mother-weasels” would quiet their “fractious” infants with threats that “the terrible grey Badger would up and get them” (150), thus echoing traditional fears of being stolen by Gypsies. Here, Grahame is both rejecting conventional Gypsy stereotypes and drawing upon them; at the same time that he repudiates counterfeit-Gypsyism, he valorizes a more realistic, “dingy” Gypsiness. At the same time that Gypsiness appears to lead to the loss of property, it also contributes to its restoration. Much the way Susan Cannon Harris argues that Sherlock Holmes has been inoculated against foreignness by imbibing poisons and “domesticating” them (459), Toad and his associates must encompass Gypsiness so as to combat the destabilization of property it signals. If Gypsies and Wild-wooders pose a threat to the social order, the only effective means of setting things to rights is to “recuperate” their “exotic poisons,” as Harris puts it, by imbibing their “voluptuous” stew themselves.

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<sup>101</sup> Nord misses this second encounter in her mention of *The Wind in the Willows* in *Gypsies* (159).

From these varied examples of Gypsies, faux-Gypsies, and near-Gypsies who enter a text and then seem to facilitate, or be implicated in, misappropriation of property in particular and a disturbance of the social order in general, we may deduce that as the Gypsy trope became a fixture in British literature over the course of the nineteenth century, that trope began to stand in for a complicated morass of anxieties— of social insurrection (as in the takeover of Toad Hall by weasels), of contamination by foreignness and/or hybridity, of failures in the system of primogeniture, and anxiety about paternity (evidenced by theories that Heathcliff was in fact Mr. Earnshaw’s illegitimate son). In *Orlando*, the instability of gender with which the Gypsies seem complicit has direct consequences on the distribution of property: in this work, Gypsies, who seem almost to constitute a gender of their own, trigger not only the overturning of gender norms but of the boundaries of private property. While they do not explicitly cause Orlando’s sex change and consequent disinheritance, their own norms regarding gender and property suggest that what has happened to Orlando is a form of Gypsification, in which his (as a male at that point) association with Rosina Pepita has infused him with a Gypsiness that erases the boundaries that govern social norms. Viewed through the lens of this phenomenon in *Orlando*, the consequences to property that attend the arrival of Heathcliff amid the Earnshaws seem linked to his Gypsiness, as his continued presence similarly disturbs the distribution of property on which family and national identity depend. In Dickens’s and Eliot’s works, Gypsy figures are present in less obvious ways, in the background but in multiple registers in which they destabilize inheritance plots.

In later works, such as those of Conan Doyle, Grahame, as well as Woolf, it would appear that hybridity works as a sort of vaccination against these forms of instability. Just as Holmes imbibes foreign drugs and Toad imbibes stereotypical Gypsy behaviors, such as horse-theft, *Orlando* contains 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. However, in *Orlando*, it would appear that Gypsiness, in facilitating Orlando's sex change, does not accomplish the resurrection of the social order and the return of misappropriated property, as it seems to in Conan Doyle's stories and in *The Wind in the Willows*; rather, in helping to destabilize Orlando's gender, it complicates his/her legal status.

The next chapter will return to *Orlando* and consider the Gypsy figure's function in destabilizing gender in much the same way that it destabilizes property: in the works of Charlotte Brontë, Elizabeth Gaskell, and others, when the Gypsy trope appears, the project of enforcing gender roles goes awry.

## Chapter Two: Gypsies and Gender

[T]he gipsy women, except in one or two important particulars, differ very little from the gipsy men.

--Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* (153)

### I. "One or Two Important Particulars": Gypsies and Gender

In Woolf's *Orlando*, the Gypsies with whom Orlando absconds are both aggressively property-less and strangely gender-neutral; their "in-between," "ambiguous" state, in Kristeva's terms, mirrors that of Orlando, whose mysterious journey from masculine to feminine is accompanied by a Gypsy who escorts "her" (she has been declared a woman two pages earlier<sup>102</sup>) from the Turkish court.<sup>103</sup> On the opposite end of the nineteenth century, in Sir Walter Scott's *Guy Mannering* (1815), another Gypsy character, Meg Merrilies, also serves as a fulcrum in a plot about the misappropriation of property, and she, too, represents a challenge to gender. Although *Orlando*'s Gypsies are not depicted as having much in the way of gender ("except in one or two important particulars"), Merrilies is introduced not as genderless, but as endowed with double<sup>104</sup> gender:

Her appearance made Mannering start. She was full six feet high, wore a man's great-coat over the rest of her dress, had in her hand a goodly

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<sup>102</sup> The narrator remarks, "Orlando had become a woman—there is no denying it. But in every other respect, Orlando remained precisely as *he* had been" (my italics, 138); the male pronoun throws Orlando's ostensible femaleness into question.

<sup>103</sup> Woolf's project in *Orlando* anticipates that of Judith Butler in undertaking to expose "the tenuousness of gender 'reality' in order to counter the violence performed by gender norms" (Butler xxiv).

<sup>104</sup> See Robyn Warhol, "Double Gender, Double Genre in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*": "To be 'double' is to resist categorization as one thing or the other; to invoke "doubleness" is to address binary oppositions without resting comfortably in either of the two terms being opposed" (857). Deborah Nord calls Merrilies "[n]either wholly female nor wholly male" (*Gypsies and the British Imagination* 26) but then later says that "'androgynous' seems too tame a word" for "Meg's combination of feminine and masculine characteristics" (40). Elsewhere, she argues that "Meg is associated with...the hidden rites of femaleness—not to say, female sexuality" (28).



sloe-thorn cudgel, and in all points of equipment, except her petticoats, seemed rather masculine than feminine. Her dark elf-locks shot out like snakes of the gorgon....(14)

This visual cocktail of petticoats, a cudgel, and the phallic-feminine image of Medusa powerfully establishes Merrilies as the century's Ur-Gypsy whose archetypal shadow will hang over subsequent representations of Gypsies. In constructing her, Scott officially establishes the trope of the Gypsy figure whose performance of gender is unstable and whose relationship to property is vexed.

Orlando's struggles with the performative qualities of apparel mirror the "in-between" costume of Merrilies and suggest that when Woolf equates Gypsiness with gender-ambiguity, she is drawing not only from the personal mythology of her lover, Vita Sackville-West,<sup>105</sup> but from the trope consolidated by Merrilies, from whom writers such as Brontë also drew. The Gypsy trope functions not only to destabilize the distribution of property in literary texts, as argued in the previous chapter, but also to destabilize gender itself, a process this chapter will trace in several nineteenth-century novels: Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, and Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South*. These challenges to gender as well as to the distribution of property co-exist in those novels in a dialectical relationship: because property distribution in nineteenth-century Britain was so inextricably linked to gender, when gender is destabilized, so is property ownership. When woman like Jane Eyre, Lucy Snowe, and Margaret Hale are masculinized and their partners are feminized, symbolically

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<sup>105</sup> See Kirstie Blair, "Gypsies and Lesbian Desire: Vita Sackville-West, Violet Trefusis, and Virginia Woolf."

castrated, or (as in *Villette*) killed,<sup>106</sup> these women inherit property that frees them from their powerless positions as unmarried women. This chapter will begin by examining the curious androgyny of the Gypsy trope as it is established by Meg Merrilies and will then trace the implications of this destabilization of gender as it appears in the aforementioned works. It is the appearance of Gypsy figures in these novels, however brief, that signals a transgressive overturning of Victorian gender binaries, disrupting property ownership.

In *Gypsies and the British Imagination*, Deborah Nord has argued that Gypsies in nineteenth century Britain often embody “gender heterodoxy” (12):<sup>107</sup> “Writers who used Gypsy plots and figures also often chafed against patterns of gender conformity. They tended to invent Gypsy characters who deviated from conventional forms of masculinity and femininity” (12). I would further suggest that these writers employ the Gypsy trope, whose heterodoxy was understood, in a larger way to interrogate and complicate the binarization of gender as it was being worked out in that period:<sup>108</sup> with the deployment of Gypsies or Gypsy figures (i.e., characters who embody Gypsy traits) to signal the destabilization of gender norms, the genders of multiple characters—not just of those Gypsies—become unstable. Again, a modernist text like *Orlando* can serve as a “Rosetta stone” with which to unravel the latent content of the Gypsy trope in the nineteenth century; the lens of unstable gender in *Orlando* foregrounds the latent gender ambiguity in earlier texts and suggests that in destabilizing property, as they did from the time of their arrival in the

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<sup>106</sup> Arguably the ultimate form of impotence.

<sup>107</sup> This discussion revises her previous argument in “Marks of Race” that Gypsies trope “aberrant femininity” (190).

<sup>108</sup> See Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex*.

British isles, Gypsies also functioned to contest the multiple social norms on which the distribution of property depended.

The association between property and gender in the nineteenth century has been well documented. In *Uneven Developments*, Mary Poovey explores the famous case of Caroline Norton, whose 1854 and 1855 pamphlets on divorce, inspired by Norton's own miserable marital situation, called attention to the inequities to which married women were subject under the law, the "grotesque anomaly," as Norton put it, "which ordains that married women shall be 'non-existent' in a country governed by a female sovereign"; while the husband "has a right to all that is [the wife's]; as *his wife* [her italics], she has no right to anything that is his" (qtd. in Poovey 64). Prior to the passage of the 1857 Matrimonial Causes Act, Poovey states, married women were indeed, in Norton's word, "non-existent" in the eyes of the law (52): a wife was an extension of her husband under the common-law practice of "coverture," the principle that married women "were legally represented or 'covered' by their husbands because the interests of husband and wife were assumed to be the same" (51-2). Questions of property distribution were intrinsic to the debate about the Act: "Neither Caroline Norton's complaint," Poovey says, "nor the parliamentary debates about divorce can be considered apart from the issue of married women's property," adding that "[e]very episode of the Nortons' dispute involved a contest over property" (70). When the Act was finally adopted, however, "it did not disturb either women's relation to property or the sexual double standard" that governed property laws (84).

As Poovey demonstrates, in the nineteenth century, laws regarding property ownership in marital disputes were driven by rigid constructions of gender: because

married women were thought to be extensions of their husbands, with no legal autonomy, they were prevented from owning property in their own right. The rigid constructions of gender that underpin this legal argument are, in Poovey's terms, part of the "ideological work" of the nineteenth century: "the characteristic feature of the mid-Victorian symbolic economy," she argues, is "the articulation of difference upon sex and in the form of a binary opposition rather than a hierarchically ordered range of similarities" (6). This binarization forced women to try to conform to rigid gender stereotypes that often bore no relation to reality: while as Poovey points out, the 1851 Census showed that "42 percent of the women between the ages of twenty and forty were unmarried and that two million out of Britain's six million women were self-supporting," (4) the prevailing ideology dictated that women's "natural role" was as wives and mothers (1).<sup>109</sup> Despite their ubiquity, unmarried women were considered to be anomalous creatures whose only goal should be marriage, and failing that, they were "redundant." In this sense, the marriage plot that drives the nineteenth-century novel can be read as a quest to distribute property to these "redundant" women in the only manner available to them.

But if women were by virtue of their gender ordained for marriage and thus fated not to hold property on their own, Gypsies, on the other hand, were not subject to the rules that governed property ownership for the non-Romani population: as nomads, they did not own land but rather commandeered public spaces, and as putative thieves, the durable goods that they possessed belonged in theory to

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<sup>109</sup> Single working women were thought to be, in the words of essayist and manufacturer W.R. Greg, in a "quite abnormal" situation in which they had "to carve out artificial and painfully sought occupations for themselves...in place of completing, sweetening, and embellishing the existence of others" through marriage (qtd. in Poovey 1).

others.<sup>110</sup> As argued in the previous chapter, the anxiety about property that these stereotypes<sup>111</sup> manifest was a significant current of early anti-Romani legislation: the earliest statutes accused Romanies of having “deceyved the people of theyr money” and having “comytted many and haynous felonyes.” Further, the punishment for their mere presence in the realm was forfeiture of their property (such as durable goods or livestock, presumably) to the king, as well as his heirs and successors (22 Hen. VIII. c. 10. (1530-1)). Property laws (and the complex controversies surrounding them as the century progressed and the changing roles of women challenged earlier practices) hold curiously little relevance to people who are by definition<sup>112</sup> itinerant and therefore propertyless; and if that is the case, then gender, too, insofar as it acts as a determinant of property ownership, becomes unnecessary and perforce, unstable: the entire apparatus of gender underpinning property ownership is only relevant when there is property to be owned and bequeathed.

Given Gypsies’ contested relationship to property, it makes sense that various types of instability—not only of property, but also of gender, and as we will see in subsequent chapters, of sexuality and national identity—were all located, indeed, conflated, in the Gypsy figure: given the relationship of gender to property, it is logical to conclude that if ownership is not in question, gender itself becomes far less important. If the “ideological work” of binarizing gender was motivated in part by the necessity of deciding matters of property distribution, a concept on which British

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<sup>110</sup> Behlmer notes that “the champions of private property [i.e., non-Gypsies] alleged” that the wares sold by Victorian Gypsies, e.g., baskets and clothespins, “were generally fashioned from stolen reeds and willow branches” (233).

<sup>111</sup> This study does not concern itself with whether or not the Romani people were or were not in actual fact itinerants and/or thieves; what matters here is that these attributes are key components of the Gypsy trope.

<sup>112</sup> Although as indicated earlier, this definition is contested.

nationhood was grounded in a variety of registers, this was a project from which Gypsies, by virtue of their self-imposed landlessness, were exempt. Indeed, one may conjecture that in opting out from the British national project of distributing land and goods, a project with which the nineteenth-century novel is obsessed, Gypsies created for themselves a category in which all the social norms and practices that coalesced around property were nullified in a way that must have been striking to the novelist for whom property plots—the marriage of women to landed men, challenges to hereditary distribution of estates, etc.—were meat and potatoes. Indeed, it was partly Gypsies' exemption from the process of the ideological work of distributing capital and its associated projects—the shoring up of gender, the promulgation of marriage, and the regulation of sexuality—that constituted a source of anxiety for the non-Gypsy community and caused Gypsies to serve as a ready trope onto which these anxieties could be projected.

The Gypsy trope in the long nineteenth century is framed by novels that explicitly construct Gypsies' relationship to gender, rendering it ambiguous, in-between, composite, and complicated: in the century's bookends, *Guy Mannering* (1815) and *Orlando* (1928), Gypsies' vexed relationship to property, their distinctive landlessness and their destabilizing effects on the property of others, is explicitly conflated with an equally vexed relationship to gender. Between these two novels, Gypsy figures function to destabilize the gender of other characters and thus to facilitate the distribution or redistribution of property, especially land, *vis á vis* gender.

That the Gypsy trope is associated with gender ambiguity is evidenced in Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* (1860): the novel's first narrator, Walter Hartright, describes the distinctly androgynous Marian Halcombe with the term "swarthy," a word frequently associated with Gypsies.<sup>113</sup> "The lady's complexion was almost swarthy, and the dark down on her upper lip was almost a moustache. She had a large firm, masculine mouth and jaw; prominent, piercing, resolute dark eyes; and thick, coal-black hair, growing unusually low down on her forehead" (24-5). Hartright remarks upon his being "almost repelled by the masculine form and masculine look of the features" (25). Later, Laura Fairlie refers to Halcombe's "dear, dark, clever, gipsy-face" (185), thereby explicitly associating the face's masculinity with Gypsiness.

George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), which will be examined in more detail in Chapter Three, contains much more extensive instances of "gender heterodoxy," to borrow Nord's term, being identified with Gypsies. The tomboyish Maggie Tulliver is anomalous both in terms of her challenges to femininity, emblemized by her attack on her sweet cousin Lucy, and her perceived physical resemblance to a Gypsy.<sup>114</sup> While the ultra-feminine Lucy has "blonde curls," "hazel eyes," and "the neatest little rosebud mouth" (66), Maggie has "dark heavy locks" and "gleaming black eyes," as well as "the air of a small Shetland pony" (16). The contrast between the two cousins "is like the contrast between a rough, dark,

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<sup>113</sup> Deborah Nord notes, "The Gypsy's habitual swarthinness becomes a marker not simply of foreignness, of non-Englishness, but of heterodox femininity as well" (*Gypsies* 14).

<sup>114</sup> In *Sex Scandal*, William A. Cohen has noted that the label "tomboy," often applied to Maggie by readers, is "apt not only in its usual sense but in its onomastic and etymological suggestions as well": the term's "older meaning—harlot--...allows it accurately to condense Maggie's youthful reputation of femininity with her adult sexual misconduct" (135-6). See also Cohen's discussion of the instability of the genders of the novel's male characters as well (134-5).

overgrown puppy and a white kitten” (66), in other words, between Maggie’s animal, somewhat masculine, dark features and Lucy’s conventionally feminine light ones, and a contrast reminiscent of that between Laura Fairlie and Marian Halcombe is set up between the cousins: “Maggie always looked twice as dark as usual when she was by the side of Lucy” (66). Maggie’s darkness is characterized as Gypsylike: “‘She’s more like a gypsy nor ever,’ said aunt Pullen, in a pitying tone, ‘it’s very bad luck, sister, as the gell should be so brown....’” (73). Later, Maggie says of herself, “What a queer little girl I was....I really *was* like a gypsy” (312). Like Marian Halcombe’s, Maggie’s darkness is a marker of unconventional gender that is so explicitly Gypsy-like that Maggie herself identifies with Gypsies and actually runs away from home, hoping to be taken in by them, though instead of kidnapping her, as the stereotype dictates they should have, they bring her home.<sup>115</sup>

In George du Maurier’s *Trilby* (1894), an explicitly Gypsy character, Gecko, serves as the henchman for the evil Svengali, a “sinister” man “of Jewish aspect, in the hypnosis or “glamouring” of Trilby. A novel about bohemianism in *fin de siècle* Paris, *Trilby* is remarkable for the gender instability of most of its characters: the main character, “Little Billee,” is “small and slender,” “graceful and well built,” and well dressed, with “very small hands and feet” (6). While heavily moustached, Svengali has “thick, heavy, languid, lusterless black hair” that “fell down behind his ears to his shoulders, in that musician-like way that is so offensive to the normal Englishman,” and he wears “a red beret and a large velveteen cloak” (11). Gecko, “a little swarthy young man,” has “large, soft, affectionate brown eyes, like a King

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<sup>115</sup> Nord notes the prevalence of “myths of Gypsy kidnappings”: “Legends of kidnapping and child swapping had [in the nineteenth century] long been associated with Gypsies, and accusations of such crimes haunt them to this day” (*Gypsies* 10).



Charles spaniel” and “small, nervous, veiny hands” (11). Finally, Trilby herself is perhaps the most androgynous of them all: she first appears, “a very tall and fully developed young female, clad in the grey overcoat of a French infantry soldier,” as well as a petticoat and “a huge pair of male slippers” (12-13). She has “short, thick, wavy brown hair,” “a very fine brow, broad and low, with thick level eyebrows much darker than her hair,” and the narrator sums up her appearance by remarking, “She would have made a singularly handsome boy” (13). Gender is one of the many unstable qualities in Bohemian Paris, and Gecko’s Gypsiness is an explicit form of the Gypsiness of the entire milieu.

While all of the aforementioned texts link Gypsiness to challenges to gender, the work that most conspicuously inaugurates this function of the Gypsy trope, both due to its enormous popularity and to the sublime and Romantic power of its central Gypsy figure, is Sir Walter Scott’s *Guy Mannering*.

## II. “Rather Masculine Than Feminine”: Gypsies in *Guy Mannering*

In “Meg the Gipsy in Scott and Keats,” Claire Lamont traces the origins of “that enigmatic figure, the Romantic Gipsy” and finds its beginnings in the literary constructions of Gypsies in the works of Sir Walter Scott and John Keats (144). Indeed, if the Gypsy trope can be said to have a point of origin in British literature, there are few other candidates for the position. While literary Gypsy figures pre-date *Guy Mannering*, ranging from Ben Jonson’s 1621 *The Gypsies Metamorphos’d* to Wordsworth’s 1807 poem “Gipsies,” there is no single Gypsy figure with the stature, literally and figuratively, of Meg Merrilies. Perhaps it is an oversimplification to trace

the rise of the Gypsy trope directly to Merrilies; but it is certainly worth remarking that her figure towers over the century, as it were, and may explain at least in part the association between Gypsies and ambiguous gender that is legible throughout the period and culminates in the radical gender contestation of *Orlando*.<sup>116</sup>

It is likely that Scott's conflation of Gypsies and gender ambiguity comes at least in part directly from Scott's own experience with Gypsies: at least one marker of Merrilies' gender ambiguity, her extraordinary height, derives from two of Scott's alleged sources for his character, a Gypsy woman named Jean Gordon, "a leading member of the gypsy settlement at Kirk Yetholm" (Garside, "Historical" 505), and her granddaughter, Madge. P.D. Garside, editor of the Edinburgh UP edition of the Waverly novels, is convinced by Scott's identification of Jean Gordon as a "prototype for Meg Merrilies" ("Essay" 361), adding that "[t]his identification was actively encouraged by Scott himself through his (anonymous) contribution to the article, 'Notices concerning the Scottish Gypsies', which appeared in the first issue of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* in April 1817" (505). Garside cites Scott's 1829 introduction to the novel, in which this identification is made explicit: "My father remembered old Jean Gordon of Yetholm, who had great sway among her tribe. She was quite a Meg Merrilies, and possessed the savage virtue of fidelity in the same perfection" (qtd. in Garside 505). Scott goes on to describe his father's visit to her: "when he knocked at the door, it was opened by Jean Gordon. Her very remarkable figure, for she was nearly six feet high, and her equally remarkable features and dress, rendered it impossible to mistake her for a moment, though he had not seen her for

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<sup>116</sup> See Janet Lyon for a convincing discussion of the confluence of the Gypsy trope with the interests of Modernism.

years” (qtd. in Garside 505). He depicts Madge Gordon in similar terms, citing an account of her that describes her, too, as “nearly six feet high,” with “a large aquiline nose,—penetrating eyes, even in her old age,—bushy hair, that hung around her shoulders from beneath a gipsy bonnet of straw,—a short cloak of a peculiar fashion, and a long staff nearly as tall as herself” (qtd. in Garside 505). Scott’s pointed insistence that his portrait of Meg Merrilies was drawn from real life implies that he was striving for a kind of verisimilitude or “street cred” that George Borrow and other Gysiologists would later emulate. That the unusual height—as noted above, Merrilies “was full six feet high” (14)<sup>117</sup>—and the staff, both components of the striking description in *Guy Mannering*, are drawn from real life in no way negates the assertion that they are markers of ambiguous gender, nor does it mean that Scott was drawn to these details merely for the sake of accuracy, rather than because they are masculine synecdoches. Whatever the genesis of Scott’s gender-bending description of the Gypsy figure, Merrilies encapsulates, if not instantiates, the Gypsy trope in the nineteenth century<sup>118</sup> and its components of ambiguous gender: powerful, masculine women, effeminized men, and a tribal, foreign culture that lives riotously in the margins of British life, making little distinction between the sexes and captivating the popular imagination by providing a romantic, peripatetic alternative to the settled, landed life of nationhood.

The power and ubiquity of Merrilies<sup>119</sup> as Gypsy archetype are attested to by the existence of John Keats’s 1818 poem about her, “Old Meg she was a gipsej.”

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<sup>117</sup> Scott has added an inch or two to the height of the Gordon women.

<sup>118</sup> Deborah Nord calls *Guy Mannering* “the single most important literary influence on the nineteenth-century fascination for Gypsy subjects” (*Gypsies* 25).

<sup>119</sup> In her discussion of the novel, Nord alludes to this “Meg-mania” (she is quoting from Garside).

Scott's novel was published in 1815, and his archetypal Gypsy quickly penetrated public awareness to such an extent that a mere three years later, Keats wrote to John Taylor while traveling, "we are now in Meg Merrilies country and have this morning passed through some parts exactly suited to her - Kirkcudbright County is very beautiful, very wild with craggy hills somewhat in the westmoreland fashion."<sup>120</sup> Most strikingly, according to Lamont, who cites an account of Keats' journey through Scotland written by his friend Charles Brown, Keats had not even read *Guy Mannering*, yet had a clear enough sense of its geography and enough awareness of Merrilies to immortalize her in verse (137). Keats' casual identification of the landscape with Merrilies indicates that he was making the assumption that everyone, including his niece, for whom his poem was written, was familiar with her, a reasonable assumption given the novel's popularity: Lamont points out that not only was *Guy Mannering* widely and well reviewed, but a dramatic version of the novel, *Guy Mannering; or, The Gipsy's Prophecy*, was produced at Covent Garden in March of 1816, and several portraits of the actress who played Meg, Mrs. Sarah Edgerton, had already been exhibited in London prior to 1821, when the first illustrated edition of *Guy Mannering* was published (140). Lamont concludes that "from reviews, the theatre, and paintings the character of Meg Merrilies was sufficiently well-known for Keats to have 'heard of' her before his walk to Auchencairn with Charles Brown" (141).

Keats's description of Merrilies as "tall as Amazon" is reminiscent of Scott's, although he appears more taken with images that construct her as a Romantic figure who is one with the natural landscape ("Her bed it was the brown heath turf,/And her

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<sup>120</sup> July 3, 1818.

house was out of doors”) than with her complications of gender. Since Keats had not actually read the novel, one may surmise that Merrilies’ Amazonian height was a key component of her cultural transmission as a Gypsy archetype. While Keats’s poem does not echo Scott’s representation of Meg’s costume in quite such gender-ambiguous terms: “An old red blanket cloak she wore/A chip hat<sup>121</sup> had she on,” neither is her garb particularly feminine. The other important component of Scott’s Merrilies that Keats brings into his poem is her landlessness: if we read Keats’ poem in terms of its transmission of Merrilies, the two key features of Gypsies legible in *Orlando*, their lack of both gender and property, appear to have antecedents in Scott’s Gypsy.

Indeed, the landlessness of Merrilies’ and her “tribe” is the linchpin of the property plot of *Guy Mannering*: it is the laird’s eviction of the Gypsies from their long-time settlement on his property that sets in motion the kidnapping and subsequent disinheritance of his son.<sup>122</sup> While as we have seen, the Gypsy trope depends on the notion that Gypsies are wild and itinerant nomads,<sup>123</sup> the Gypsies in *Guy Mannering* are only nomadic after they are evicted from their “standing camp” (36) on the laird’s estate:

A tribe of these itinerants, to whom Meg Merrilies appertained,

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<sup>121</sup> According to the *OED*, a chip-hat is made of “Wood (or woody fibre) split into thin strips.”

<sup>122</sup> Deborah Nord calls attention to this plot device: “The child-stealing stories associated in folklore and fiction with the gypsies (invented, perhaps, to explain the existence of fair-haired, blue-eyed gypsy children) lend themselves to the imaginary plot of family romance and the literary plot of the foundling, and she adds that *Guy Mannering* “follows this paradigm: the kidnapped child is a laird’s son, and his return from the gypsies to his true family also returns him to his inheritance” (“Marks of Race” 192).

<sup>123</sup> As Janet Lyon points out, however, this was not always the case: while “[l]egislative discourse after 1870 specifically targeted Gypsies as rural itinerants who resisted education, hygiene, and recognizable forms of labor,” this “homogenized” figure was a fiction, since “Gypsies in England in these years were both sedentary and mobile, rural and urban,” and their patterns of migration stemmed largely from “economic considerations” and not from the wanderlust associated with the Gypsy trope (524-5).

had long been as stationary as their habits permitted, in a glen upon the estate of Ellangowan. They had erected a few huts, which they denominated their “city of refuge,” and where they harboured unmolested as the crows that roosted in the old ash-trees around them. They had been such long occupants, that they were considered in some degree as proprietors of the wretched sheelings which they inhabited (37).

When Godfrey Bertram, the Laird of Ellangowan, is elected to a judgeship through the machinations of his clerk, he decides, in a fit of hubris, to evict “sundry personages, whose idle and mendicant habits his own *lachesse* had contributed to foster until these habits became irreclaimable” (33), causing commerce of both goods and information to grind to a halt on his estate and incurring widespread condemnation. One group of such evicted personages was—unfortunately, as it turns out, for Bertram—“a colony of gypsies...who had for a great many years enjoyed their chief settlement upon the estate of Ellangowan” (34). The anger of the Gypsies causes them to abet the kidnapping of Bertram’s young son Harry and leads to the ultimate dissolution of Bertram’s estate.

In evicting the Gypsies, Bertram disrupts a pattern of relatively peaceful coexistence, a “friendly union” (37), that has been uneasily maintained for centuries. In Chapter Seven of the novel, the narrator gives a history of the “gypsy tribes” in Scotland that culminates in their occupation of Bertram’s land. He traces their emergence as “a distinct and independent people” whose “character” came to be regarded under the law as “equal, in the judicial balance, to that of common and

habitual thief” who combine the “idleness and predatory habits of their eastern ancestors,<sup>124</sup> with a ferocity which they probably borrowed from the men of the north who joined their society” (35). Such a borrowing suggests that the Gypsy “tribe” has much in common with the Highland clans of Scotland and implies a connection to the land, and to Scottish nationhood, to which Bertram is tragically deaf.<sup>125</sup> Scott goes on to quote an article by “Fletcher of Saltoun”<sup>126</sup> that characterizes Gypsies not only as beggars and “vagabonds,” but as “without any regard or subjection to the laws of the land, or even those of God and nature” (35-6). According to Fletcher, among the Gypsies’ violations were “fathers incestuously accompanying with their own daughters, the son with the mother, and the brother with the sister” (36). He describes their Bacchanalian habits in “years of plenty”: “many thousands of them meet together in the mountains, where they feast and riot for many days; and at country weddings, markets, burials, and other the like public occasions, they are to be seen, both men and women, perpetually drunk, cursing, blaspheming, and fighting together” (36). Fletcher’s narrative provides a pseudo-historical underpinning for the ethnic and sexual ambiguity of Merrilies and by extension, her “tribe” (a term that appears to be the lawless/landless equivalent of “clan”).

However, despite the transgressive lawlessness of the historical Gypsies, according to Scott’s narrator, “the progress of time...gradually reduced this dreadful evil within more narrow bounds” (36). His explanation for this is that “The tribes of

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<sup>124</sup> Scott appears to be aware of the theory that Gypsies came from India.

<sup>125</sup> Garside notes a statement of Scott’s in response to an 1816 questionnaire on Gypsies: “I do not conceive them to be the proper Oriental Egyptian race, at least they are much intermingled with our own national outlaws and vagabonds” (qtd. in Garside, “Explanatory Notes” 527).

<sup>126</sup> “Andrew Fletcher (1653-1716), Scottish patriot and political writer; he sat for many years as a representative of East Lothian in the Scottish Parliament, where he vehemently opposed the proposed Union with England of 1707” (Garside’s note, 527).

gypsies—jockies, or cairds,—for by all these denominations such banditti were known,—became few in number, and many were entirely rooted out” (36). Those remaining, while still able to “give occasional alarm and constant vexation,” took up “rude handicrafts,” as well as “petty trade in the coarser sorts of earthen-ware,” and while they did not fully assimilate into Scottish society, they became more settled: “Each tribe had usually some fixed place of rendezvous, which they occasionally occupied and considered as their standing camp, in the vicinity of which they usually abstained from depredation” (36). Within these confines, the Gypsies participated in necessary commerce, entertained (“the favourite fiddler or piper of a district was often to be found in a gypsy town” (36)), hunted, purveyed occult skills such as fortune-telling and “legerdemain” (36), and generally made themselves useful and thus infiltrated Scottish society. Allison Bardsley has called attention to the hybridity of the Gypsies in *Guy Mannering*: “bad harvests, ongoing enclosures, and post-1745 punitive expropriations in the Highlands—the very history of eighteenth-century Scotland in small—have led to the transformation of these descendents of invading ‘Eastern ancestors’ into a local hybrid and enabled the creation and ‘prospering’ of this ‘mingled race’ of internal exiles” (402). In other words, the Gypsies of *Guy Mannering* were, prior to their eviction, sufficiently integrated into the local culture to have given up, at least temporarily, the stereotypical practices of vagrancy and thievery and, as Bardsley notes, they replicated the Scottish clan and thus called the idea of Scottish nationhood into question (402), contesting the homogeneity of the nation and the ownership of land on which nationhood depends.



But when Bertram evicts the Gypsy “clan” from the land on which they’ve been “stationary,” the Gypsies are forced to revert to challenges to property, to the nomadism and thievery (which they adopt in retaliation for the Laird’s harassment) that constitute the traditional markers of “the *Parias* of Scotland,” as the narrator terms them (37),<sup>127</sup> countering their process of assimilation and hybridity and threatening the stability of the Laird and his family. The ultimate act of familial destabilization, child-stealing, while commonly associated with Gypsies, as Nord has pointed out (*Gypsies* 33) is in fact committed by the smugglers who, along with the Gypsies, as Bardsley points out, “embody a challenge both to private property in land and to the idea of the state, that is, of the governing body and its laws” (402). In this case, kidnapping is particularly destabilizing because it interferes with primogeniture: the kidnapped child, Harry Bertram, is the first son and would-be heir to Ellangowan in an inheritance plot that functions like *Wuthering Heights* in reverse. Ironically, in that her actions run counter to the stereotypes of the Gypsy as child-stealer, it is Meg Merrilies who causes the smugglers to spare young *Harry’s* life and then, in the book’s climax, gives her life to help the adult Harry capture Hattaraick, the smuggler who had kidnapped him.

The Gypsies in *Guy Mannering* begin as anarchic, marginalized Others who challenge the mores and boundaries of Scottish society, but gradually infiltrate and assimilate into it until they are once again evicted and forced back into the margins: once they return as part of the body politic, it is clear that they are not object, i.e., separate from the body, but abject, i.e., a part of the body that cannot be rejected

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<sup>127</sup> Ian Hancock’s *The Pariah Syndrome* bemoans the persistence of the stereotype of the Gypsy nomadism, as well as those of “stealing and promiscuity” (121).

without peril to the body itself.<sup>128</sup> The benchmark of their assimilation is their occupation of land, and when this is disrupted, they reassume the markers of Gypsiness: peregrination, thievery, and by proxy, child-stealing. Fletcher of Saltoun's narrative suggests that in their tribal past, the Gypsies' sexual and gender mores were scandalously incestuous and ungendered ("they are to be seen, both men and women, perpetually drunk, cursing, blaspheming, and fighting together" (36)). However, when the Laird evicts the Gypsies from his estate, men and women walk separately, clad in gender-specific costumes: "Four or five men formed the advanced guard, wrapped in long loose great coats, that hid their tall slender figures, as the large slouched hats, drawn over their brows, concealed their wild features, dark eyes, and swarthy faces," whereas the women wear "red cloaks and straw hats" (42): perhaps their occupation of land has caused them to adopt more clearly delineated gender roles, but the next reference to the Gypsies is collective: "The group would have been an excellent subject for the pencil of Calotte"<sup>129</sup> (42), implying that this temporary division on the basis of gender is being eroded by their resumption of nomadism, where they become a group whose members' gender is uncertain.<sup>130</sup> Shortly thereafter, Merrilies appears again, her preternaturally masculine height emphasized: she is standing on "one of those high banks [that] overhung the road; so that she was placed considerably higher than Ellangowan [i.e., the Laird], even though he was on horseback; and her tall figure, relieved against the clear blue sky, seemed almost of

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<sup>128</sup> This process is very much like that of the Jews in Britain.

<sup>129</sup> "Jacques Calotte (1592-1635), French graphic artist whose series of four etchings, *Les Bohémiens* (c. 1621) were known to Scott" (fn. 529). His drawing, *Les Bohémiens (Procession)* depicts a group of figures clad in flowing garments that make their gender somewhat difficult to ascertain.

<sup>130</sup> See James M. Garrett's discussion of Wordsworth's "Gipsies," in which he reads the Gypsies' depiction as an "unbroken knot" as a similar blurring of gender and identity: (613-14).

supernatural stature” (43). In their state of abjection, Merrilies and her tribe resume the ungenderedness and, subsequently, the other markers of Gypsiness that characterize their Otherness.

It is this picture of Merrilies in particular and Gypsies in general that casts a giant shadow across the nineteenth century and establishes the Gypsy trope. Not only does this trope inform Woolf’s choice of the Gypsies to accompany the problematized gender in *Orlando*, but it also underpins their portrayal in the works of Charlotte Brontë, in which Gypsy figures serve as linchpins to plots about the destabilization of property and gender.

### III. “I Have Seen a Gypsy Vagabond”<sup>131</sup>: Gypsies in *Jane Eyre*

It is hardly surprising that Charlotte Brontë’s work would manifest gender instability in multiple registers, since for her and her sisters, the act of authorship was in itself an act of literary cross-dressing. The unstable nature of gender in *Jane Eyre* is first famously legible on its title page, which bears the name “Currer Bell.” The power of this pseudonym is noted by Brontë’s biographer Elizabeth Gaskell, who asserts that “Currer Bell” had an identity separate from that of “Charlotte Brontë,” whose “duties” as a woman forced her to live life in “two parallel currents - her life as Currer Bell, the author; her life as Charlotte Brontë, the woman,” and Gaskell notes that these currents did not always “run smoothly parallel” (qtd. in Peterson 109). Brontë herself commented on the pseudonyms in her 1850 “Biographical Notice of

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<sup>131</sup> Blanche Ingram says this after her encounter with the “Gypsy” Rochester, but she might as well have been referring to Jane (165).

Ellis and Acton Bell” (i.e., Emily and Anne Brontë, who had both died the previous year):

Averse to personal publicity, we veiled our own names under those of Curren, Ellis, and Acton Bell; the ambiguous choice being dictated by a sort of conscientious scruple at assuming Christian names positively masculine, while we did not like to declare ourselves women, because—without at that time suspecting our mode of writing and thinking was not what is called “feminine”—we had a vague impression that authoresses are liable to be looked on with prejudice....(16)

It is worth noting here that although many critics refer to these pseudonyms as “male” names, Brontë’s discussion of them suggests that they are a deliberately “ambiguous” choice that sought to destabilize the assumptions underlying gender, as opposed to the sort of transvestitism Patrick Brantlinger refers to in *The Reading Lesson*: “though [Charlotte Brontë’s] adoption of a male pseudonym, like that of her sisters and of other women novelists and poets throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, is ordinarily understood as a conventional act of defiance to patriarchy, it can also be understood as another form of transgression—a transvestite wish...to make gender performative or malleable” (117). While a “transvestite wish” certainly informs Brontë’s novels, as evident in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, what is even more fundamental to these novels is a sense that gender is fundamentally performative<sup>132</sup> and as such, unstable. Unlike in *Wuthering Heights*, which works to abject Gypsiness and restore

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<sup>132</sup> Judith Butler defines the “acts, gestures, enactments” of gender as “*performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means” (her italics 173).

the status quo with the death of Heathcliff, in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, Gypsiness, and its concomitant gender instability, is an even more subversive quality that ultimately infuses the protagonists—as it infused Harry Bertram in *Guy Mannering*—and thus cannot be fully eradicated.

In recent years, critics have traced various iterations of gender instability in Brontë's work,<sup>133</sup> and critics such as Gilbert and Gubar have read *Jane Eyre* teleologically, as a Bunyan-esque “progress”<sup>134</sup>; Parama Roy sees the novel as moving “from dispossession to ownership” (715). While Gilbert and Gubar argue that *Jane Eyre* can be read as a “female *Bildungsroman*” (339), and Roy argues that it traces a journey toward possession of capital, there is an equally significant progression in *Jane Eyre* is from a dispossessed female nomadism to landed genderless rootedness. At the heart of this progression is Jane's strange encounter with Rochester dressed as a Gypsy, and this meeting is the turning point in their divergent trajectories: Jane's, from disempowered, disinherited, and itinerant female to masculinized economic empowerment, and Rochester's, from masculine empowered land-ownership to castrated homelessness. Rochester's Gypsy cross-

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<sup>133</sup> In “Double Gender and Double Genre in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*,” Robyn Warhol examines the gender “doubleness” of both novels and notes that in *Jane Eyre*, Jane “is in the distinctly ‘masculine’ position of inheriting a living before she becomes Mr. Rochester's wife. In Jane's dealings with St. John, too, her sex is inscribed as specifically female (she has a ‘woman's heart’), but her gender identity crosses over into masculinity” (869). Christina Crosby has noted the importance of cross-dressing in *Villette* and suggests that Lucy Snowe's “doubling” of de Hamal represents “a serious challenge to the ostensible division of . . . woman and man” (707). Mary Poovey has examined the historical figure of the governess and the way she challenges the difference between the “middle-class mother” and “a working-class woman and man” (127), and she points to ways in which Jane's narrative calls sexual difference into question: “merely to assert that the most salient difference was located within every individual and not between men and women was to raise the possibilities that women's dependence was customary, not natural, that their sphere was kept separate by artificial means, and that women, like men, could grow and work outside the home” (147).

<sup>134</sup> Gilbert and Gubar see the novel as a “pilgrim's progress toward maturity” (339), an expression of Brontë's “rebellious feminism” that enables Jane to “circumvent the strictures of a hierarchical society” (369) and to overturn patriarchy's effects on her gender.

dressing functions as a marker for these destabilizations of gender and property and serves as an indication that indeed, a Gypsy has infiltrated the narrative: Jane herself.

As the novel opens, it is apparent that Jane suffers from powerlessness that is rooted in both gender and economics.<sup>135</sup> She is the victim of her bullying cousin John Reed, and her inability to defend herself against him stems both from the fact that she is female and, perhaps more significantly, that as a penniless orphan she lacks capital, in terms of both financial and personal assets: as Jane herself reminds us throughout the novel, she does not possess the power of “feminine” beauty that would enable her to escape her position as a “redundant woman.” While cousins Eliza and Georgiana are decked out in “muslin frocks and scarlet sashes, with hair elaborately ringletted” (23), “plain Jane,” as Gilbert and Gubar refer to her, is described by Abbot the servant as a “little toad” with whose “forlornness” she cannot “compassionate” as one could for a “nice, pretty child” (21).<sup>136</sup> From the beginning, Jane’s ascetic drabness stands in contrast to the colorful feminine apparel of other female characters. She presents herself at Thornfield in a “black frock” that she describes as “Quaker-like” (84); when she meets Rochester, she is wearing “a black merino cloak, a black beaver bonnet: neither of them half fine enough for a lady’s maid” (97). While Blanche Ingram arrives at Thornfield dressed in a “purple riding-habit [that] almost swept the ground” and alliteratively sporting “rich raven ringlets” (141), Jane berates herself for her delusional desires for Rochester and gives herself an order to acknowledge her lack of assets:

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<sup>135</sup> Virginia Woolf comments, “The drawbacks of being Jane Eyre are not far to seek. Always to be a governess and always to be in love is a serious limitation in a world which is full, after all, of people who are neither one nor the other” (“*Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights*” (161).

<sup>136</sup> Bessie, the other servant, agrees that “a beauty like Miss Georgiana would be more moving in the same condition” (21).

Listen, then, Jane Eyre, to your sentence: to-morrow, place the glass before you, and draw in chalk your own picture, faithfully; without softening one defect: omit no harsh line, smooth away no displeasing irregularity; write under it, "Portrait of a Governess, disconnected, poor, and plain." (137)

Here, Jane herself conflates her lack of personal and capital assets: she is "disconnected," i.e., without family connections providing status or title, she is poor, and she is plain, and hence not able to use her appearance as capital with which to levy herself into marriage: her plainness is an inextricable aspect of her poverty.

Later, however, Jane's subsequent look in the mirror reveals that her affiliation with Rochester has rendered her more attractive: after their "engagement," she "looked at [her] face in the glass and felt it was no longer plain" (219). By the novel's last chapter, she has shed the Quaker look and is wearing a "glittering ornament round [her] neck" and a "pale blue dress" (384) which perhaps lack the opulence of Blanche Ingram's garb but imply that one facet of Jane's "progress" is toward commanding, though not necessarily opting for, the power of performative femininity; while she never reaches the degree of frippery sported by Blanche, by the novel's end, she has declared herself on the side of female costume at the same time that in many ways, she has assumed the masculine role of caretaker of her symbolically castrated husband. In acquiring financial capital, she has acquired the capital of performative femininity as well.

The economics of gender also play out in Jane's picaresque movement from homelessness to a home that exists both literally, in the sense of ownership, and

figuratively. “Wherever you are is my home,” she later says to Rochester, “my only home” (209); the simultaneous quest for and flight from home underpins the novel, constructing the dual nature of “home”: the comforting “home” with Rochester and the potential “home” of death. The first chapter introduces the linkage of vagabondage and flight from eternal rest, with echoes of *Wuthering Heights*: prior to Jane’s famous fainting fit, Lockwood-like, she conjures up the ghost of her uncle Mr. Reed:

I began to recall what I had heard of dead men, troubled in their graves by the violation of their last wishes, revisiting the earth to punish the perjured and avenge the oppressed; and I thought Mr. Reed’s spirit, harassed by the wrongs of his sister’s child, might quit its abode... and rise before me in this chamber. (13)

When a light shines onto the wall, Jane is terrified into syncope, seemingly by the specter of a gothic ghostly visitation—but the most profoundly terrifying theme introduced here is the ghostly motif of quitting an abode and being forced to wander eternally. Equally terrifying, however, is the idea that death *is* a home (i.e., “abode”); thus nomadism is both a zombie-like exile from the eternal home *and* a terrifying flight from death. Jane soon quits her temporary abode—as she points out, Gateshead Hall is not *her* house (19)—and spends the rest of the novel attempting to find a permanent resting place other than that found in death, a goal that can only be accomplished by the assumption of power, not merely that of performative femininity, but of “masculine” capital, and it is her Gypsiness that allows her to assume both simultaneously.



The novel's first reference to Gypsies is in the novel's opening section at the Reeds: when Bessie the servant offers Jane a book, Jane requests *Gulliver's Travels*, a book that has formerly delighted her but which now strikes her as "eerie and dreary"; in her view, colored by the vision of the peripatetic ghost of her uncle, the "giants" have turned to "gaunt goblins, the pigmies malevolent and fearful imps, [and] Gulliver a most desolate wanderer in most dread and dangerous regions" (17). Again, Jane's terror is awakened by visions of nomadism that foreshadow her own fate. At this point, Bessie (while making a bonnet for Georgiana's doll out of "splendid shreds of silk and satin" (17), a metonymy of the performative femininity Jane lacks), as if sensing the content of Jane's fears, sings two songs, both about nomadism. These songs depict the dual nature of nomadism: the first, which Jane describes as suffused with "an indescribable sadness," puts a somewhat positive, or at least nostalgic, construction on wandering: "In the days when we went gipsying,/A long time ago" (17).<sup>137</sup> Next, however, Bessie segues into a song about a "poor orphan child" whose sore feet and weary limbs testify to her wandering on the moors;<sup>138</sup> the song concludes, "Though both of shelter and kindred despoiled;/Heaven is a home, and a rest will not fail me"<sup>139</sup> (18). These songs demonstrate that nomadism is simultaneously a nostalgic adventure and a haunted journey to death. That "gipsying" and ghostly wandering are here conflated with female costume by Bessie's sewing of the bonnet foreshadows two of the novel's trajectories—the progress from nomadism

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<sup>137</sup> According to the *OED*, the intransitive verb "to gipsy" means "To live or act like gipsies, esp. to have meals in the open air, to picnic." The *OED* cites this example from 1847/1848: "As cold weather came..he could no longer go on with his gipsying mode of life," which clearly indicates that the word has connotations of vagabonding and not simply picnicking.

<sup>138</sup> Here are more shades of the opening of *Wuthering Heights*, and Catherine's ghost.

<sup>139</sup> As Gilbert and Gubar point out, "Bessie's song was an uncannily accurate prediction of things to come" (363).

to home (or more specifically, to a home-that-is-not-death), and from “plain”-ness to performative femininity—and its later pivotal scene involving Rochester’s disguise as a Gypsy.

Shortly thereafter, Jane enters into another period of homelessness: she is housed at the sinister Lowood school, where the only way students can “go home” is to die; when Helen Burns dies, Jane asks, “Are you going home?” (69). Jane says that the departure of Miss Temple “to a distant county” ended “every settled feeling, every association that had made Lowood in some degree a home” to her (71). Again, here, the concept of home, and the issue of Jane’s fundamental homelessness, is complicated and made metaphysical: home can be literal, encompassing issues of property ownership, or figurative in a negative sense (home as death), or in a positive sense (home in a person, e.g., Miss Temple). In this part of the novel, too, nomadism is both terrifying and liberating: in making her journey to Thornfield, Jane remarks that “[i]t is a very strange sensation to inexperienced youth to feel itself quite alone in the world, cut adrift from every connection, uncertain whether the port to which it is bound can be reached” (79). Each stage in Jane’s odyssey calls into question the nature of rootedness and affirms her status as vagabond; if possessing no capital is her first brush with Gypsiness, this is her second. In their first meeting, Mr. Rochester calls attention to her apparent itinerancy: “‘I should think you ought to be at home yourself,’ said he, ‘if you have a home in this neighbourhood: where do you come from?’” Jane responds that she has come from Thornfield, “just below,” and Rochester asks her whose house it is (97), as if to underscore her lack of connection to the property. When he asks her about her background, he says, “‘if you disown

parents you must have some sort of kinsfolk: uncles and aunts?’ ‘No; none that I ever saw.’ ‘And your home?’ ‘I have none’” (104). Here, homelessness does not signify the lack of a place of residence, since she obviously lives in a literal sense at Thornfield, but a lack of capital and “connections” that is particularly legible in her association with Mr. Rochester.

The introduction of Blanche Ingram, Mr. Rochester’s apparent love interest, to Thornfield further emphasizes the multiple forms of Jane’s poverty. In addition to having no inheritance, or land, or indeed, possessions of any kind, Jane is singularly lacking in another important form of property: unlike Blanche Ingram, she is not herself a marriageable commodity. In describing herself in the conflated terms of “disconnected, poor, and plain,” as well as “indigent” and “plebeian” (137), Jane establishes a clear contrast with Blanche Ingram, who is described by housekeeper Mrs. Fairfax as Jane’s polar opposite: “most beautiful,” “magnificently dressed,” like a “queen” (135). Although Blanche does not have a large fortune, she is well-connected, extremely attractive, and thus highly marketable. In the midst of the Ingrams’ visit, Mr. Rochester dresses up as a Gypsy woman and purports to tell Jane’s fortune in order to gain access to her uncensored view of him, a performance that, as Deborah Nord points out, “disturbs hierarchies of sex, race, and rank” (“Marks” 195). Masquerading as a Gypsy woman enables Rochester to throw off the limitations of his gender and class in an attempt to penetrate the secrets of female discourse. His disguise implies that femininity, such as that of Blanche Ingram, consists of costume, a disguise that can be seen through by the astute observer.<sup>140</sup> The

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<sup>140</sup> Both Nord and Gilbert & Gubar have called attention to the fact that Jane is able to penetrate Rochester’s disguise whereas the Ingram women are taken in by it.

real Rochester is, like Jane, plain: as he himself says, Jane is not pretty and he is not handsome (113); but he, like Jane, possesses hidden personal assets that are their real capital, as their interchange makes clear (and as the later emphasis on “seeing” introduced by Rochester’s blindness renders even more legible).

At this point in the text, the conventional narrative of the marriage plot—beautiful, highborn woman weds rugged landed second son—goes off its rails. Here, as in *Orlando*, the Gypsy figure is associated with an escape not only from the restrictions imposed by society, but from gender itself; in dressing as a Gypsy *and* overturning gender, Rochester has imperiled the social mores that have operated to preserve Jane’s chastity. His performance as a female is tinged with eroticism, signaling as it does the breakdown of boundaries of propriety that dictated that a man should not be closeted alone with a woman, and, in so doing, suggesting the lesbian desire associated with the Gypsy trope that will be legible in *Orlando*. Thus, his cross-dressing both effaces his sexuality *and* enhances it, giving him access to Jane in an intimate, unchaperoned setting, as well as complicating the gender categories on which the economics of marriage depend.

In constructing Rochester as an ambiguously (or ambivalently) gendered Gypsy, Brontë deploys shades of Meg Merrilies:<sup>141</sup>

The library looked tranquil enough as I entered it, and the Sibyl—  
if Sibyl she were—was seated snugly enough in an easy chair at the  
chimney-corner. She had on a red cloak and a black bonnet: or  
rather, a broad-brimmed gipsy hat, tied down with a striped handker-

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<sup>141</sup>See Carol A. Bock, “Charlotte Brontë’s Storytellers: The Influence of Scott,” which, as the title suggests, makes the case for Scott’s influence on Brontë. Deborah Nord notes the “traces of Meg” in Rochester’s impersonation (*Gypsies* 14).

chief under her chin. An extinguished candle stood on the table: she was bending over the fire, and seemed reading in a little black book, like a prayer-book, by the light of the blaze....She shut her book and slowly looked up; her hat-brim partially shaded her face, yet I could see as she raised it, that it was a strange one. It looked all brown and black: elf-locks bristled out from beneath a white band which passed under her chin, and came half over her cheeks or rather jaws; her eye confronted me at once, with a bold and direct gaze (167).

Not only is Rochester's Gypsy more masculine than feminine, but he/she is similarly clad, and his/her illumination by firelight echoes that of Merrilies; note the similarities to Scott's description: "A female figure, dressed in a long cloak, sat on a stone by this miserable couch; her elbows rested upon her knees, and her face, averted from the light of an iron lamp placed beside her...." (144). More tellingly, Scott's later description of Merrilies' encounter evokes an even more striking allusion to Scott's Gypsy: "the spokes-woman [i.e., Merrilies] was very tall, had a voluminous handkerchief rolled round her head, her grizzled hair flowing in elf-locks from beneath it, a long red cloak, and a staff in her hand" (285). Not only does Jane's description specify that Rochester's cloak is, like Merrilies', red, but she remarks that "elf-locks bristled out from beneath a white band which passed under her chin" (167). The uses of the uncommon word "elf-locks"<sup>142</sup> and of the homonym-like "grizzled" and "bristled," plus the red cloak, hint that Brontë's Gypsy draws directly, if unconsciously, from the trope established by Scott.

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<sup>142</sup> The *OED* defines "Elf-lock" as a "tangled mass of hair, superstitiously attributed to the agency of elves, *esp.* Queen Mab: 'which it was not fortunate to disentangle' (Nares)."

Another description of Merrilies also parallels Brontë's:

At present, she stood by the window of the cottage, her person drawn up so as to shew to full advantage her masculine stature, and her head somewhat thrown back, that the large bonnet with which her face was shrouded, might not interrupt her steady gaze at Brown [Bertram]. At every gesture he made, and every tone he uttered, she seemed to give an almost imperceptible start. On his part, he was surprised to find that he could not look upon this singular figure without some emotion. "Have I dreamed of such a figure?" he [Brown/Bertram] said to himself, "or does this wild and singular-looking woman recall to my recollection some of the strange figures I have seen in an Indian pagoda?" (*Guy Mannering* 123).

Like that of Rochester's Gypsy, Merrilies' face is shrouded by a bonnet, and Brown/Bertram's sensation of dreaming seems of a piece with Jane's startled awakening from her encounter with the Gypsy/Rochester: "Where was I? Did I wake or sleep? Had I been dreaming? Did I dream still?" (172)

In arguing that Brontë has drawn from Meg Merrilies in her depiction of Rochester's Gypsy, a reasonable inference, given the similarities and the well-documented influence of Scott on her and her siblings, I am not trying to make a case for influence merely in terms of Brontë, but in terms of the entire century: it appears that "Meg-mania" resulted in some of Merrilies' attributes—her ambiguous gender, her portentousness, and her sublime largeness—becoming well-codified aspects of the increasingly romantic Gypsy trope. While as Trumpener has shown, Merrilies

herself is drawn from a variety of previously existing iterations of the Gypsy in the popular imagination, it is perhaps because of Merrilies' own characteristics that we later see the conflation of several important features—multivalent gender, and the ability to function in a narrative to subvert both property distribution and gender roles—that will become components of the Gypsy trope.

In another parallel between *Jane Eyre* and *Guy Mannering*, Brown/Bertram's shadowy recollection of Merrilies from his infancy is mirrored in Jane's recognition of the "Gypsy": "The old woman's voice had changed: her accent, her gesture, and all were familiar to me as my own face in a glass" (*Jane Eyre* 172).<sup>143</sup> Here, Jane's response to Rochester shows that she has identified him, despite his costume, but it also suggests that in a deeper sense, she has recognized the reflection of her own Gypsiness, presaged by the earlier references to "wandering." If at this point, Rochester's masquerade foregrounds Jane's own Gypsy qualities or even infuses her with more of them, it also foregrounds the novel's problems with gender roles. As Rochester transforms from his Gypsy costume back into his masculine self, for the time being, he is able to revert to the performance of masculinity, but he is doomed to "symbolic castration."<sup>144</sup> As he ceases to perform the Gypsy, Jane sees that his hand is "no more the withered limb of old than my own; it was a rounded supple member" (172), a description that foreshadows his later "mutilated" arm (367). Rochester may

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<sup>143</sup> Deborah Nord, too, notes "traces of Meg" in *Jane Eyre* (*Gypsies* 14).

<sup>144</sup> See Gilbert and Gubar, who suggest that after his injuries, Rochester is in fact more powerful than before, "paradoxically stronger" after being "freed from the burden of Thornfield" (368-9). I would argue, however, that first, he is forced into an extremely dependent relationship to Jane because of his wounds, and that second, the loss of an arm, especially one that has previously been described as a "rounded supple member," is quite close to being a literal, as opposed to symbolic, castration.

be able to shed the performance Gypsiness here, as well as of femininity, but the gender instability that his performance signals is not so easy to throw off.

Not only does Rochester's Gypsy signal the destabilization of the genders of those directly in contact with "her"—Jane and Rochester—but of other characters as well: Bertha and Richard Mason. Bertha is depicted in masculine terms: "She was a big woman, in stature almost equaling her husband, and corpulent besides" who shows "virile force" in her fight with Rochester: "more than once she almost throttled him, athletic as he was" (250). Gilbert and Gubar have argued that Bertha is Jane's double (360), but she is also the double of Rochester's Gypsy, a dark, "wild" figure whose lack of femininity represents a challenge to the gender roles of those around her. Indeed, Jane's description of Bertha echoes that of Rochester's Gypsy: "it [Bertha] was covered with clothing; and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face" (250). While Jane uses the term "bristled" in reference to Rochester's Gypsy's "elf-locks" (167), Scott uses "grizzled" to describe the elf-locks of Meg Merrilies (285). It is Bertha's "wild"-ness that has destroyed any possibility of conjugal happiness with Rochester and has caused him to seek a union with Jane that is distinctly outside social norms and the Victorian marriage plot.

While Rochester's Gypsy masquerade occurs at the moment in the novel when the marriage plots between him and Blanche Ingram as well as between him and Jane, begin to go awry, his Gypsy seems to act as a trigger for these complications, but in fact, a more literal cause is the arrival of Richard Mason, Bertha's brother, which is exactly concomitant with Rochester's prank. Mason's arrival is announced at the same time that Jane notes that there is a "gypsy camp"



pitched nearby (161). If Mason's sister is "virile," he seems weak and effeminate: Jane describes him as "fashionable-looking" (161), "polite" (162), and "smooth-skinned" (162). The other girls call him a "beautiful man," "a love of a creature" with "a pretty little mouth and nice nose" (162). Though he is handsome, he repels Jane "exceedingly" (162): he lacks "power," "firmness," and "command," and compared to Rochester, he is a "meek sheep" (162). Jane also describes Mason as "not precisely foreign, but still not altogether English": "his complexion was singularly sallow" (162). Though Gyatri Spivak calls Bertha Mason a "white Jamaican Creole" (247), there seems to be no reason to assume that the Masons are in fact white: they are both tinged with dark foreignness, and the term "sallow" implies brown or yellow skin (*OED*) evocative of hybridity. It is Mason who seems to emasculate Rochester: when Mason appears, Rochester tells Jane, "I've got a blow," to which Jane responds, "Lean on me" (173). If the Masons are not literally Gypsies, both possess signs of dark, wild Otherness, and both function in very literal ways to destabilize both gender and the marriage plot: at the critical moment, Mason turns up with a solicitor to call a halt to Rochester's intended marriage to Jane.

If Gypsies and Gypsy figures seem to complicate gender in both *Guy Mannering* and *Jane Eyre*, they also appear to have a destabilizing effect on property. In *Guy Mannering*, the Laird loses his estate and his heir as a result of what appears to be a form of the classic "Gypsy curse": in her famous (to Scott scholars) "ride your ways" speech, Merrilies appears to be putting a curse on the Laird: "This day have ye gowan—ride your ways, Godfrey Bertram!—This day have ye quenched seven smoking hearths—see if the fire in your ain parlour burn the blyther for that" (44).

Merrilies concludes with a seemingly ritual gesture: “So saying, she broke the sapling she held in her hand, and flung it into the road.” In an allusion that compares the Laird to Shakespeare’s Richard III, the narrator adds, “Margaret of Anjou, bestowing on her triumphant foes her keen-edged malediction, could not have turned from them with a gesture more proudly contemptuous” (44). While there is no comparable curse uttered during Rochester’s Gypsy masquerade, Merrilies’ breaking of the sapling recalls the blasting of the great horse chestnut tree by lightning (219) that follows hard upon Rochester’s proposal of marriage to Jane and seems to portend subsequent disasters, including Rochester’s own maiming by the fire that destroys his property (Gilbert and Gubar 369). In being “castrated,” Rochester comes to embody the masculine-femininity he initiated in his cross-dressing. At the same time, in inheriting property and then in becoming Rochester’s “vision” and “right hand” (384) after his injuries, Jane becomes simultaneously more feminine (the blue dress and “glittering ornament”) and more masculine. Her description of their relationship constructs their marriage as a hermaphrodite mingling of bodies: “No woman was ever nearer to her mate than I am; ever more absolutely bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh,” and in the next line, she compares their mutual society to their heartbeats, of which they could never tire (384). This perfect union anticipates *Orlando*, in which Orlando and Shelmerdine meet in a manner similar to Jane’s initial meeting with Rochester: Orlando is wandering on the moors, hurts her ankle, and is rescued by a man on horseback with whom she falls in love—shades of Jane and Rochester with the genders reversed (as genders so frequently are in *Orlando*: ‘You’re a woman, Shell!’ she cried. ‘You’re a man, Orlando!’ he cried” (252)). At the same time that

ambiguously gendered Gypsy figures appear in both *Jane Eyre* and *Orlando* as harbingers of the gender reversals of the characters and their consequent loss of property, they also portend love that derives its power from the complication of gender roles.

When Jane returns at the end of her period of nomadism, which has culminated in her inheriting twenty thousand pounds, enabling her to bring her wandering to an end, it is to discover that Rochester has lost *his* home: Thornfield is now “a blackened ruin” (361). Jane’s “progress” toward the “masculine” quality of property ownership is concomitant with Rochester’s “castration,” the assault on his masculine privilege which has quite literally destroyed his property (though not all of his capital: he is able to relocate to Ferndean). While he has been incapacitated by his accident, Jane revels in her newly acquired powers: “I am independent, sir, as well as rich,” she tells him (370). While success has made Jane practically giddy (374), Rochester is like a “lamp quenched, waiting to be relit.” “It was mournful indeed,” Jane says, “to witness the subjugation of that vigorous spirit to a corporeal infirmity,” and she adds, “the powerlessness of the strong man touched my heart to the quick (374). These terms—“subjugation,” “powerlessness”—suggest that as Rochester’s star has dimmed and Jane’s has risen, she has now assumed the dominant position in the relationship. If her earlier nomadism is both disempowering and liberating, at the novel’s conclusion, she is both masculinized *and* feminized, and her homelessness, and ergo, her “gipsying,” comes to an end: “We entered the wood, and wended homeward” (382). Although Rochester ultimately recovers part of his sight and presumably enough of his masculinity to father a child, in the end, gender and power

have become utterly unstable; nomadism has given way to property ownership—and vice versa, in the case of St. John Rivers, who wanders around India, waiting to be called home to death (385).

If Bertha Mason as “Jane’s truest and darkest double” (Gilbert and Gubar 360),<sup>145</sup> Rochester’s Gypsy is also Jane’s mirror image: in *Jane Eyre*, the true Gypsy-nomad is Jane, and while the faux-Gypsy acts as her *doppelgänger*, a harbinger or even catalyst of property redistribution (via its destruction), Jane is the itinerant whose appearance in the text destabilizes Rochester’s property, his landedness and his masculinity. Rochester’s iconic, benign Gypsy doubles Jane’s destabilizing effects on the text, her subversion of the marriage-plot and her “progress” toward a reversal of gender and capital that ultimately dispossesses and emasculates her suitor. Unlike in *Wuthering Heights*, where the Gypsy figure must be abjected, in *Jane Eyre*, Gypsiness is absorbed by the characters for long enough to break down the gender roles that have paralyzed them and to enable Jane and Rochester to achieve a multi-gendered commingling like that of Orlando and Shelmardine. At the novel’s end, once gender and economic issues have been negotiated, Jane is able to finally move toward “home,” giving up the nomadism that has animated her “progress”; her Gypsiness has served its purpose in renegotiating the boundaries of gender and property distribution, leading the narrative toward an unconventional heterosexual closure. In *Jane Eyre*, Gypsiness has functioned to reveal that the binaries that Victorian society took for granted—male/female, rich/poor, English/Gypsy—are, in

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<sup>145</sup> Gyatri Spivak has famously called attention to the equation of Bertha with the “animal” which “weaken[s] her [Bertha’s] entitlement under the spirit if not the letter of the Law” (803). Nord has noted Jane’s sense of kinship with both the “foreign” Bertha and with Rochester, and posits that “to be related to this gypsy, to Bertha, and to Rochester is to be released, if only partially and by association, from the strictures of female destiny and female plot” (“Marks” 197).

being performative, fundamentally unstable, a process that is further explored in *Villette*.

#### IV. "The Indolent Gipsy-giantess": Gypsies in *Villette*

While in *Jane Eyre* the performative qualities of gender are demonstrated by Rochester's cross dressing, in *Villette*, even more explicitly, gender's instability is repeatedly evidenced by its reliance on costume.<sup>146</sup> Like Jane's, *Villette*'s narrator Lucy Snowe's plainness seems to inhere in a simple wardrobe that places her in marked contrast to the ultra-feminine Ginevra Fanshawe, who inhabits the novel like Blanche Ingram run amok: "how pretty she was!" Lucy remarks. "How charming she looked, when she came down on a sunny Sunday morning, well-dressed and well-humoured, robed in pale lilac silk, and with her fair long curls reposing on her white shoulders" (149). Unlike Blanche, who is "dark as a Spaniard" (147), Ginevra is fair, light, and charming, able to exercise her self-professed coquetry in ways that Lucy (who seems even less attractive than Jane) can never hope to. While Jane emerges triumphant in the love triangle between Blanche and Rochester, Lucy is destined by her Jane-like plainness to failure with Dr. John; but like Blanche, Ginevra, too, ultimately fails, and it is doll-like Polly who prevails, as Lucy goes on to fight another triangular romantic battle for the heart of M. Paul Emmanuel. Both of Brontë's narrators are strikingly immune to the trappings of femininity and count on their

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<sup>146</sup> Robyn Warhol argues in "Double Gender and Double Genre in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*," "Lucy Snowe, as narrator and as character, is acutely aware of the ambiguities of gender in herself and in the characters who surround her," (869) and her "ambivalence about gender roles lends a doubleness to every aspect of her story, including the unresolved marriage-plot of the novel she is inhabiting" (870).

lovers to see through the frippery of gowns and curls into the true, and in an almost Woolfian sense, ungendered hearts of their companions.

The reliance of gender upon costume is hinted at in several key scenes. In Chapter Fourteen, Lucy is forced by M. Paul, whom she has thus far met only briefly, to take part in a “vaudeville” or school play in which she must play a man<sup>147</sup>: “It was a disagreeable part,—a man’s—an empty-headed fop’s. One could put into it neither heart nor soul: I hated it” (203). The play unwittingly enacts the triangle between Ginevra, Dr. John, and the less conventionally masculine man she prefers, de Hamal: “One lover was called the ‘Ours,’ [bear] a good and gallant but unpolished man, a sort of diamond in the rough; the other was a butterfly, a talker, and a traitor: and I was to be the butterfly, talker, and traitor” (203).<sup>148</sup> So she may rehearse, M. Paul locks Lucy in the attic, where she spends the day in fear of rats, of “the ghostly Nun of the garden,” and of beetles about which she “trembled lest they should steal on me a march, mount my throne unseen, and unsuspected, invade my skirts” (205), a description that suggests that the skirts themselves, i.e., female apparel, constitute a point of vulnerability to attack.

When M. Paul finally releases her, she finds Ginevra, “beautifully dressed for her part, and looking fascinatingly pretty,” and discovers that in contrast, Lucy must dress for her part “like a man” (207-8). Lucy refuses: “To be dressed like a man did not please, and would not suit me. I had consented to take a man’s name and part; as

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<sup>147</sup> Christina Crosby has read this scene, in which Lucy “plays the man to Ginevra” (707), as a “doubling” or mirroring between Lucy and de Hamal in which Lucy’s “masculine stance...display[s] a fascination with the ‘natural’ division of the sexes—and a repeated tendency to call this difference into question” (708).

<sup>148</sup>It would appear that what affronts Lucy here is not so much the gender of the part she must play as the character defects of the lover.

to his dress—*halte là!* No. I would keep my own dress; come what might. M. Paul might storm, might rage: I would keep my own dress” (208). This anxiety about her “dress” echoes her fear of the skirts being invaded by beetles and implies that for Lucy, acting in the play is a kind of invasion, but the challenge is not to her virginity but to her gender: without performative apparel, what is left of femaleness? M. Paul then negotiates a compromise with Lucy about the clothes. ““How must it be, then? How, accept a man’s part, and go on the stage dressed as a woman?...[C]ertain modifications I might sanction, yet something you must have to announce you as of the nobler sex” (208). These modifications consist of the addition of male garb that does not entirely occlude the female: “Retaining my woman’s garb without the slightest retrenchment, I merely assumed in addition, a little vest, a collar, and cravat, and a paletôt [short coat] of small dimensions” (209). When Zélie St. Pierre sneers at her, Lucy remarks, “I was irritable, because excited, and I could not help turning upon her and saying, that if she were not a lady and I a gentleman, I should feel disposed to call her out” (209); here, Lucy is being ironic, but it appears that she is taking her gender-bending seriously; while her “skirts” lead Lucy to anxiety about invasion by beetles, the addition of male costume causes her to declare herself (however sarcastically) a gentleman. Her performance is so convincing that Ginevra, who proves not surprisingly to be good at acting out a love triangle, is so transported by Lucy’s performance that “she once or twice threw a certain marked fondness, and pointed partiality into her manner towards me—the fop” (210). While this is meant to reveal that Ginevra’s preference is for the real fop, de Hamal, it also stages a kind of

lesbian or transgendered desire, indicating that all that is required to become the object of Ginevra's affections are a vest and cravat, i.e., performative maleness.<sup>149</sup>

In the sexually charged atmosphere evoked by the cross-dressing, Lucy is inspired by the gazes of Ginevra and Dr. John: she is "animated" by his "look" and "threw it into my wooing of Ginevra" (210). Like Rochester wooing Jane in the guise of a Gypsy, Lucy, too, woos as cross-dresser, comforting herself that while Dr. John is a pitiable "outcast," she, Lucy, despite being a fop, or perhaps because of it, "could please" (210). Lucy and Ginevra are so transported in their performance that M. Paul tells them "he knew not what possessed [them]"; "I know not what possessed me either," Lucy says; "but somehow, my longing was to eclipse the 'Ours,' i.e., Dr. John. Ginevra was tender; how could I be otherwise than chivalric?" (210). She opines, "Without heart, without interest, I could not play [the role] at all. It must be played—in went the yearned-for seasoning—thus flavoured, I played it with relish" (210). Male costume is central to this performance, in which Lucy uses terms redolent of desire ("longing," "yearned for") to depict her stage romance with Ginevra—and not surprisingly, Lucy concludes the next day that "I quite disapproved of these amateur performances; and...I took a firm resolution never to be drawn into a similar affair" (211).<sup>150</sup>

Another erotically charged site of gender instability in which costume is crucial is the art gallery scene in Chapter Nineteen, which has been read by numerous

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<sup>149</sup> Anita Levy calls Lucy a "transvestite" and calls attention to Marjorie Garber's discussion of cross-dressing that "not only confounds gender binarism, according to Garber, but most importantly, constitutes a 'mechanism of displacement from one blurred boundary to another'" (406). See also Ann Weinstone's "The Queerness of Lucy Snow."

<sup>150</sup> Gilbert and Gubar have noted that "Lucy makes the role her own. But at the same time she is liberated by the male garments that she does select, and in this respect she reminds us of all those women artists who signal their artistic independence by disguising themselves as men or, more frequently, by engaging in a transvestite parody of symbols of masculine authority" (413).



critics as significant, although it has no apparent bearing on the plot.<sup>151</sup> This episode contains an allusion to Gypsies so brief that it has escaped critical notice but whose significance becomes legible when read in conjunction with the Gypsy-cross-dressing of *Jane Eyre*. Two of the three times in which the term ‘gipsy’ appears in *Villette* are in the art gallery where Lucy examines a painting of Cleopatra and characterizes her as a “huge, dark-complexioned gipsy-queen” (276) and “indolent gipsy-giantess” (278). As in the scene in *Jane Eyre* in which Rochester dresses as a Gypsy,<sup>152</sup> the scene with the Cleopatra seems to function as a linchpin in the progression of gender disturbance mapped in *Villette*: in the art gallery, the hints of gender reversal that were manifested in the “vaudeville” become even more apparent, and as in *Jane Eyre*, this instability seems to be a function of the appearance of a Gypsy figure.

While it may seem odd that Lucy refers to Cleopatra as a Gypsy, there is a historical logic behind this conflation of Gypsies and the Egyptian queen, given that Gypsies were erroneously thought to have come from Egypt; Brontë’s description of Cleopatra as a Gypsy reveals an identification of Gypsies with a more literally Orientalized, highly eroticized Other. In *Cleopatra: Histories, Dreams, and Distortions*, Lucy Hughes-Hallett asserts that in general, the nineteenth century placed Cleopatra in the context of “the association of the Orient with sexual license” and characterized these Cleopatras as capable of “transcendent sexual pleasure”; “as sultry and ardent as the torrid countries they inhabit, [they] offer their men ineffable delights” (210). While Hughes-Hallett does not remark on any representations of

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<sup>151</sup> For example, Laura E. Ciolkowski notes that the scene “trouble[s] the most familiar and sacred of truths about gender, sexuality, and identity” (220); it “renegotiates prohibitions and transforms the disciplinary apparatuses of gender into imperfect structures that are riddled with holes” (222).

<sup>152</sup> Strangely, that scene also appears in the nineteenth chapter of that novel.

Cleopatra as a Gypsy, an association that would seem to be unique to Brontë, she does find that in the nineteenth century, the Egyptian queen is both exoticized and eroticized: “she reclines among cushions or on barges...waiting, like Asia, to be penetrated” (201). Her image constructs “a seductive fantasy of an Elsewhere characterized by luxury and limitless sexual opportunity” (201). In describing Cleopatra as a Gypsy, Brontë draws upon constructions of Gypsy society as an exotic “foreign country” in the midst of Britain, an “internal colony,” as Nancy Armstrong puts it (*Fiction* 184)<sup>153</sup>; this conflation of Gypsy and Egyptian firmly places the Gypsy within the larger trope of Orientalized Other.<sup>154</sup>

At the same time, this conflation enables Brontë to evoke the associations of the Gypsy trope as constructed by Scott: the Cleopatra manifests Meg Merrilies’ preternatural gender-bending largeness, and her effects on others signal the turn in the plot in which the male characters are progressively feminized, while the female narrator grows increasingly empowered with masculine privilege, a trajectory which, as in *Jane Eyre*, ends with the male’s emasculation (or, in the case of M. Paul Emmanuel, his destruction) and the assumption of property, however modest, by the female protagonist. Lucy observes not only the painting itself but the reactions of her fellow “worshipping connoisseurs” (275), whose gender is destabilized as they gaze on the painting. Like Rochester’s “Gypsy,” the Cleopatra marks a progression in

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<sup>153</sup> Armstrong examines the role of fiction in the “internal colonization” of Britain’s others, enabling readers to distinguish themselves from others as well as to “master” them, thus mastering “the same primitive element in themselves” (177). She calls attention to George Borrow’s treatment of Gypsies in *Lavengro* (1851) in which he depicts Britain as “a cultural landscape littered with a heterogeneous population of foreigners” (184).

<sup>154</sup> According to Michele Mancini, Gypsies themselves exploited their perceived Otherness: “Some element of exoticism, whether real or pretended, has been part of many Gypsies’ self-presentation since their early appearances in Europe” (108f).

which even more markedly than in *Jane Eyre*, the dissolution of Victorian binaries signals challenges to the conventional marriage plot: while for Jane, these challenges complicate the project of heterosexual closure, for Lucy, they are fatal to it.

The discomfort Lucy has already registered with eroticized challenges to gender is further evidenced in her reaction to the Cleopatra's sublime femininity: she immediately regards the painting with disapproval, describing it as "of pretentious size": "It represented a woman, considerably larger, I thought, than the life," she says, adding, "I calculated that this lady, put into a scale of magnitude suitable for the reception of a commodity of bulk, would infallibly turn from fourteen to sixteen stone" (275). Not only the size of the canvas but the fleshly vastness of Cleopatra's body seems to offend Lucy: "She was, indeed, extremely well fed: very much butcher's meat—to say nothing of bread, vegetables, and liquids—must she have consumed to attain that breadth and height, that wealth of muscle, the affluence of flesh" (275). This "affluence of flesh" is evidently the source of the Cleopatra's disturbing qualities; not only is her flesh abundant, but it is not properly covered: Cleopatra "ought to have worn decent garments; a gown covering her properly, which was not the case," and Lucy adds sourly that "out of abundance of material—seven and twenty yards, I should say, of drapery—she managed to make inefficient raiment" (275). The word "inefficient" implies that Lucy's disapproval stems from the profligate use of fabric; however, the word "decent" reveals her real concern.

As in the earlier scenes, if it is costume that establishes gender, as in the play with Ginevra, here Cleopatra's "inefficient" use of "drapery" not only fails to conceal her sexuality but it also fails to perform gender in the terms the novel has set forth.

Lucy advocates the use of fabric to conceal sexuality, much the way the Turkish trousers functioned for the Gypsies in *Orlando*, and her complaint is that despite the “abundance of material,” it does not do so; the combination of a blatantly erotic display of flesh at the same time that costume’s role in establishing gender is called into question creates a confusing object of desire, as in the play with Ginevra: Cleopatra, with her “affluence of flesh,” is both erotic *and* insufficiently gendered by clothing. Lucy reads Cleopatra as resolutely female and complains that in her indolence, she is not living up to the female role: “She lay half-reclined on a couch: why, it would be difficult to say;...she appeared in hearty health, strong enough to do the work of two plain cooks; she could not plead a weak spine; she ought to have been standing, or at least sitting bolt upright” (275). Here, perhaps, it is flesh, i.e., an absence of costume, that determines Cleopatra’s gender, and this may be part of the reason that she destabilizes the gender of the gazer: her flesh elicits desire, but clothing does not sufficiently perform her femininity, rendering the onlooker both sexually aroused and conflicted in terms gender.

Another function of this scene seems to be its establishment of more “doubles” for Lucy. As she continues to gaze at the painting, Lucy asserts that she has positioned herself in front of the Cleopatra because she wants to rest herself, not “with a view to studying this huge, dark-complexioned gipsy-queen” (276), but in fact, she *is* studying the painting; by examining what it is—sensual, sexual, slothful, and horizontal—she defines what she is not, as she does with all the other female characters in the novel. If throughout the novel, Lucy’s project appears to be to define herself in contradistinction to, or to other, as many people and groups of people as

possible, the art gallery accelerates this process, providing her with a group of different depictions of women in various iterations of the female role, all, it seems, but the role of “redundant woman” embodied by both Lucy and Jane Eyre. In gazing at the painting, Lucy is able to construct a clear distance between herself and Cleopatra on a variety of grounds: unlike small, increasingly gender-neutral, “plain” Lucy, Cleopatra is large, feminine (despite the absence of efficient raiment), fleshly, sensual, dark, *and* a “gipsy.” However, the term “queen” implies a sneaking admiration for Cleopatra’s excesses, much like the romantic idealization common to many Victorian representations of the Gypsy figure, and suggests that some kind of sympathy with Cleopatra underpins Lucy’s disapproval. Just as Kucich has described a dichotomy between “passion” and “reserve” that is problematized throughout *Villette*, so, here, the opposition between Lucy and the Cleopatra is complicated by these traces of grudging admiration. Like Vashti four chapters later, Cleopatra is an iconic female figure whose power causes Lucy to place herself in opposition to her while simultaneously revealing an appreciation for that power.<sup>155</sup>

One might assume that the problem with the Cleopatra painting is that in exposing Cleopatra’s “affluence of flesh,” it is indecent, as M. Paul Emmanuel’s reaction suggests: though he whisks Lucy away from it in a state of high dudgeon, he opines that it is “quite proper” for married women (“des dames”) to contemplate her (278), implying that the painting constitutes a threat to her chastity (as Rochester’s

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<sup>155</sup> In their discussion of this scene, Gilbert and Gubar assert that the painting of Cleopatra and those entitled “La vie d’une femme” “parody Lucy’s inner conflict between assertive sensuality and ascetic submission” (420-21). I would argue that Lucy’s experience of Cleopatra itself embodies this conflict, but that the conflict is more complicated than a simple binary opposition between these paintings: the difference between them is much less clear than Gilbert and Gubar suggest, and much closer to Kucich’s model of apparent oppositions that “mirror and echo” each other in “infinite play.”

Gypsy poses a threat to Jane's). Even more alarming to M. Paul are the multiple violations of gender norms that the Cleopatra presents. This disruption is registered when Emmanuel arrives and registers shock at Lucy's proximity to Cleopatra: "How dare you, a young person, sit coolly down, with the self-possession of a garçon, and look at *that* picture?"(277). Emmanuel's use of the term "garçon" suggests that the problem with the painting is that it has infused Lucy with a masculine "self-possession" (though it is juvenile: he does not say "*un homme*"). He questions not only the painting's appropriateness, but Lucy's assumption of a male prerogative in viewing it.

The disrupting effects of "the indolent gipsy-giantess" (278) on gender are further manifested by the appearance of Colonel de Hamal, who also gazes upon the painting. Previous references to de Hamal have indicated that while he is not explicitly feminine,<sup>156</sup> he is small and doll-like (like the ultra-feminine Polly), and in an earlier description of him, his gender appears, like Lucy's in the play, to be somewhat unstable, both propped up *and* undermined by his costume in much the way Lucy's was by her donning of a cravat in the play:

He was a straight-nosed, very correct-featured, little dandy. I say *little* dandy, though he was not beneath the middle standard in stature; but his lineaments were small, and so were his hands and feet; and he was pretty and smooth, and as trim as a doll: so nicely dressed, so nicely curled, so booted and gloved and cravated—he was charming indeed. (216)

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<sup>156</sup> Christina Crosby calls him "feminized" (708). Ruth Robbins refers to his "lack of mature masculinity" (219).

Despite the cravat, he is a pretty little male doll, “booted,” “curled,” and “gloved” like a woman. His rival, Dr. John, on the other hand, is described for the moment as purely and essentially masculine: “his uncovered head, his face and fine brow were most handsome and manly. *His* features were not delicate, not slight like those of a woman” (219; her italics).<sup>157</sup> It’s clear which of Ginevra’s suitors Lucy favors: she assures Ginevra that she likes de Hamal the way she likes “sweets, and jams, and comfits, and conservatory flowers” (217).

If he was foppish before, here, as de Hamal gazes at the Cleopatra, he appears wholly effeminized: Lucy describes his “head too pretty to belong to any other” and goes on to call it a “very finished, highly-polished little pate” (281). She rhapsodizes sardonically over him: “What a figure, so trim and natty! What womanish feet and hands! How daintily he held a glass to one of his optics! with what admiration he gazed upon the Cleopatra! and then, how engagingly he tittered and whispered [to] a friend at his elbow!” (281). This scene foreshadows de Hamal’s cross-dressing turn as the nun, whose gender is revealed to be as performative as the nun herself, who turns out to consist of nothing but a pile of castoff clothing that Lucy gleefully destroys.<sup>158</sup> The ease with which Lucy is able to dispose of the spectral nun’s identity again signals the overarching power of costume: here, as in *Jane Eyre*, cross-dressing has enabled a man to gain access to “*l’allée défendue*” (174) of female experience,

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<sup>157</sup> In the next chapter, Dr. John is positively revolted by being given a “lady’s head-dress,” a “blue and silver turban” that he holds “at arm’s length” and regards “with a mixture of reverence and embarrassment highly provocative of laughter” (300). While he may reject this garment and is on the verge of tossing it “on the ground beneath his feet,” it’s worth noting that even Dr. John is subject to challenges to gender post-Cleopatra. Robin Warhol notes that Lucy “refuses to trade her masculine door prize (a cigar case) for Dr. John’s feminine one (‘a lady’s head-dress’...)” (6).

<sup>158</sup> “I tore her up—the incubus! I held her on high—the goblin! I shook her loose—the mystery! And down she fell—down all around me—down in shreds and fragments—and I trode upon her” (569). Kathryn Bond Stockton refers to this scene as “the uncovering of de Hamal’s phallic farce” (160).

arguing that gender itself is ultimately a costume that can be shed and disposed of as handily as the nun's.<sup>159</sup> Lucy's assumption of the male prerogative in viewing the painting is much like cross-dressing; Cleopatra-as-Gypsy gives her access to discourses which she was formerly denied, like those Rochester acquires in *Jane Eyre* when his gender is reversed by Gypsiness. According to Emmanuel, Lucy should not "dare" to participate in a gazing that is the province of the male, yet she continues to do so.<sup>160</sup>

By invoking both male and female desire, the Cleopatra challenges the clearly delineated notions of gender that Emmanuel espouses. His desire to have Lucy don masculine attire for his little drama, preferring gender ambiguity to the lesbian desire that her playing the part as a woman would have evoked, implies that he, too, views gender as performative. Emmanuel's contribution to this scene is to attempt to designate which visual subjects are and are not proper for a woman and thus to enforce gender roles—a sensible impulse, given that it is the disruption of gender, in de Hamal's assumption of the nun costume, that lends the plot its "Gothic"

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<sup>159</sup> Calling attention to the "ambiguities of gender" that Lucy is aware of in herself and others, Robyn Warhol has noted other significant passages of the novel in which Lucy remarks on these moments of gender slippage, noting Lucy's description of Madame Beck, who "did not wear a woman's aspect, but rather a man's" (Brontë 141), and adding that Lucy "fantasizes that if she were herself a man, she would find Mme. Beck attractive" (Warhol 6). In discussing Lucy's reaction to the Cleopatra, Warhol asserts that Lucy does not identify with "the men who are looking at the paintings and telling her how to view them," nor does she align herself "with Dr. John's masculine view when he later judges Vashti's performance" (6). Warhol points to these "complications" of gender and asserts that they serve to "destabilize the fixity of Victorian gender roles" (6). In his chapter on *Villette* in *Caught in the Act*, Joseph Litvak reads "the novel's motif of female androgyny or transvestitism" as "not so much daringly iconoclastic as grimly expressive of the ambitious woman's confinement to male impersonation" (84-5).

<sup>160</sup> Hughes-Hallett reads this same unsettling of gender in other representations of Cleopatra: for example, she sees it as part of Cleopatra's effect on Anthony in Shakespeare's depiction of her: "In her realm, where everything shimmers and nothing is stable, masculine and feminine dissolve into each other" (145).



elements.<sup>161</sup> In acknowledgement of the Cleopatra's blatant and inappropriate sexuality, he leads Lucy to a "dull corner" where she is forced to contemplate the four "laid" paintings, "La vie d'une femme," obviously a more suitable subject for females. These linked paintings stand in marked contrast to the Cleopatra: their style is "flat, dead, pale, and formal" (277). Their flatness and paleness oppose the fleshly abundance and dark eroticism of the "gipsy-queen."<sup>162</sup> In its sublime sexuality, the Cleopatra functions as a crucial omission from the tableau, a missing fifth stage whose Gypsiness enables it to posit an alternative in which the restrictions of the female role are subverted.

The paintings in the tableau—"masterpieces," as Lucy sarcastically terms them—cannot hold Lucy's attention, and her gaze turns to the rest of the gallery, which is now crowded with onlookers who converge around the Cleopatra, including the "dames" upon whom M. Paul remarks. He himself "looked at the picture himself quite at his ease, and for a very long while," while continuing to monitor Lucy's gaze to make sure that she "was obeying orders, and not breaking bounds" (278) and characterizes Cleopatra as "un femme superbe," comparing her to Juno, but insists that Lucy must "not cast even one more glance in that direction" (English translation 608 fn.)<sup>163</sup> Here, M. Paul recognizes that it is the gaze itself that is dangerous; it subverts societal norms such as male authority, sexual taboos, and gender roles. In this scene, he takes it upon himself to enforce gender roles with Lucy, but this is a

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<sup>161</sup> Of course, Emmanuel does not appear to know this, but in an environment so rife with surveillance, one can never be sure.

<sup>162</sup> In her reading of Lucy Snow, Ann Weinstone writes that "queer Lucy presents the reader with a veritable portrait gallery of women who exhibit various degrees of masculinity and femininity and occupy diverse positions within the heterosexual matrix" (372) and says that "[e]ach portrait offered by Lucy emphasizes a different sexual relationship to men: the nun (celibate), the angel in the house (wife), and the vulgar seductress (whore) presented in a gallery painting of Cleopatra" (373).

<sup>163</sup> "Aussi vous ne jetez plus un seul coup d'oeil de sa côté" (280).

fruitless task: Lucy has already violated the rigid code governing the gaze, and indeed, does not conform to any of the options presented by “La vie d’une femme,” proclaiming them “As bad in their way as the indolent gipsy-giantess, the Cleopatra, in hers” (278). Lucy herself bemoans the lack of options presented by the four “Angeles,” terming them “grim and gray as burglars, and cold and vapid as ghosts” (278). This “ghost” of asexuality haunts the novel in the form of the nun, but while the nun appears to represent virginity and chastity, her costume is in fact the vehicle for Ginevra’s affair with de Hamal, and the final revelation of “her” identity reveals both performances as illusory.

Gypsies figures once again in the novel when Lucy uses costume to disguise herself in her nocturnal visit to the midsummer fair. It would be easy to read the chapters that contain this episode without noticing any allusion to Gypsies; indeed, the mention is fleeting, but comes at the height of one of the novel’s most significant scenes in which Lucy manages to escape from surveillance, a scene that, Joseph Litvak has remarked, “might almost be read as a symbolic encounter between the Bakhtinian carnival and the Foucauldian prison” (102).<sup>164</sup> Just as Rochester’s performance of Gypsiness enables him to enter a metaphorical *allée défendue*, Gypsy costume allows Lucy to gain entry into territory that is normally forbidden by her gender and class.

When Lucy enters the park, “with the suddenness of magic,” she finds herself “plunged amid a gay, living, joyous crowd” in which Villette is “one broad illumination” in which “moonlight and heaven are banished.” The effect is surreal

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<sup>164</sup> If, as Kate Millett has famously said, “*Villette* reads like one long meditation on a prison break” (262), the fair scene is the site of this break, Lucy’s “private apocalypse,” as Kathryn Bond Stockton terms it (156).

and denaturalizing: “I see even scores of masks,” Lucy says, and adds that it is “a strange scene, stranger than dreams” (549).<sup>165</sup> While Lucy herself does not literally wear a mask,<sup>166</sup> she has constructed a costume whose most functional component is a virtual mask with which to disguise herself and elude detection: her “straw-hat passed amidst cap and jacket, short petticoat, and long calico mantle, without, perhaps, attracting a glance,” so she is able to move freely in the crowd without being recognized. To render herself even less visible, she says, “I only took the precaution to bind down the broad leaf [of the hat] gipsy-wise, with a supplementary ribbon; and then I felt safe as if masked” (551). Here, as in *Jane Eyre*, Gypsy costume functions as a disguise that not only conceals Lucy’s identity but also contributes to the dissolution of social barriers, conferring invisibility upon her. Costume facilitates Lucy’s movement toward a Gypsy-like nomadism (much like that of Jane Eyre when she escapes from Thornfield) and empowers her to wander freely through the park: “Safe I passed down the avenues,” she says; “safe I mixed with the crowd where it was deepest” (551). In endowing her with invisibility, the Gypsy-hat functions much as the nun costume did for de Hamal, freeing her from the social controls of Madame Beck (who has attempted to drug her so she would not “escape” to the fair), and by extension, of Catholicism and the tight rein of Labassecourian society. In transcending the barriers of class, Lucy is no longer the object of the gaze, but the

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<sup>165</sup> Charlotte Brontë visited a carnival during her stay in Brussels, and while her description of it was far less enthralled than Lucy’s, she did mention masks in a letter to Ellen Nussey: “The carnival was nothing but masks and mum[m]ery—Mr Heger took me and one of the pupils into the town to see the masks—it was animating to see the immense crowds and the general gaiety—but the masks were nothing—” (Barker, *A Life* 112).

<sup>166</sup> In “The Face in the Mirror: *Villette* and the Conventions of Autobiography,” Janice Carlisle recounts an anecdote from Gaskell’s *Life* in which Patrick Brontë asked his children to put on a mask that he had on hand and then to “speak boldly from under the cover of that mask.” Carlisle sees this episode as one that “encouraged [Charlotte Brontë] to adopt subversive modes of self-expression” (264).

gazer: “I rather liked to find myself the silent, unknown, consequently unaccosted neighbor of the short petticoat and the sabot; and only the distant gazer at the silk robe, the velvet mantle, and the plumed chapeau” (552).

While Cleopatra is not specifically referenced in this scene, her exotic milieu is: here, as in Lucy’s description of the Cleopatra, the Egyptian and the Gypsy are conflated (as they are etymologically); the fair, too, is architecturally Egyptian, with a “wealth” of “altar and of temple, of pyramid, obelisk, and sphynx.” “Incredible to say,” Lucy says, “the wonders and symbols of Egypt teemed throughout the park of Villette” (550). It would be possible to read this Orientalized setting as facilitating the granting of sexual or gender license that Kathryn Stockton reads in the scene; certainly, it creates a kind of estrangement from the ordinary that invokes the carnivalesque.<sup>167</sup> In Bakhtinian terms, carnival signals “[t]he temporary suspension, both ideal and real, of hierarchical rank” (10) and of “certain norms and prohibitions of usual life” (Bakhtin 15).<sup>168</sup> The othering of the park’s familiar surroundings is mirrored in Lucy’s own othering: the carnival allows her to move beyond the class hierarchy that has tormented her, and outside the norms of her station and the confines of her own identity. As someone who is not Belgian, she is doubly exempted from normal social strictures: she is outside of the imperial celebration that commemorates “an awful crisis in the fate of Labassecour” (550).

The sedative that Lucy has been given seems to render everything dreamlike, but her perspective is made more surreal by her apparent invisibility. She is propelled

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<sup>167</sup> Michele Mancini notes, “That eighteenth and nineteenth-century writings about gypsies were Orientalizing and Orientalist was the unanimous indictment handed down by a special session at the 1997 Modern Language association” (49).

<sup>168</sup> Stallybrass and White have traced the connection between the carnival or fair and representations of the “low-Other.”

by the crowd to an exoticizing “Byzantine building,” where she joins the “outer ranks of the crowd,” i.e., “citizens, plebeians, and police” (552), to a concert where she is then conducted to a seat directly behind the Brettons and the Bassompierres. The Egyptian/Byzantine setting, mingled with the drug, perform a kind of estrangement on the town of Villette; similarly, Lucy’s “gipsy-wise” disguise estranges her as object of the gaze, so that even her close associates don’t recognize her, though it appears that Dr. John has some unconscious inkling that he knows her. Her fear of being recognized leads her to wander through the park, and her disguise enables her to function as an invisible nomad with a panoramic, almost panoptic, view of the fair’s congregants.<sup>169</sup> When she finds Madame Beck, Madame Walravens, and Père Silas, she terms them “the whole conjuration, the secret junta” (558). While “conjuration” is another word for “conspiracy,” it also has connotations of magic;<sup>170</sup> perhaps the implication here is that in acquiring a “gipsy-wise” identity, Lucy has somehow conjured this whole scene into being.

If Lucy’s previous experience with Gypsiness appears to have destabilized her gender, here, in Kathryn Stockton’s reading, Lucy must enter into the carnivalesque through distinctly female means: as Lucy attempts to enter the park, she discovers that the gates are shut. However, she is able to gain access through “a gap in the paling” (547) that Stockton terms “an (Irigarayan) slit” (156), a “*narrow, irregular*

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<sup>169</sup> See Joseph Boone, “Depolicing *Villette*,” for a discussion of the Panopticon in *Villette*.

<sup>170</sup> *OED* lists alternative definitions as “a magic spell, incantation, or charm” and “performance of magical art or sleight of hand; conjuring” (*OED Online*). According to Mayall, “The belief that Gypsy women possessed magical powers which enabled them to see the future was common among the superstitious of all classes. The impression was further enhanced if the Gypsy, dressed for the part by wearing colourful headscarves and drooping earrings, was old, ugly and with the appearance of a ‘wild-eyed hag’”(49-50).

*aperture* visible between the stems of the lindens” (Stockton’s emphasis, 156).

Stockton goes on to say,

That Lucy claimed this “gap” for herself, on behalf of her desire, may be further implied by her observation that “a man could not have made his way through that aperture, nor could a stout woman, perhaps not Madame Beck; but I thought I might: I fancied I should like to try, and once within, at this hour the whole park would be mine—the moonlight, midnight park!” (qtd. in Stockton 156)

While I am not persuaded by Stockton’s reading of this scene as Lucy’s “intent pursuit of self-sexual pleasure” (158), her emphasis on the gendered nature of this scene is significant. Although throughout the novel, gender has appeared to be fluid and perhaps even arbitrary, in Lucy’s description of her access to the park, it appears to be essentialized; upon actually entering the park, however, she is able to assume the disguise that liberates her from her previous captivity: she is freed from the confines of Madame Beck and the Pensionnat; from class; and from visibility. If, per Stockton, the entrance to the park is explicitly female, once she is in the park, Lucy’s adoption of Gypsiness performs the same kind of operation on gender as it did earlier: while perhaps not rendering it unstable, her disguise renders gender irrelevant, as it releases her from the rigid expectations she faced as a middle-class female. Her panoramic view in the fair chapters is a direct reversal of the perspective of the earlier stages of the novel, in which she is constantly spied on and thereby oppressed. Now, suddenly, having donned her “gipsy-wise” costume, she is the one performing surveillance.

In describing Cleopatra as a Gypsy, Lucy does not overtly identify with her, but continues to regard her as a “dark other.”<sup>171</sup> However, in the fair chapters, when Lucy’s escape is perpetrated by her Gypsy disguise, rather than regarding the dark other with an element of repulsion, as she does the Cleopatra, and as Jane Eyre does Bertha Mason, Lucy constructs herself as a “low-Other” figure whose gender and class are indeterminate.<sup>172</sup> Throughout *Villette*, Lucy continually defines herself in terms of what she is not: she is not Labassecourian, not Catholic, not upper-class, not young and beautiful, not Cleopatra, not Vashti, not sexual, not asexual, not entirely gendered, not entirely ungendered: but she is, ultimately, like Jane Eyre, a nomad whose Gypsiness enables her to wander freely through a foreign country, internally colonized, never assimilated, a perpetual foreigner even among her own kind—all qualities of the trope, in which Gypsiness confers exemption from the many anxieties of modern life, not just from “the lapse of hours [that] wears out the life of mortal men” as for Matthew Arnold (151, ll. 141-2) but from the confines of class, gender, and surveillance. *Villette*, like *Jane Eyre*, conflates Gypsiness and performative gender and reveals that the social categories on which Victorian British and “Labassecourian” society depend are fundamentally unstable. Both Rochester’s “Gypsy” in *Jane Eyre* and Lucy’s in *Villette* are, like de Hamal’s nun, disguises—they are fluid identities, costumes that can be put on and taken off. This kind of performance has traditionally been associated with Gypsies: according to Mayall, the

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<sup>171</sup> As such, she appears to be perpetuating the “axioms of imperialism” that Gayatri Spivak complains of in *Jane Eyre* in “Three Women’s Texts and a Critique of Imperialism” (798).

<sup>172</sup> Susan Meyer argues that the fiction of Brontë, as well as that of other nineteenth-century female novelists, “reveals that their gender (and in some cases, class) positioning produced a complex and ambivalent relation to the ideology of imperialist domination, rather than an easy and straightforward one” such as Spivak suggests (11).

stereotypes surrounding Gypsies were inseparable from representations of their physical appearance; traditionally, Gypsies were associated with “showy and colourful” dress, “with headscarves, trinkets, and droopy earrings in abundance” (*Gypsy-Travellers* 75-6), much like Rochester’s disguise.<sup>173</sup> Both Lucy Snowe and Jane Eyre are prisoners of not only gender but class, with few options available to them, but due to performative Gypsiness, both are able to move beyond gender to experience forms of empowerment. In *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, Jane and Lucy are the true Gypsy figures who function in those texts to destabilize gender: nomads without home or “connections,” they both enact a progression from “redundant” femininity to the masculine assumption of property that is concomitant with the destruction of their suitors. Like Jane, Lucy ends up with a home of her own, thanks to M. Paul, whose death at sea presumably does not disturb Lucy’s progress toward geographical stability, if not a true rootedness (after all, she, unlike Jane, is still both “redundant” and a foreigner). Perhaps more powerfully than any other “double” figure in both novels, it is the Gypsy trope that lays bare the disguise-like nature of gender.

V. “A Gypsy or Make-shift Life”: Gypsies in North and South

In the first chapter of Elizabeth Gaskell’s *North and South* (1854), protagonist Margaret Hale’s cousin Edith is contemplating an imminent move to Corfu. While Edith “would have preferred a good house in Belgravia to all the picturesqueness of the life which Captain Lennox [Edith’s fiancé] described at Corfu,” Margaret’s

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<sup>173</sup> Mancini reads Arnold’s “The Scholar-gypsy” similarly in terms of material “signifiers of gypsy presence...and their ineffable referent” and notes that “this gap in registers... will be a trouble for other writers more explicitly concerned with actual gypsy subjects” (4).



response to these descriptions is to “glow as she listened” (9). The contrast between the two women, reminiscent of the light/dark dichotomies of *The Woman in White*, *The Mill on the Floss*, and *Villette*,<sup>174</sup> in which Gypsiness is associated with darkness, is highlighted by the difference in their reactions: while Margaret is intrigued by the idea of foreign travel, for Edith, “a gipsy or make-shift life was really distasteful to her” (9). Here, “gipsy” is being used in its adjectival sense of “Resembling what is customary among or characteristic of gipsies” (*OED*), and suggests that what is Gypsy-like about life in Corfu is its exoticism as well as the more general transience and itinerancy of living at an overseas post. Margaret’s “glow” implies that exotic itinerancy would appeal to her, an impression that is enhanced by her subsequent attraction to a pile of “Indian shawls,” which she carries to her aunt, while “snuffing up their spicy Eastern smell” (11);<sup>175</sup> as in *Villette*, costume appears here to perform if not explicit Gypsiness, at least a hint of Orientalism.

And as in *Villette*, this first passing reference to Gypsies appears at first glance to be inconsequential; however, its appearance in the novel’s opening signals the beginning of its examination of “gipsy-like or makeshift life” that begins with Edith’s relocation and continues throughout Margaret’s peregrinations.<sup>176</sup> At the novel’s outset, both cousins are propelled into itinerancy, Edith by her marriage to a military man and Margaret by her father’s relocation from the idyllic southern village of

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<sup>174</sup> See Jeanne Fahnestock’s “The Heroine of Irregular Features” for a discussion of Margaret’s physiognomy.

<sup>175</sup> She then “stand[s] as a sort of figure on which to display them,” a posture that foreshadows her later protective embrace of the factory owner Mr. Thornton during the strike (11). Barbara Leah Harman reads this public appearance in terms of sexuality, as indeed does Thornton.

<sup>176</sup> Both Catherine Gallagher and Deirdre David have offered compelling readings of *North and South* in terms of a schism between the public and the personal. I would suggest that the novel’s dichotomy between itinerancy and stability is somewhat analogous, representing the outer world of travel vs. the inner world of a “good house in Belgravia.”

Helstone to the industrial northern city of Milton (modeled on Gaskell's adopted home of Manchester). In a novel whose title indicates that it is replete with binaries, the contrast between these two locales is the central axis, as Margaret comes to appreciate the qualities of the north and to see for the first time the defects of the south. Like Jane Eyre's and Lucy Snowe's, Margaret's trajectory is a journey from nomadism to a home: in *North and South*'s rather abrupt ending, she has committed to marriage with the factory owner (and now her tenant), Mr. Thornton, and thus to settling permanently in Milton. In the course of her "make-shift" and thus "gipsy" life, Margaret's unconventionality presents multiple challenges to social norms, and the term "gipsy" is a signal of her own "gender heterodoxy," to borrow Nord's term, which will result in the reversal of gender roles and property distribution with which the novel concludes.

That Gypsies may have been associated with challenges to gender for Gaskell is revealed by a reference in one of her letters in which she remarks, "Nature intended me for a gypsy-bachelor; that *I* am sure of. Not an old maid for they are particular & fidgety; and tidy, and punctual,—but a gypsy-bachelor" (qtd. in Bonaparte 218). Felicia Bonaparte has read this phrase as sufficiently significant to have used it in the title of her biography of Gaskell, and she points out that Gaskell's words "utterly annihilate the whole of 'Mrs. Gaskell's' existence. A bachelor does not have a family. A gypsy does not have a home....The image even changes her gender, for a bachelor is male" (218). This quote suggests that for Gaskell, a "gipsy" life contains an inherent implication of gender instability.

In *North and South*, as the Hales enter into itinerancy (since neither Margaret nor her parents regard Milton as home, and Margaret's brother Frederick is in exile to avoid criminal prosecution), their genders are continually rendered unstable. Mrs. Hale, like her niece Edith, is ultra-feminine, but in a childish register that disrupts her womanhood, as she is infantilized first by her unhappiness and later by her illness. Mr. Hale is repeatedly described in overtly female terms:<sup>177</sup> his eyes have "a peculiar languid beauty which is almost feminine" (81); when Mrs. Hale dies, he makes "a kind of soft inarticulate noise, like that of some mother-animal caressing her young" (246); Hale's friends in Oxford "[take] him to their hearts, with something of the protecting kindness which they would have shown to a woman" (340). During Thornton's financial collapse toward the novel's end, Higgins, the factory worker, remarks of Hale, now deceased, "Th' ou'd parson would ha' fretted his woman's heart out, if he'd seen the woeful looks I have seen on our measter's face" (411). Because Hale's femininity generally takes the form of weakness and emotionalism that require "protecting kindness," Margaret is continually placed in the position of ministering to him and doing the presumably male tasks: for example, when Margaret writes to her exiled brother Frederick to ask him to visit their dying mother, Hale remarks, "I'm glad it is done, though I durst not have done it myself" (203).

If Gypsiness is a trait that feminizes, androgynizes, or even kills and maims men,<sup>178</sup> as in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, it makes sense that Hale himself is feminized and then dies, since it is his decision that sets the family's nomadism into motion (though

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<sup>177</sup> The footnotes to the Penguin edition note multiple references to Hale's "femininity" (431).

<sup>178</sup> Nord argues that "The Gypsy, imagined as an itinerant outside the economic and social structures of British life, becomes a trope for nonproductive work, refusal of ambition, and the delicacy and softness—the implied effeminacy—of the unsalaried and unharnessed male" (*Gypsies* 14).

arguably, Margaret has been a nomad since her childhood, in which she was sent to London to live with her aunt and cousin). He is unable to support the family adequately, either with his earnings or with capital: when he makes the decision to move to Milton, Margaret asks him about his finances, and he says, "I suppose we have about a hundred and seventy pounds a year of our own," and that "Seventy of that has always gone to Frederick" (39). That this is a pittance is attested to by the fact that later, Mr. Bell insists on paying 250 a year to Edith's family for Margaret's room and board. Mr. Hale justifies the move to Milton by saying, "Because there I can earn bread for my family" (38), a presumably masculine impulse, albeit one that seems to pose a challenge to Margaret's dislike of people who are "shoppy" (20). The "bread" Hale earns is not enough to garner him or his family the social status of either the Shaw/Lennox household or the shoppy Thorntons, and his trade as a tutor places him in much the same position as a "redundant" woman such as Jane Eyre. It is his decision to adopt a "gipsy" life by giving up his living as a vicar that sets the family's socioeconomic decline into motion.

In contrast to the feminized Hale is the somewhat clumsily masculine Mr. Thornton, who is initially described by Margaret as "a tall, broad-shouldered man" who is "not quite a gentleman"; however, she says, "With such an expression of resolution and power, no face, however plain in feature, could be either vulgar or common," adding, with a dig at his shoppy-ness, that he is "sagacious and strong, as becomes a great tradesman" (65). At their first meeting, she is still wearing a marker of Gypsiness, "a large Indian shawl, which hung about her in long heavy folds, and which she wore as an empress wears her drapery" (62-3). Perhaps because of the

shawl, although “Mr. Thornton was in habits of authority himself,” Margaret “seemed to assume some kind of rule over him at once” (63), a reversal that prefigures their relationship at the time of the strike. As Thornton hides in his house while waiting for the soldiers to come subdue the strikers, Margaret blasts Mr. Thornton in terms that seem to question his masculinity: “‘Mr. Thornton,’ said Margaret, shaking all over with her passion, ‘go down this instant, if you are not a coward. Go down and face them [the strikers] like a man....If you have any courage or noble quality in you, go out and speak to them, man to man’” (175). While Thornton takes up this challenge, it is up to Margaret to save him, a process that begins with her tearing her bonnet off, i.e., stripping herself of a conspicuous feminine marker, and then, as the mob prepares to hurl their “heavy wooden clogs” at Thornton, she throws her arms around him, making “her body a shield from the fierce people beyond” (177), ignoring Thornton’s remonstrances. However, the narrator observes, “If she thought her sex would be a protection...she was wrong,” and she is hit by a rock (177). Not only is Margaret’s sex not a protection, but it has been complicated both by the jettisoning of her bonnet and by her chivalrous posture with Thornton which depicts her as rescuer and protector and him as helpless victim.

By the novel’s end, the powerful Mr. Thornton has been reduced to financial ruin—redundancy—and is being comforted by his somewhat masculine mother,<sup>179</sup> to who he cries, “Help me, as you helped me when I was a child” (414). Happily for Thornton, Margaret discovers his impending failure and rescues him much as she did during the strike, though this time, the rescue is economic. It is Edith who informs

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<sup>179</sup> At the time of the strike, Thornton’s sister Fanny starts at the sight of their mother and says, “Oh, mamma, how you terrified me! I thought you were a man that had got into the house” (180). Thornton himself calls her “a woman of strong power, and firm resolve” (85).

Margaret of Thornton's ruin—"Oh! He's failed, or something of the kind"—and then, in a remark that mirrors their discussion of "gipsy life" in the novel's opening, she adds, "I wish I was as tall as a queen, and as brown as a gipsy, Margaret" (417).

While a bit ambiguously worded, it appears that she is describing Margaret here, and like Thornton, conflating Gypsiness (the Indian shawl) with queenliness ("empress").

It is this Gypsy/Empress quality that gives Margaret the androgynous power to reverse both gender and economic roles in her relationship with Thornton and to thus bring about an unconventional culmination of the marriage plot.

While as in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, the female heroine in *North and South* is an itinerant with Gypsy-like qualities, there is still another nomadic figure who destabilizes the novel's social norms: Margaret's brother Frederick, who haunts the novel like Heathcliff in reverse. It is his absence that creates chaos for the Hale family in multiple registers: not only is his enforced exile a drain on their finances, as noted above, but it is his visit to see the dying Mrs. Hale that throws a wrench into the relationship between Margaret and Thornton and delays their union. More significantly, by forcing Margaret to lie to the police to cover the fact of his visit, he has compromised the Victorian ideal of woman as moral agent, an ethical position that Margaret is thus unable to occupy, despite the many other aspects of this function that she performs, such as visiting the poor or remonstrating with the strikers. Margaret herself refers to her protection of Thornton as doing "a woman's work," though she also asks herself, "what possessed me to defend that man as if he were a helpless child?" (188), acknowledging that some kind of role reversal has gone on.

Of all the Hales, it is Frederick who is arguably the most itinerant, since he has traveled the world in the navy, as well as while fleeing prosecution, and is now exiled in Spain. It is worth noting that since the publication of George Borrow's *The Zincali* in 1841, Spain was a place that was associated with Gypsies in the popular imagination; in any case, Spain was certainly redolent of the kind of exoticism manifested by the Indian shawls. When Frederick finally arrives in Milton, he is described with one of the qualities frequently associated with Gypsies: "swarthinness" (243). In Frederick, as in the other characters, gender appears complicated, and it is only this quality that saves him from femininity: "He had delicate features, redeemed from effeminacy by the swarthinness of his complexion, and his quick intensity of expression" (243). The impression of Gypsiness is enhanced by the "latent passion" of his facial expression: not one of "doggedness" or "vindictiveness," it is "instantaneous ferocity of expression that comes over the countenances of all natives of wild or southern countries" (243). In terms of the novel's treatment of physiognomy, Frederick has gone native, so to speak, and his "wild" expression betokens "gipsy-like" qualities that compromise not only his gender but the socioeconomic positions of his entire family.<sup>180</sup>

At the heart of the destabilization of property in *North and South*, in which the roles of landlord and tenant, dowered bride and bridegroom, are upended, are the continual complications of the genders of the characters. The implication appears to be that conventional gender can only inhere when property ownership creates

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<sup>180</sup> Like everyone else in Margaret's orbit, he is also infantilized; as his dying mother holds his hand, "Margaret had to feed him like a baby, rather than that he should disturb her mother by removing a finger" (244).

socioeconomic stability; once property has been detached from class (for Hale's social status was derived from his being a vicar, which comes with a "living" but not ownership of property), and class has been complicated by possibilities of upward mobility, as evidenced by Thornton's ambiguous class status, gender no longer functions as it ought to but becomes "makeshift," "gipsy"-like, and everything is subject to what Margaret terms a "slight, all-pervading instability" (390) much like the insecurity of fortunes such as Thornton's evidenced by Chapter L.'s nursery-rhyme epigraph, "Here we go up, up, up;/And here we go down, down, downee" (407).

*North and South* offers one additional link between Gypsies, property, and the complication of the novel's binaries when Margaret comes to the conclusion that her nostalgia for Helstone, i.e., the south, has been a trifle misplaced. When Margaret returns to her home town for a visit with Mr. Bell, she finds things altered in small but alarming ways, which causes Bell to comment, "The instability of all human things is familiar to me, to you it is new and oppressive" (379). When she goes to see her friend "little Susan," she finds that Susan has gone to school. Margaret inquires of Susan's mother about "old Betty Barnes" and is told, "I don't know... We're not friends" (380). Margaret asks why not and is told a gruesome story: evidently, Betty Barnes had lent her husband's clothes to a "gypsy fortune-teller" who had promised to return them but had not; to retrieve them, Barnes had attempted to enlist the "powers of darkness" in their retrieval by roasting Susan's mother's cat.<sup>181</sup> Margaret

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<sup>181</sup> A somewhat similar story, reported in the *Preston Guardian* in 1889, is noted by Behlmer in which a "Gypsy fortune teller" extracted a dress, a ring, and two shillings in return for "warding off bad luck" (234). Madame Flora, a "psychic" on Route One in College Park, Maryland, once made me an offer like this.



is sickened by this tale, in which whatever barbarous, pagan qualities that might be traditionally associated with Gypsies pale in comparison to those of Helstone's peasantry who, unlike the workers of Darkshire, no longer strike her as particularly noble. Her horror at this story, and at the changes wrought upon Helstone in her absence, causes her to reflect on the mutable nature of existence, concluding that while heaven may be "everlasting," "If the world stood still, it would retrograde and become corrupt" and concludes that "the progress all around me [with which Milton and its industrialization are identified] is right and necessary" (390-1). The stagnant primitivism of the fate of Susan's mother's cat is regarded in contrast with the modernity of Milton, and the instability that inheres in the latter, with its socioeconomic vicissitudes, is something Margaret now comes to accept, which ultimately paves the way for her marriage to Thornton. In this instance, then, a Gypsy has not only facilitated the destabilization of the central binary of North vs. South, but has caused Margaret to embrace—quite literally, in the person of Mr. Thornton—the uncertainty that comes with the destabilization of binaries.

But if Margaret rejects the literal Gypsy, as well as her barbarous victim, in adopting not only a "gipsy" life but also the marker of otherness represented by the shawl, and by her embrace of her "wild" brother Frederick, she has become infused with a Gypsiness that first acts to destabilize all the social norms of her environment—gender, class, property, and place—and then ultimately gives her the power to assume a masculine, propertied role. If the boundaries of binary gender are problematized in the novels this chapter has examined, the boundaries between Gypsy and non-Gypsy are equally complicated.

For Woolf, Brontë, and Gaskell, the Gypsy trope as defined by Scott and others represents a ready-made challenge to the nineteenth-century project of disciplining gender and sexuality with which Woolf, in reacting against her Victorian predecessors, explicitly grapples. In using this trope, all three writers are drawing from the multiple possibilities opened up by the indeterminacy of Gypsy identity and its analogies to gender that Scott's *Guy Mannering* consolidates in Meg Merrilies, and it is Gypsies' inherent semantic ambiguity that helps enable the dislocation of social mores and the deconstruction of accepted notions of gender and sexuality, and ultimately, of race, class, and empire, when they enter a text. This ambiguity underpins the complex relationship between the reversals of gender and the vicissitudes of property distribution in *Jane Eyre*, *Villette*, and *North and South*, as Jane, Lucy, and Margaret all display "gender heterodoxy" and then become nomadic—Gypsy-like—coming into property at the expense of the men in their lives.<sup>182</sup> All three novels end with a marriage, as is conventional, but these marriages are all unconventional: in *Jane Eyre*, the gender roles of the conventional marriage plot have given way to a more androgynous relationship; in *Villette*, the marriage is between Lucy and M. Paul's property, suggesting that as in *Guy Mannering*, an end to Gypsy nomadism facilitates the rightful distribution of capital; and in *North and South*, Margaret has assumed the masculine role of property owner and has rescued the "redundant" man.

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<sup>182</sup> Though it can be argued that unlike Jane's uncle, M. Paul does not have to die in order for Lucy to acquire property, in Margaret's case, her inheritance is purely the result of Mr. Bell's death.

While Woolf's depiction of Gypsies' destabilizing effects on gender appears to draw from the aspects of the trope examined here, it differs greatly in terms of their association with sexuality: whereas the power of the 'gipsy-giantess' in *Villette* resides in her palpable eroticism, in *Orlando*, there is nothing remotely sexual about Orlando's associations with the Gypsies. Although she is a woman alone, the only threat they appear to pose to her is to her life, not to her 'chastity',<sup>183</sup> and while she considers marrying and settling among them, she is forced to abandon this idea because of her philosophical differences with them, so there is never any possibility of sexual relations between them. Indeed, Orlando's stay with the Gypsies appears to offer her a respite not just from gender, but from sexuality. While Orlando's life as a man has been filled with women who were said to be 'dying for love' of him, as well as with 'passionate embraces' from mysterious women, and her life as a woman is replete with flirtatious sailors and persistent suitors, her time with the Gypsies presents her with no opportunities for similar liaisons. Here Woolf, unlike Brontë, works against the traditional stereotype of Gypsies as 'free-living and free-loving'; in fact, they seem to be asexual, as if the lack of significant gender difference that Orlando notes is an impediment to their sexuality. While gender for Woolf is a performance, it is one that is essential to eroticism. The next chapter will consider the functions of Gypsies who act to destabilize sexual mores in texts.

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<sup>183</sup> This is a ludicrous concept for someone who has been having sexual dalliances for several hundred years.

## Chapter Three: Gypsies and Desire

From nowhere, through a caravan, around a campfire light  
A lovely woman in motion with hair as dark as night...  
She was a gypsy woman....  
--"Gypsy Woman," Curtis Mayfield (1961)

### I. "Rogues and Trollops": The Gypsy as Erotic Trope

In his article on the founding of the Gypsy Lore Society,<sup>184</sup> "A Rum Lot," Angus Fraser traces the romantic antics of Gypsyologist Francis Hinde Groome, author of the 1899 *Gypsy Folk Tales* and one of the Society's founders. Groome, whom Fraser terms "a drop-out before the term had been invented"(4), first ran away with and later wedded one Gypsy woman, Britannia Lee, and then, more famously, eloped with another, Esmeralda Lock, the young "Gypsy bride" of a fellow Gypsyologist. Groome proved "unable to obtain employment, even as a waiter," and Esmeralda was forced to "[keep] the pot boiling by singing and dancing," but fortunately for the couple, Groome's father intervened, getting his wayward son a job producing reference books, as well as "those books of his [on Gypsies] which remain classics in the literature"(5). Fraser does not mention what became of Esmeralda, but Deborah Nord, in her chapter on the Gypsyologists in *Gypsies and the British Imagination*, points to Esmeralda as an example of "nineteenth-century figures [who] became the signifiers of Gypsy femininity—exotic, musical, sexually desirable, and stunningly beautiful" (144). Nord notes that Groome's "wife" "assumed legendary status among both lorists and the public," and that Dante Gabriel Rossetti often

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<sup>184</sup> The official date of its founding is 1888, but Fraser traces its germination to 1874 when Charles Leland proposed the creation of "a periodical devoted to Gypsy affairs" (1).

depicted her “as a dancing Gypsy girl,” merging “the eroticized Gypsy woman” with “the lush beauty of Pre-Raphaelite iconography” (144).

Although the early Gypsiologists’ mission was ostensibly to discover and record accurate information about the Romani people and, presumably, to thus mitigate their otherness, in fact, the Lorists’ personal lives suggest that for at least some of them, Gypsies represented objects of erotic desire in much the same way they did for the less-informed general population, for whom the exotic Gypsy embodied a dark, brooding sexuality:

Throughout Europe, the Gypsy woman is presented as sensual, sexually provocative, and enticing. In England a stereotype of the Spanish Gypsy is often thought to be typical and is so depicted in popular paintings....She is thought to be sexually available and promiscuous in her affections....The Gypsy women especially have been the objects of the dominant society’s exotic and erotic projections and disorders. (Okely 201-2)

The Gypsylorists appear to have fallen prey to the very stereotypes they ostensibly combated, deserting wives and families for seductive women and freewheeling Gypsy-like lifestyles. While even their detractors agree that they had the best of intentions towards the objects of their study, the rather dodgy story of Groome and his wives indicates that however scholarly the Lorists’ methods, perhaps their scholarship, too, was a quest for objects of erotic desire that enhanced popular stereotypes instead of correcting them. Certainly, most historians agree that all the pseudo-scientificism of Gypsylorism could not conceal a fundamental lack of

academic rigor: David Mayall calls attention to their pursuit of scholarly legitimacy but notes that “[s]uch labels as ‘Gypsy studies’ and ‘Gypsiologists’ serve the purpose of conveying a degree of academic respectability and purpose to an area which has largely operated on the fringes of mainstream academic activity” (*Gypsy Identities* 23). Fraser adds that “it has to be said that there are some features of the attitude of these pioneering Gypsy-lorists—if not too often in the *Journal [of Gypsy Lore]*, certainly in their letters and their books—that may set one’s teeth on edge today” (7). Deborah Nord suggests that the Gypsy-lorists’ “fantasy of an Edenic Romany existence, the result of projection and an ultimately self-regarding nostalgia, often limited their ability to acknowledge the Gypsies as independent beings subject to change and possessed of a complex history” (*Gypsies* 126). Such characterizations suggest that while these early scholars made great show of utilizing academic, even scientific, principles<sup>185</sup> to immerse themselves in Gypsy life and language in the manner documented by their mentor George Borrow in his autobiographical novels (or fictional autobiographies) *Lavengro* (1851) and *Romany Rye* (1857), many of the details of their lives and work imply that their desire to embed themselves, as it were, with the objects of their study was fueled by the eroticism of the Gypsy as trope.<sup>186</sup>

The idea that Gypsy women, like the Cleopatra in *Villette* that Lucy Snowe characterizes as a “Gipsy-giantess,” and in a somewhat different register, Gypsy men, possess an erotic lure so powerful as to be almost uncanny has been well documented

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<sup>185</sup> Nord quotes the statement of George Lawrence Gomme, “president of the Folk-Lore Society in the early 1890s,” who said, “I should like it to be settled once for all that folk-lore is a science” (127).

<sup>186</sup> Contemporary scholars have taken pains to distance themselves from these predecessors; while Fraser defends the early Gypsy-lorists against “the sweeping dismissal of everything which had gone before,” he agrees “that the new professionalism [in the field] has brought valuable fresh insights” (11).

by scholars such as Okely who have striven to inject accurate information into the morass of traditional misconceptions. Nord, too, attempts to correct the views of the Lorists: she notes with disapproval their habitual “descriptions of female Gypsies that highlight their ‘Oriental’ and exotic looks, their animal natures, and their potential for explosive and potentially dangerous sexuality,” referencing among other examples a passage quoted by Groome describing the “veiled fire,” “serpent-like power,” “filmy languor,” and “latent fascination” of a Gypsy woman (144). In these depictions, she says, “[t]he Englishman lorist safely projects sexual desire onto these canvases: the women promise sexual adventure but, still and subordinate, never pose a threat” (144). It appears, however, that in the wake of the domestic wreckages of the lives not only of Groome but of his colleague John Sampson, one of the GLS’s co-founders and its president from 1915-16, who maintained a secret *ménage* with one of his female assistants, the eroticism with which the lorists infused their study of Gypsies was indeed highly threatening, at least to their own marital stability.<sup>187</sup>

While the stereotype of the highly eroticized or sexually deviant Gypsy is most often associated with Gypsy women, it is not confined to them. While Gypsy women, who, as Okely points out, coming “from an alien culture, but not in a foreign land,” living “in dangerous and ambiguous proximity,” are the repositories of non-Gypsies’ projected “suppressed desires and unvoiced fears” (202), Gypsy men are thought to be “parasites” and “potential home-breaker[s]” who “may liberate a housedweller virgin *à la* D.H. Lawrence...or abduct a woman to be his own in Gypsy

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<sup>187</sup> See the fascinating biography of Sampson written by his son, Anthony: *The Scholar Gypsy: The Quest for a Family Secret* (London: John Murray, 1997). While Sampson did not, like Groome, “elope” with Gypsy women, it would appear that his identification with Gypsiness facilitated a degree of sexual Bohemianism that was revealed after his death.

society,” a “male fear [that] is expressed in the popular ditty about a rich lady who goes ‘Off with the Raggle Taggle Gypsies O’” (202). Okely quotes a description by an eighteenth-century farmer of the local Gypsies as “miscreants and their loose women, for no doubt all of them are so, as they lie and herd together in a promiscuous manner,” and he goes on to dub them “a parcel of Rogues and Trollops” (201), equally implicating both genders. While the Gypsy figure as it evolves in the late nineteenth century is often represented in highly eroticized terms (as opposed to Walter Scott’s gender-neutral Meg Merrilies, who is anything but a siren), it is the bucolic Gypsy lifestyle, the rural wandering or “gypsying” which, as Nord puts it, “crossed from Borrovian fellow traveling to what Angus Fraser has called ‘Open Road’ bohemianism, adopted by the turn-of-the-century Lorists, that seems most charged with erotic power.<sup>188</sup>

As noted in the previous chapters, in being freed by their itinerancy from social norms of property distribution, Gypsies in the nineteenth centuries were viewed as outside the status quo with respect to gender. This chapter argues that the Gypsy trope also functioned as a vehicle through which the famously restrictive sexual practices of the Victorians were contested.<sup>189</sup> In much the same way the trope functions as a site of multiple challenges to property and gender, so, too, does it signal contestations of normative sexuality, i.e., heterosexual sex within the confines of officially sanctioned marriage.<sup>190</sup> At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Jane

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<sup>188</sup> According to Okely, the alleged ruralness of Gypsy society is partly a myth and partly a condition imposed upon them because they were evicted from urban areas (30-31).

<sup>189</sup> I am making the Foucauldian assumption here that contrary to the conventional narrative about the Victorians, the era was in fact rife with discourse about sexuality.

<sup>190</sup> In *Another Kind of Love*, Christopher Craft discusses the influential definitions of Thomas Aquinas of what is sexually “natural” and concludes that “in each of Aquinas’s enumerated perversities—masturbation, bestiality, sodomy, nongenerative ‘heterosexual variations’—it is the failure of the given



Austen's *Emma* (1816) demonstrates the destabilizing function of a band of Gypsies on the marriage plot. As in *Jane Eyre*, *Villette*, and *North and South*, the primary threat to social norms is not the Gypsies themselves, who are incidental to the plot, but one of the non-Gypsy characters, Harriet Smith, who appears to be "infected" with Gypsiness. In Matthew Arnold's poem "The Scholar-Gipsy" (1853), the mythically itinerant Gypsy represents a challenge to modernity; however, it can also be read as disrupting sexual mores by signaling homoerotic desire. Like Harriet Smith, Maggie Tulliver in George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), has an encounter with Gypsies, but it is her own Gypsiness, figured as erotic desire, that threatens her social standing. In T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land" (1922), a Gypsy can be seen, perhaps even more cryptically than in Arnold, as signaling homoerotic desire; and in D.H. Lawrence's *The Virgin and the Gypsy* (1930, posthumous), the eponymous male Gypsy serves as a very overt threat to the virginity of the female protagonist. Although in each of these works, a Gypsy figure functions as a kind of shorthand to signal multiple challenges to sexual norms, the Gypsies themselves are represented in a variety of registers, ranging from the exotic and romantic to the mundane and annoying. Indeed, though historically, the Romani people have often been represented in terms of highly charged eroticism, literary Gypsies themselves do not always function as objects of erotic desire: rather, in each of these works, they appear to fling off the apparatus of Victorian and post-Victorian sexual repression by,

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sex act to conform to the procreative imperative, and not any malformation in desire itself, that defines transgressivity" (14). However, in the nineteenth century, simply being "procreative" is not a sufficient guarantor of naturalness, and legal matrimony is an important, arguably *the* most important, criterion for sexual normativeness.

in one way or another, infusing—infecting—the non-Gypsies characters with forms of Gypsiness that challenge the status quo.

It is ironic that enticing erotic images of Gypsies flourished at the same time that social “reformers” like George Smith (“of Coalville”) constructed stereotypes at the opposite extreme, characterizing Gypsies as “living in a state of indescribable ignorance, dirt, filth and misery, mostly squatting on the ground, making their beds upon peg-shavings and straw, and divested of the last tinge of romantical nonsense...”(qtd. in Mayall, *Gypsy-travellers* 134). Characterizations of Gypsies as erotic *and* filthy are not, in fact, incompatible, as is suggested by William A. Cohen in his introduction to *Filth: Dirt, Disgust, and Modern Life*. In general, he argues, “*filth* is a term of condemnation, which instantly repudiates a threatening thing, person, or idea by ascribing alterity to it,” and “labeling something filthy is a viscerally powerful means of excluding it” (x), a process that aptly describes the way Gypsies were depicted by Smith, for example. “People are denounced as filthy,” Cohen continues, “when they are felt to be unassimilably other,” and “[a]ctions, behaviors, and ideas are filthy when they partake of the immoral, the inappropriate, the obscene, or the unaccountable” (ix-x): in short, describing something as filthy is to say, “*That is not me.*” (x).<sup>191</sup> Because filth is often a product of the human body, it is often associated with the sexual: “Sexual activity has often been tainted with the charge of filthiness, which has in turn made the word *filth*, like its synonym *smut* (originally meaning soot or smudge), another term for pornography, obscenity, and sometimes sex itself” (xii). While at first glance, Smith’s representations of Gypsies

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<sup>191</sup> He adds, “By the time one has encountered and repudiated filth, it is too late—the subject is already besmirched by it”(x). Tough luck for George Smith of Coalville!

appear antithetical to the alluring stereotypes noted by Nord and Okely, it is possible to read his abjection of their “obscene” filth as version of the same erotic othering that informs the stereotype of the Gypsy as object of erotic desire: the Gypsies’ exoticism and alleged foreignness are what constitute them as objects of both desire and fear. The filth of which Smith accuses them and their highly eroticized depictions can be seen in Cohen’s terms as related components in a process of othering in which alleged filthiness only heightens erotic power.

If we return to Woolf’s *Orlando*, it is apparent that many of the stereotypes consolidated in the nineteenth century are legible there. In appearance, the Gypsies in *Orlando* with whom Orlando absconds resemble the traditional racialized stereotypes that David Mayall notes in *Gypsy-travellers*: “Complexion was said to be swarthy, hair curly and black, eyes dark with a pearly luster” (75). The Gypsies in *Orlando*, similarly, “seem to have looked at [Orlando] as one of themselves. . .and her dark hair and dark complexion bore out the belief that she was, by birth, one of them.” (141). Although the genderless Gypsies with whom Orlando lives are not depicted as particularly seductive, it is a passionate liaison with a Gypsy woman that ushers in Orlando’s sex change. Prior to the week-long trance during which the mysterious transformation takes place, he (at that point) is seen on his balcony with “a woman. . .apparently of the peasant class,” after which, “they embraced passionately ‘like lovers,’ and went into the room together, drawing the curtains so that no more could be seen” (131-32). When Orlando is found asleep the next day “amid bed clothes that were much tumbled” (an erotic synecdoche), his room in disarray, a “deed of marriage” is found among his papers documenting a marriage between “his

Lordship, Orlando, Knight of the Garter, etc. etc. etc., and Rosina Pepita, a dancer, father unknown, but reputedly a gipsy” (132). While it is not clear precisely what impact this liaison has had on his gender, the fact that it immediately precedes his turning into a woman appears to be significant: not only does the appearance of the Gypsies function to destabilize gender, but the juxtaposition also implies that it is the erotic power of the Gypsy woman that is somehow responsible for Orlando’s gender transition.

Both Orlando’s appearance, which is read as Gypsy-like, and the marriage to the Gypsy Pepita are drawn from the life of Vita Sackville-West, whose photographs as Orlando accompany the text. As noted in Chapter One, Vita’s grandmother was a Spanish dancer known as Pepita,<sup>192</sup> in depicting Orlando’s escapades, Woolf has elided Vita and her grandfather, Lionel Sackville-West, implying that it is this passionate affair that somehow catapults Orlando into femaleness. In “Gypsies and Lesbian Desire: Vita Sackville-West, Violet Trefusis, and Virginia Woolf,” Kirstie Blair argues that “the Gypsy...haunts texts about desire between women in this period” (142), and she examines Sackville-West’s use of Gypsies to “represent liberation, excitement, danger, and the free expression of sexuality” (141). Blair reads the “tug toward ‘Gypsiness’” in Woolf’s, Sackville-West’s, and Trefusis’ writings as “a hint of same-sex desire” (142).<sup>193</sup> If, as Mayall indicates, Gypsies are thought to be as “free-living and free-loving, with a sexual appetite matched only by their wanderlust” (*Gypsy-travellers* 76), this reading of the sexual aspects of the Gypsy

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<sup>192</sup> See Vita Sackville-West’s biography of her grandmother, *Pepita* (1937).

<sup>193</sup> Blair notes that in their letters, Sackville-West and Trefusis employ “a private elaboration of the Gypsy myth” that troped “an intense fantasy of escape and a way of referring to an illicit but natural sexuality” (150) and that Woolf, too, “evidently responded to the Gypsy figure as an image for desire between women” (156).

trope adds a dimension to the stereotype, making sense of the appearance of Pepita in Orlando's court by suggesting that Orlando's marriage to her ushers in not just a change of "his" gender but an awakening of lesbian desire.

Kirstie Blair has argued convincingly that in *Orlando*, Woolf draws upon a twentieth-century trope of the Gypsy that "haunts texts about desire between women in this period" (142) as well as from idiosyncratic references to Gypsies by Sackville-West, of whom *Orlando* is an affectionately parodic biography. In Sackville-West's correspondence with her lovers, particularly Violet Trefusis, Blair reads their numerous mentions of Gypsies as representations of lesbian desire and finds evidence that Woolf adopted Vita's trope of 'gypsiness' in their relationship (156-7).<sup>194</sup> Throughout *Orlando*, Woolf is playfully alluding to the family history of the Sackville-Wests: Vita's mother, Victoria, was the illegitimate daughter of Lord Sackville and a Spanish Gypsy known as "Pepita" (Glendinning 2). When Orlando marries the dancer Rosina Pepita, reputedly a Gypsy, this revises Lord Sackville's association with the real Pepita; and Orlando's vexed relationship with property - which the Gypsies are said to abjure - echoes Vita's relationship with the Sackville estate, Knole. The complex and seemingly androgynous relationship between Orlando and her husband Shelmardine mirrors that of Vita and her husband, Harold Nicolson, and Vita's and Virginia's own playful relationship to gender.

Mayall's discussion of Gypsy stereotypes in which he links their alleged "free-loving" with their "wanderlust" calls to mind the equation of nomadism and sexuality to which Karen Lawrence has alluded in "Orlando's Voyage Out,"

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<sup>194</sup> According to Blair, Sackville-West and Trefusis went so far as to learn Romany so as to have a "secret (or semi-secret, given widespread interest in Romany) vocabulary to express desire and love" (151).

following Norman O. Brown's assertion that "all walking, or wandering in the labyrinth, is genital-sexual" (qtd. in Lawrence 253). Both Lawrence and Blair call attention to the homoerotic subtext of *Orlando*: "desire is polymorphous, the heterosexual paradigm of adventure destabilized" (Lawrence 253) and "Gypsiness in itself could slyly indicate that Orlando's desires might not be normatively heterosexual" (Blair 157). Gypsies' alleged nomadism, with its lack of respect for geographical boundaries, serves as an apt metaphor for the sexual exploration outside of normative cultural boundaries that informs the Gypsy trope. The itinerant Romani lifestyle, unfettered by property and gender, appears to facilitate sexual exploration in both literature and reality, as it did in the case of the Gypsyloists. As the previous chapters have argued, in literature, if not in life, the Gypsy trope functions to destabilize the status quo; this destabilization serves to enable non-normative forms of erotic desire in each of the texts this chapter will examine.

## II. "A Party of Gipsies": Gypsies in *Emma*

Throughout *Emma*, inappropriate desire threatens to undermine what is most important to Jane Austen's milieu, the correct distribution of property through marital alliances. In the novel, multiple dangers are averted, most significantly, the danger of marrying the wrong person and thus upsetting the social order. At the novel's height, danger of a more literal sort is presented by Gypsies.

In her seminal essay, "The Time of the Gypsies," Katie Trumpener discusses the "brief but famous" scene in *Emma* in which Harriet Smith, Emma's young protégé, is accosted by Gypsies while on a walk. Trumpener views this episode as one

facet of “late eighteenth-century Gypsy reception: its almost hysterical moralism in the face of Gypsy intransigence” (868). In her view, the Gypsies constitute a very transient but significant threat: “The actual danger presented by contact with the Gypsies passes almost immediately,” she says; “the woman is rescued by an acquaintance who happens to be passing...[b]ut the episode continues to color everyday perception long after it is over, lingering obsessively in the memory of a few characters until it threatens their trust in memory itself” (868). While Trumpener sees the Gypsies Harriet encounters as presenting “actual danger,” other critics have questioned this reading of the encounter as a “violent incident” (Nord, “Marks” 208, fn. 2): since Harriet is accosted by a group of women and children, Nord argues that the incident “is not, in fact, violent at all” (“Marks” 208, fn. 2), and she elaborates on this view in *Gypsies and the British Imagination*: “Only because the Gypsy band that approaches [Harriet] is unfamiliar and yet known by rumor and reputation could Harriet be so frightened by what amounts to a group of rowdy children or Emma so eager to make her friend’s encounter into an elaborate tale of danger, rescue, and romance” (4-5).

As Nord has noted, part of the “literary and folkloric power” of the Gypsy figure derives from the idea that an English child might, “through error or kidnapping (a crime with which Gypsies were commonly thought to be associated)...end up in the Gypsy world” (“Marks” 189). The association between Gypsies and kidnapping is reflected in the *OED*’s etymology of the term “glamouring”: “Magic, enchantment,

spell; esp. in the phrase to cast the glamour over one.”<sup>195</sup> The *OED* cites the ballad of “Johnny Faa,” a famous Romani, and gives this example of the term: “As soon as they saw her well far’d face, They coost the glamer o’er her.”<sup>196</sup> The idea that a woman can be “glamoured” by the Gypsies, as in this and other ballads, makes manifest the hidden sexual dimension in representations of the Gypsies. As Said points out in *Orientalism*, the process of “othering” is governed not just by “empirical reality” but “by a battery of desires, repressions, investments, and projections” that give rise not only to scholarship but to pornography (8).<sup>197</sup> “The Orient,” he says, “seems to suggest not only fecundity but sexual promise (and threat), untiring sensuality, unlimited desire, [and] deep generative energies” (188). While Gypsies might not appear at first glance to be “Oriental,” the term “Gypsies” embodies the mistaken assumption that they come from Egypt and constructs them as an “Oriental” population in the heart of Britain. Because during the nineteenth century, the Gypsy is othered, Orientalized, and as such, represented as being in violation of social norms, Gypsies tap into these “deep generative energies,” serving as provocative figures that both embody and trigger the anxiety about sexuality that pervaded nineteenth-century Britain.

In asserting that a group of women and children pose no real danger to Harriet and indeed, that this scene “marks, albeit comically, the cultural borders of provincial community” (*Gypsies* 4), Nord is unwittingly taking the sexual subtext of the trope so

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<sup>195</sup> *OED* also cites Scott’s 1830 use in *Demonology*: “This species of Witchcraft is well known in Scotland as the glamour, or *deceptio visus*, and was supposed to be a special attribute of the race of Gipsies.”

<sup>196</sup> *Johnny Faa* in Ritson *Sc. Songs* (1794) (*OED*).

<sup>197</sup> Said cites the Victorian pornographic novel *The Lustful Turk* as an example of this kind of exoticized erotic projection (8).



for granted as to suggest that the type of danger posed by Gypsies who accost one is sexual—hence the apparent innocuousness of women and children. In so doing, she implies that a sexual threat can only be posed by the traditional paradigm of the male Gypsy-seducer, failing to acknowledge the more general threat of “glamouring” or abduction, which could conceivably be accomplished just as handily by female or underage Gypsies as by men such as the Gypsy in Lawrence’s *The Virgin and the Gipsy*.<sup>198</sup> More significantly, she also fails to acknowledge that if Gypsies can be deployed, as Blair argues, as figures of lesbian desire, the sexual threat posed by female Gypsies is no less than that posed by males. Finally, she ignores the larger, more metaphysical threat that Gypsies can constitute in a text and the way their mere presence can destabilize multiple aspects of the status quo.

Indeed, it does appear as if one of the threats to the status quo lurking in *Emma* is that of “the homoerotic matrix,” as Susan M. Korba puts it in “‘Improper and Dangerous Distinctions’: Female Relationships and Erotic Domination in *Emma*” (141). Korba takes up Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s complaint against “timid” Austen criticism, inquiring, “How do Emma’s relationships with the various male and female characters in the novel reveal the nature of her sexual orientation?” and, “Why *shouldn’t* Emma be a lesbian?” (her italics; 141). “Emma’s erotic predilection for members of her own sex can be traced throughout the novel,” she writes (148),<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Michael Kramp reads the scene with Harriet and the Gypsies as an opposition between Harriet’s “whiteness” and the Gypsies’ “blackness” which solidifies national identity in abjecting the Gypsies, a concept to which Chapter Four will turn: “This brief moment in the novel allows Austen to dramatize the threat posed by the ‘Black’ nomads to the young, fair-skinned, blue-eyed female; Austen’s account suggests how the Romani almost envelop the ‘natural’ daughter of Highbury in their transient community. And yet, the juxtaposition of Harriet to the gypsies helps expose a strong social desire to incorporate the former and the extant cultural fear of the latter” (157).

<sup>199</sup> See also Tiffany Potter’s placement of Emma on the “lesbian continuum” in “‘A Low but Very Feeling Tone’: The Lesbian Continuum and Power Relations in Jane Austen’s *Emma*.”

arguing that Jane Fairfax is Emma's "real object of desire" (142). Korba traces the way Jane's "inaccessibility...leads Emma back to Mr. Knightley" (142), causing her to reconcile and then part with Jane: "Each ends up with her respective husband, and the heterosexual social order is maintained" (142). Harriet's marriage to Robert Martin, too, maintains this order: as Michael Kramp puts it, their union "becomes a key element in *Emma*'s depiction of the post-Revolutionary project to solidify the state, safeguard its culture, and construct a 'national' race" (161). An aspect of this project that Kramp does not note but which the Gypsies, in his reading, implicitly threaten is the legitimacy of heterosexual reproduction, which Harriet's own status as the "the natural daughter of somebody" (23) endangers. If Emma's relationship with the women of the novel—her beloved Miss Taylor, as well as Harriet and Jane—may be read in terms of a homoerotic matrix, we may also see Harriet's encounter with the Gypsies as a marker for the destabilization of heterosexual relations as they define the national project.

If, as in *Orlando*, Gypsies figure the destabilization of social norms, it makes sense that the Gypsy scene in *Emma* is viewed by critics such as Trumpener as dangerous and violent, despite evidence, such as that offered by Nord, that it is neither: the very real danger the Gypsies present is to the status quo. Much as their presence in texts destabilizes property distribution and gender norms, so, too, does it signal a threat to sexual norms, especially to the heterosexual marriage paradigm in which gender roles are designed to shore up in order to support, among other things, property distribution. Indeed, *Emma*, like all of Austen's works, is devoted to the project of constructing heterosexual alliances that ensure legitimacy, appropriate

property distribution, maintenance of social class, and, as Kramp reminds us, national identity. The travails of Harriet Smith constitute multiple threats to this project: Harriet herself is illegitimate; she threatens to forge a marital alliance with farmer Robert Martin that is beneath what Emma incorrectly perceives as her social class, a misapprehension that is ultimately corrected by Mr. Knightley; even more threatening, Harriet attempts an alliance *above* her social class, with Knightley, causing Emma to forsake her crypto-lesbian commitments and get with the program of heterosexual closure.

The events leading up to Harriet's run-in with the Gypsies have an atmospheric, almost seductive beginning: at the point where Harriet and her friend see the "party of gypsies" (312), the topography itself, circuitous and mysterious, almost resembles female anatomy: the road "mak[es] a sudden turn," and "deeply shaded by elms on each side, it became for a considerable stretch very retired" (312). Harriet's companion Miss Bickerton responds as if to a threat to her virginity: "excessively frightened," she "gave a great scream, and calling on Harriet to follow her, ran up a steep bank, cleared a slight hedge at the top, and made the best of her way by a short cut back to Highbury" (312). Harriet, however, though also "exceedingly terrified" is, alas, immobilized: "[s]he had suffered very much from cramp after dancing, and her first attempt to mount the bank brought on such a return of it as made her absolutely powerless" (312). It is from this state of paralysis that she is rescued by Frank Churchill, the man Emma has erroneously designated as a potential husband for her. He turns the tables, terrifying the Gypsies and driving them away so expeditiously that "[t]he young ladies of Highbury might have walked again

in safety before their panic began” (315). News of the incident is soon “all over Highbury,” and while “the whole history dwindled soon into a matter of little importance,” it has enough staying power that Emma’s nephews continue to ask her daily for “the story of Harriet and the gipsies” (315).

Thus, while the episode “dwindles” into absurdity, as Harriet’s endeavors so often do, I would join Trumpener in reading the encounter as significant: she sees the incident as emblematic of Gypsies’ evolution from “actual (if threatening) characters” into “shadowy, haunting discursive figures” who create a “lingering narrative anxiety” (868). Nord, following Trumpener, traces this process of narrativization in the evolution of the story of Harriet’s “traumatic encounter” with “a group of children” into a “drama of terror to be savored and retold” (*British Imagination* 15). It is precisely this “literarization,” in Trumpener’s term (849) that gives the Gypsies the power to continue to resonate throughout the novel even after their hasty exit, a power redolent of a sexual undercurrent.

If we read *Emma* in terms of the sexual power of the Gypsy trope, the subtext of Harriet’s fortunate escape is made manifest: for Harriet, a young woman on the borders of the working class, of unknown and perhaps unsavory parentage, comeliness is the only capital she owns, and it is only through this capital that she will be able to parlay her way into a marriage that will provide for her. The prospect that awaits women who are unable to marry is exemplified by the fate from which Jane Fairfax is rescued by her engagement to Frank Churchill, which enables her to narrowly avoid becoming a governess. Harriet, lacking the intellectual resources of Jane Fairfax, does not have nearly such an attractive option; marriage is her only

resource, and as such, her virginity is extremely valuable.<sup>200</sup> Although it can be argued, and indeed, has been, that the Gypsies do not pose a serious threat to Harriet's virginity, they cast a large, threatening, "literarized" shadow over the entire work that suggests that unmarried women are always at risk of losing this capital, whether through rape, "glamouring," or homosexual desire.

In a larger sense, the scene calls attention to the presence in *Emma* of another Gypsy figure who constitutes a threat to the status quo: Harriet. As "the natural daughter of somebody" (23), a "parlour-boarder" at Mrs. Goddard's school, Harriet has no home, "no visible friends but what had been acquired at Highbury," and no history; for all anyone knows, she might literally be a Gypsy. And if not, she might as well be, given her effects on the inhabitants of Highbury: she entices Emma along the lesbian continuum into a relationship that threatens Emma's relations with Mr. Knightley, who is peeved when Emma thwarts Harriet's marriage to the farmer Robert Martin. Harriet threatens to destabilize Emma's marriage to Mr. Knightley by having designs on him herself; her swoon into Frank Churchill's arms could potentially have imperiled Frank's secret liaison with Jane Fairfax. In short, Harriet is trouble, an odd woman out, and no heterosexual alliance in Highbury is safe until she is finally married off to the farmer.

Another important aspect of the status quo is threatened in the course of the novel: primogeniture. As Emma notes, if Mr. Knightley were to marry, his and Emma's nephew, Henry, would be "cut out" from inheriting Donwell, Knightley's estate (209). Although Emma's concern for her nephew turns out to have been a

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<sup>200</sup> In this, she is unlike the twentieth-century Yvette in *The Virgin and the Gipsy*: in Lawrence's other works, e.g., *Women in Love*, he demonstrates that women can do without this capital.

justification for not wanting Knightley to marry anyone but herself, the fact remains that although the distribution of property in the novel is ultimately set to rights for the other female characters—Harriet marries the farmer; Jane Fairfax marries Frank Churchill—in the case of Emma and Knightley, property presents a problem that is resolved peculiarly: Mr. Knightley agrees to move into Hartfield with Emma and her father, thus giving up his solitary bachelor life and his property. So while primogeniture is temporarily preserved, in that Mr. Knightley does not immediately cede the property to his nephew, it is not clear what will happen to Donwell ultimately, or whether Henry's claim on the estate is ever realized. In moving to Hartfield, Knightley adopts a female role, a solution that Mrs. Elton deems a "shocking plan" (439), and gives up his property and the privileges of his gender, at least temporarily.

At the novel's end, another incident occurs, not mentioned by either Trumpener or Nord, in which Gypsies appear to figure. Although Mr. Woodhouse initially objects to Emma's marriage to Knightley and to the latter's moving to Hartfield, his trepidation turns to "more voluntary, cheerful consent" (453) following a sinister incident: "Mrs. Weston's poultry-house was robbed one night of all her turkies—evidently by the ingenuity of man," and "[o]ther poultry yards in the neighbourhood also suffered" (452). To Mr. Woodhouse, this kind of petty crime causes him to feel imperiled in much the same way that Harriet felt imperiled by her run-in with the Gypsies: "Pilfering was *housebreaking* to Mr. Woodhouse's fears" (Austen's italics), and were it not for "the sense of his son-in-law's protection," he "would have been under wretched alarm every night of his life" (452). The authors of

this deed are never identified, but Gypsies have often been accused of being chicken thieves,<sup>201</sup> and there is in fact a term in Romanichal (i.e., Anglo-Romani) for this (*kanniechor*<sup>202</sup>). Though we cannot assume that chicken thieves must perform as Gypsies, it is not a stretch to suppose that Austen was aware of the commonly held association between the two.

Thus, it is the Gypsies who initially signal a disturbance of the status quo, but later, reinscribe the heterosexual paradigm in facilitating the marriage between Emma and Mr. Knightley by threatening the “turkies,” thus recuperating Emma’s lesbian tendencies. In facilitating Knightley’s move to Hartfield, they present a novel solution to the problems of property distribution in the Woodhouse family; while *Emma* famously ends, as comedies do, with multiple marriages, here, Mr. Knightley is the bride in the heterosexual equation.

### III. “That Wild Brotherhood”: Matthew Arnold’s Scholar-Gypsy

Although it merits only a footnote in her otherwise extraordinarily comprehensive article about Gypsies, Katie Trumpener points to Matthew Arnold’s poem “The Scholar- Gypsy” (1853) as an instance of the way “the antagonistic relationship between the Gypsy life and bourgeois life” is depicted in “the nineteenth century, as 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” (870). Similarly, Deborah Nord suggests that “Arnold’s Gypsy poems—‘Resignation,’ ‘Thyrsis,’ and, especially, ‘The Scholar-

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<sup>201</sup> See, for example, Tony Gatlif’s 1998 film, *Gadjo Dilo*.

<sup>202</sup> From the *Patrin Web Journal*, “Romanichal Word List.”

Gipsy’—played a major role in the mid-nineteenth-century creation of the Gypsy figure as a remnant of prelapsarian England, a marker of the transition from rural to industrial society” (*Gypsies* 45). Both Trumpener and Nord read the Gypsy figure in Arnold’s work as the site of nostalgic desire, either for “cultural autonomy” (the word “remaining” implies that Trumpener is positing that such autonomy once existed) or for a pre-industrial pastoral.

Indeed, in “The Scholar-Gipsy,” Arnold does seem to suggest that the Gypsy figure both inhabits and embodies the rural landscape that the poem’s speaker describes in the vicinity of Oxford—the “green-muffled Cumner hills,”<sup>203</sup> “the stripling Thames at Bab-lock-hithe,” and above all, the “Fyfield Elm,” around which “Maidens” dance in May. The “Scholar-Gipsy,” an Oxford student who in Joseph Glanvill’s 1661 account in *The Vanity of Dogmatizing* (Culler, “Notes” 558) abandoned his studies and ran off with “a company of *Vagabond Gypsies*” (Culler 558, Glanvill’s italics), haunts this pastoral landscape, appearing like a ghost in a variety of rural locations. As in Glanvill’s narrative, in which the scholar becomes so assimilated in that company that he learns to conduct feats of extrasensory perception, Arnold’s scholar “went to learn the gipsy-lore/And roam’d the world with that wild brotherhood” (37-8), A “truant boy,” he was

born in days when wits were fresh and clear,

And life ran gaily as the sparkling Thames;

Before this strange disease of modern life,

With its sick hurry, its divided aims,

Its heads o’ertaxed, its palsied hearts, was rife. (201-5)

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<sup>203</sup> I.e., Cumnor, today.



Nostalgia is palpable in this representation of the bygone era from which the Scholar-Gipsy originates, and Arnold is explicit here that this past represents an escape from the pressures of modernity.

The Scholar's association with the "gipsy-tribe" and its "strange arts" appears to have garnered him some form of spectral immunity not only from this modernity, but from the passage of time and its effects:

No, no, thou hast not felt the lapse of hours!  
For what wears out the life of mortal men?  
'Tis that from change to change their being rolls;  
'Tis that repeated shocks, again, again,  
Exhaust the energy of strongest souls  
And numb the elastic powers.  
.....  
But thou possessest an immortal lot,  
And we imagine thee exempt from age  
And living as thou liv'st on Glanvil's page,  
Because thou hadst—what we, alas! have not. (141-6; 157-60)

What the Scholar-Gipsy has is not only a connection to the rural landscape but an ability to escape from the "shocks" that the "strange disease of modern life" inflicts through, presumably, his wandering.

The nostalgic desire of the poem's speaker for a pre-industrial England represented by Gypsiness, reminiscent of that of George Borrow and his acolytes the

Gypsylorists,<sup>204</sup> is indeed palpable here, as the speaker longs in a Keatsian register for not only the rural past but for the kind of exemption from “sick fatigue” and “languid doubt” that the Scholar’s ghostly immortality appears to have granted him. It is tempting to read that desire as simply a longing for the past, for a simpler time, and for an escape from modernity and mortality. However, if we examine “The Scholar-Gipsy” in conjunction with Arnold’s later poem, “Thyrsis” (1867) which alludes to the Scholar-Gipsy, leading Nord to classify it as a “Gypsy poem,” other forms of desire may become legible.

Arnold’s pastoral elegy, “Thyrsis,” subtitled “A Monody to commemorate the author’s friend, Arthur Hugh Clough, who died at Florence, 1861,” is a memorial in the tradition of Milton’s “Lycidas” (also termed a “monody” by its author). Like Tennyson’s “In Memoriam,” it is a tribute to the deceased that is both public and yet in many ways, more private than the newspaper article or review that Arnold was asked to write about his old friend, from whom he was mostly estranged at the time of his death (Culler 560).<sup>205</sup> According to Ian Hamilton, though Arnold was asked immediately after Clough’s death to write a “Memoir” of Clough for the *Daily News*, he could not: “that I cannot do,” he told his mother in a letter; in terms that bespeak a cryptic reticence, he said, “I could not write about him in a newspaper now, nor can, I think, at length in a review, but I shall some day in some way or other relieve myself of what I think about him” (210). Arnold began “Thyrsis” almost a year after

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<sup>204</sup> According to Culler, Arnold became acquainted with Glanville’s work in 1844 and read it the following year. Borrow’s first book on Gypsies, *The Zincoli, or an Account of the Gypsies in Spain*, was published in 1841, and perhaps Culler is correct in asserting that in the 1840s, Gypsies were “in the air” (559).

<sup>205</sup> In “Spurring an Imitative Will: The Canonization of Arthur Hallam,” Devon Fisher points out that an elegy “places memory in the public sphere,” and “always exists to be read by others” (221).

Clough's death and included it in his last book of poems, *New Poems* (1867), the volume that marked, as Hamilton points out, the end of Arnold's poetic life (212). It is clear that "Thyrsis" is Arnold's official response to Clough's death, and in that sense, it is a public poem; however, it also appears to contain shades of private meaning that are legible when it is read in conjunction with "The Scholar-Gipsy."

In "Thyrsis," Arnold evokes the same landscape as "The Scholar-Gipsy," the area to the west of Oxford around which he and Clough, accompanied by Arnold's brother Thomas and another school friend, Theodore Walrond,<sup>206</sup> had rambled during 1845-46—i.e., the same "Cumner hills" that were the setting of "The Scholar-Gipsy" (Culler 559). He begins the poem by remarking on "how changed" this landscape is: "In the two Hinkseys [i.e., the villages of North and South Hinksey, just west of Oxford] nothing keeps the same" (2) and remarks, "Here came I often, often, in old days—Thyrsis and I; we still had Thyrsis then" (9-10). Here, in the poem's first stanza, Arnold's speaker establishes a complex web of connections between Clough and the character of Thyrsis borrowed from both Theocritus' *Idylls* and Virgil's *Eclogues*; between Clough, Arnold, and the landscape; and between the landscape and their shared past.

In the second stanza, an overt connection between "Thyrsis" and "The Scholar-Gipsy" is made: "The signal-elm, that looks on Ilsley Downs" is shown in the third stanza to be connected to the legend of the Scholar-Gipsy: "while it stood, we said,/Our friend, the Gipsy-Scholar, was not dead;/While the tree lived, he in these fields lived on" (27-30); this, presumably, is the same "Fyfield elm" mentioned in the

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<sup>206</sup> See Kathleen Tillotson's 1953 article, "Rugby 1850: Arnold, Clough, Walrond, and *In Memoriam* (122-40).

earlier poem. Unlike most elegies, this one contains notes of criticism of its subject; the speaker remarks that “Thyrsis of his own will went away” (40), i.e., from Oxford, which Clough did in 1848,<sup>207</sup> and the speaker accuses Thyrsis of being a “Too quick despairer,” and asks, “wherefore wilt thou go?” as if chastising him (61). The eighth stanza further laments this departure: “But Thyrsis never more we swains shall see....For Time, not Corydon, hath conquer’d thee.” The word “swains” is curious here, since one of its meanings is a “country gallant or lover; hence, *gen.* a lover, wooer, sweetheart, esp. in pastoral poetry” (*OED*).

The introduction of Corydon establishes the mythopoetic context of the character of Thyrsis: as Arnold, a classicist,<sup>208</sup> was surely well aware, Thyrsis appears in the first *Idyll* of Theocritus, in which he laments the death of Daphnis. In the seventh of his *Eclogues*, which are based on the *Idylls*, Virgil describes a singing contest between the shepherd Thyrsis and his “rival” Corydon, a goat-herd, in which “Thyrsis strove for victory in vain.” In a 1963 article, “Corydon in Matthew Arnold’s ‘Thyrsis,’” Jerome L. Mazzaro examines Arnold’s use of these characters in an attempt, it would appear, to exonerate the poem from charges of “homosexual overtones” (305). Taking issue with the “usual gloss” of the poem in which Thyrsis is thought to represent Clough and Corydon Arnold, a reading that would appear to allude to the competition between the two poets, Mazzaro argues that “if Arnold were less of a classicist, one might be tempted to accept this gloss. But the name Corydon, as the knowing classicist would have been aware, has carried overtones of

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<sup>207</sup> According to Culler, “Clough renounced his Oriel fellowship in 1848, no longer able to stomach the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Anglican Church” and left for Europe (561).

<sup>208</sup> See Jerome L. Mazzaro (304).

homosexuality from Virgil on” (304).<sup>209</sup> “In fact,” Mazzaro continues, “in much of Latin literature Corydon is synonymous with a kind of homosexual” (304-5). Mazzaro offers three possibilities for Arnold’s choice of this name: “(1) either Matthew Arnold is not the classicist his writings seem to maintain; or (2) he has been careless in his poem; or (3) he is alluding to a relationship with Clough that is so close that he is willing to risk the homosexual overtones of Corydon in preference to using a name suggesting a more distant or literary relationship” (305). Mazzaro proposes an alternative reading in which “[r]ather than Corydon’s being Arnold, then, perhaps Corydon is meant to suggest all poetic competition for Thyrsis (Clough)....Such an expansion...would tend to lose personal identification and homosexual implications in the multiplicity of the name’s possible and vaguer referents” (306). Here, Mazzaro appears to be struggling to find a way to defend Arnold from the charge of having willfully created a homoerotic subtext in the poem by using figures from classical literature the poet knew perfectly well were associated with homosexuality.

From our critical vantage point, Mazzaro’s reading looks like a desperate attempt to refute the obvious conclusion: that Arnold’s choice of the characters of Thyrsis and Corydon in his poem about Clough implies a relationship between them

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<sup>209</sup> According to Rictor Norton’s website on “the Homosexual Pastoral Tradition,” the association of the pastoral with homosexuality began well before Virgil: “Seven of the thirty idylls completed by Theocritus are essentially homoerotic: in the fifth idyll two shepherds good-naturedly accuse each other of pederasty (one accusing the other of anal rape in the bushes), using colloquial expressions that are “obscene” enough to be printed in Latin in some modern English translations from the Greek (a notorious pedantic practice that makes merely vulgar passages seem especially wicked - and easier to locate); in the seventh idyll Aratus is passionately in love with a boy; in the twelfth idyll a lover addresses his absent beloved and describes a kissing contest amongst boys in honour of Diocles, lover of Philolaus; in the thirteenth idyll Hercules frantically searches for his beloved Hylas; in the twenty-third idyll a lover commits suicide and is revenged by a statue of Eros falling upon his faithless beloved; in the twenty-ninth idyll a lover speaks to his inconstant and immature beloved; and in the thirtieth idyll a rejected suitor reflects upon the heartbreak caused by the love of lads.”

so suggestive of homoeroticism that even in 1963, a period not known for its application of Queer Theory, they cannot be rationalized away, despite Mazzaro's efforts. A fourth critical possibility that Mazzaro does not consider is that Arnold was under the impression that he was somehow "coding" the poem's homoerotic subtext.

Although I am not attempting here to make a biographical argument about Arnold's and Clough's relationship based on the poem, it is perhaps worth noting that their friendship in the 1840s was, by all accounts, at first exceedingly warm and then, apparently inexplicably, broken off. Arnold was known for his use of such expressions as "dear," "beloved," and "my love" when addressing Clough (Tillotson 131, fn.), while on the other hand, Tennyson felt that he needed to defend himself against suggestions that he had ever in real life referred to Arthur Hallam as "dearest" ("if anybody thinks I ever called him 'dearest' in his life they are much mistaken, for I never even called him 'dear'" (qtd. in Kolb 367)— yet Tennyson's relationship with Hallam has been characterized as a homosexual attachment.<sup>210</sup> While the falling out between Arnold and Clough has been attributed to intellectual and/or poetic disagreements, it is interesting to note that Clough appears to have resented Arnold's marriage to Frances Lucy Wightman in 1851, saying in a letter to Arnold's brother, "I consider Miss Wightman as a sort of natural enemy," and in a letter of 1852, "complains of not having seen much of the man who 'is my most intimate friend' (or has been)'" (DeLaura 200). Arnold "reviews the cooling of their friendship, and admits that absorption with his new wife is a cause"; he then "assures Clough of the

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<sup>210</sup> See, for example, Jeffery Nunokawa, "In Memoriam and the Extinction of the Homosexual" and Christopher Craft, *Another Kind of Love* (44-70).

‘attachment and affection’ he felt for him during their London years (1849-52),<sup>211</sup> and insists, ‘I am, and always shall be...powerfully attracted towards you, and vitally connected with you’” (201). DeLaura somewhat euphemistically remarks that “certainly, even by the more generous standards of the Victorians, this is a remarkable exchange between two grown men” (201).<sup>212</sup>

What is clear in “Thyrsis” is a powerful emotional attachment to Clough/“Thyrsis,” and to the landscape, which is conflated with Clough and the poets’ shared past; and at the very least, this attachment bespeaks a nostalgic “homosocial desire,” as Sedgwick terms it, a longing to return to an immortal pastoral world that can be, and indeed has been, construed as homosexual. This immortality is attested to in “Thyrsis” by the continued presence of the “signal elm,” of which Arnold’s speaker exclaims the presence in the sixteenth stanza: “the Tree! the Tree!” (160), which prevents the poet from despairing over the loss of Thyrsis: “There [i.e., “heavenward”] thou art gone, and me thou leavest here/Sole in these fields! yet will I not despair./Despair I will not, while I yet descry/’Neath the mild canopy of English air/That lonely tree against the western sky” (191-5). The conflation of the tree and the Gipsy-Scholar is continued in the next lines: “Still, still these slopes, ‘tis clear,/Our Gipsy-Scholar haunts, outliving thee!” (192-3), and in the poem’s conclusion, in which the whispered voice of Thyrsis says, “*Why faintest thou? I wander’d till I died./Roam on! The light we sought is shining still./Dost thou ask*

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<sup>211</sup> Interestingly, Arnold fails to mention Oxford, which is clearly the subject of “The Scholar-Gipsy” and “Thyrsis.”

<sup>212</sup> If, however, one really wanted to go out on a biographical limb, one might note that in Virgil’s seventh *Eclogue*, while Corydon calls on “the chaste goddess Diana...Thyrsis responds by calling on the rude and wanton Priapus, who suggests a vulgar [i.e., sexual] sort of love” (Waite 122). One might infer from this that Arnold, the keen classicist, is suggesting that Clough’s homoeroticism had sexual manifestations that Arnold’s did not.

*proof? Our tree yet crowns the hill,/Our Scholar travels yet the loved hill-side*” (237-40). If wandering is “genital-sexual,” this wandering in particular can be read in terms of a prelapsarian homosexual exploration of which “Our tree” stands as emblem.

The Scholar-Gipsy, who at times appears to represent Arnold and at other times Clough, appears almost incongruous in the midst of a pastoral elegy whose other literary allusions are to Theocritus and Virgil. However, he serves two important functions in the poem: first, as in Woolf and Austen, the presence of the Gypsy suggests an emotional undercurrent in which Arnold is able to “code” some of his complicated feelings for and about Clough, i.e., to “relieve [him]self of what [he thought] about him.” As in other works, the Gypsy’s presence alerts us to a loosening of the status quo in which sexuality, in this case between men, complicates the rigid categories of Victorian mores. The Gypsy’s presence in “Thyrsis” also points the reader to “The Scholar-Gipsy,” to which we may now return with a heightened awareness of the significance of its nostalgia. In decoding a homoerotic relationship between Arnold and Clough in “Thyrsis,” we may now read an undercurrent of nostalgia for homoeroticism in the earlier poem.

If we accept the assertion of Jerome L. Mazzaro that the figure of Corydon is virtually synonymous with homosexuality, as Arnold would well have known, the pastoral world evoked at the opening of “The Scholar-Gipsy” would now appear to have homoerotic undertones. The landscape that Arnold and Clough roamed with their companions, for which “Thyrsis” longs, can be seen not only as a metonymy of the Gypsy but also of the “wild brotherhood” to which he belongs. Arnold, Clough, Arnold’s brother, and Theodore Walrond themselves constituted a brotherhood, and it



is that “wild” homosocial landscape for which both poems appear to be chiefly nostalgic, i.e., for a time in Arnold’s life of, as he terms it in “The Scholar-Gipsy,” “glad perennial youth” (229), before “the strange disease of modern life” made such forms of male bonding socially unacceptable. In “Arnold’s ‘Scholar-Gipsy’ and the Crisis of the 1852 Poems,” William A. Oram associates the Scholar-Gipsy with Arnold’s own “Buried Self” and notes that “in his late twenties he passed through a prolonged crisis of identity” (145). Oram reads this crisis as “vocational,” and says that in 1851, the year of Arnold’s marriage, his “period of hesitation came to a clear and resolute end” (146). The 1852 poems, he argues, are the product of Arnold’s crisis, and in them, Arnold confronts issues of maturity: Oram examines the poem in which the Buried Self is adumbrated, “The Buried Life” (1852), and paraphrases Arnold’s suggestion therein that “to fulfill ourselves in action we must give up knowledge of our deepest feelings, for the Buried Self is the source of our emotional vitality....Maturity would seem to demand that one increasingly turn one’s back on feeling and get about the business of acting in the world” (150). This emotional core or Buried Self, Oram associates with the Scholar-Gipsy in the later poem: both are “elusive and wordless” (154).

With this association in mind, if we view “The Scholar-Gipsy” as having a homoerotic subtext, one cannot help but entertain an interpretation of “The Buried Life” as about closeted homosexuality. According to Ian Hamilton, “‘The Buried Life’ is perhaps Arnold’s most urgently intimate attempt to pinpoint the true source of his unceasing disaffection, his sense of being out of tune and out of touch.” He goes on to say, “The poem hauntingly elaborates the theme of [Arnold’s] 1849

unburdening to Clough” (135) and adds that “Arnold’s other ‘love poems’ of summer 1850 focus more specifically on Frances Lucy [i.e., his wife-to-be]” (136). One must wonder, then, to whom Hamilton thinks “The Buried Life” is addressed in its opening request to “Give me thy hand, and hush awhile/And turn those limpid eyes on mine./And let me read there, love! thy inmost soul,” if not Frances Lucy. The poem goes on to ask, “Alas! is even love too weak/To unlock the heart, and let it speak?/Are even lovers powerless to reveal/To one another what indeed they feel?” If the lines are addressed to a woman, why this reticence? The speaker then says,

I knew the mass of men conceal’d  
Their thoughts, for fear that if reveal’d  
They would by other men be met  
With blank indifference, or with blame reproved.  
I knew they lived, and moved  
Trick’d in disguises, alien to the rest  
Of men, and alien to themselves—and yet  
The same heart beats in every human breast!  
But we, my love! – doth a like spell benumb  
Our hearts, our voices? – must we too be dumb?  
Ah! Well for us, if even we  
Even for a moment, can get free  
Our heart, and have our lips unchain’d;  
For that which seals them hath been deep-ordained! (1-28)

It is necessary to quote that section in its entirety to follow the train of thought: why, indeed, must “the mass of men” conceal their thoughts? Why would they be “with blame reprov’d”? Why must men be “trick’d in disguises”? Why must the voices of the speaker and his love be dumb? And finally, what “deep-ordained” practice is it that has sealed their lips? The poem refuses to explain, merely notes that “often, in the din of strife,/There rises an unspeakable desire/After the knowledge of our buried life”—again, why is this desire “unspeakable”? There is

A thirst to spend our fire and restless force  
In tracking out our true, original course;  
A longing to inquire  
Into the mystery of this heart which beats  
So wild, so deep in us – to know  
Whence our lives come and where they go. (48-54)

The word “wild” evokes that “wild brotherhood” in “The Scholar-Gipsy,” and its homosocial nostalgia. The speaker goes on to remark on the “nameless feelings that course through our breast” that “course on forever unexpress’d” and while “long we try in vain to speak and act/Our hidden self, and what we say and do/Is eloquent, is well—but ‘tis not true!” (62-6). Yet “vague and forlorn” “airs” come from “the soul’s subterranean depth upborne/As from an infinitely distant land” (72-75).

Perhaps there is no compelling biographical reason to read “The Buried Life” as a poem about the tragedy of having to repress powerful homoerotic identity and emotions—yet it is equally difficult to find a reason *not* to read it this way, especially given the closeness of Arnold and Clough in the preceding period and their

mysterious break-up in the wake of Arnold's marriage. If, as Oram asserts, the Scholar-Gipsy is a corollary of Arnold's *Buried Self or Life*, and if this buried life is homosexual, the figure of the Gypsy certainly seems to act as harbinger or embodiment of homosexual desire in Arnold's work much the way the Gypsies in *Emma* harbor a sexual subtext that threatens to overturn the heterosexual order that is fundamental to Austen's texts. Certainly no one would dispute that for Arnold, the Scholar-Gipsy and his pastoral symbolize the freedom of his youth, the "wild brotherhood" in which he and Clough roamed the timeless landscape as Gypsy-scholars; and if indeed this lost homosocial world should be read as homosexual, it is hardly surprising that Arnold might turn to the Gypsy trope as an emblem of erotic desire.

#### IV. "More Like a Gypsy Nor Ever": Maggie Tulliver's Gypsiness

If Jane Eyre, Lucy Snow, Margaret Hale, and Harriet Smith are infected with Gypsiness, Maggie Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss* is positively teeming with it. Before Maggie even makes an appearance in the novel, her transgressive qualities are discussed by her parents in ways that conflate her disruptions of gender ("[S]he's twice as 'cute [acute, i.e., intelligent] as Tom," her father complains. "Too 'cute for a woman" (15)) with her other non-normative qualities, which include "brown skin as makes her look like a mulatter," hair that "won't curl," and general dirtiness<sup>213</sup> and "naughtiness" (15). In this exchange, Mr. Tulliver compares Maggie's limitations, which he attributes to the "crossing o' breeds" that has taken place in his marriage to

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<sup>213</sup> "How to keep her in a clean pinafore two hours together passes my cunning," complains Mrs. Tulliver (15).

Mrs. Tulliver, née Dodson, to a genetic mutation: “[A]n over ‘cute woman’s no better nor a long-tailed sheep—she’ll fetch none the bigger price for that” (15).<sup>214</sup> This odd remark calls attention to the central project of this, and arguably, of the majority of Victorian novels: the working out of the heterosexual marriage plot. Mr. Tulliver’s commodification of his daughter here foregrounds the economic aspects of this project: the implication is that if Maggie doesn’t straighten out and fly right, her status as a marriageable commodity is imperiled. That Maggie’s challenges to gender are figured in racial terms has been noted,<sup>215</sup> but I would add that given the long-tailed sheep comparison, Maggie’s implicit “race” is depicted as a deformity, a genetic mutation that is the result of the ill-considered liaison between the Tulliver and Dodson lines. This racial and ergo moral/ethical deformity, which the novel codifies in terms of Maggie’s oft-noted resemblance to a Gypsy, is the problem that must be worked out in order for Maggie, and thus the novel, to achieve “heterosexual closure.”

Unfortunately for Maggie, the aberrant qualities evident in her childhood ripen into a non-normative sexuality that quite literally sinks her chances of marriage.<sup>216</sup> When she acts on this sexuality, her elopement with Stephen Guest, her sweet cousin Lucy’s almost-fiancé, establishes her as *persona non grata* with everyone in the novel, including Guest himself. While the elopement appears to have

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<sup>214</sup> In *Imperialism at Home*, Susan Meyer has called attention to *The Mill on the Floss*’s somewhat Darwinian “preoccupation” with “the crossing o’ breed” and race, but has failed to take notice of the long-tailed sheep (146-9).

<sup>215</sup> Nord reads Maggie as “within [the] literary tradition of paired heroines—one light, one dark” and sees Eliot as “overlay[ing] the pairing, at its most fundamental a contrast of good and evil or chaste and impure, with racial difference” (*Gypsies* 104). Meyer remarks that “[t]he gypsies... provide an especially apt metaphor for an English girl who feels alien within her society, just as the gypsies are the bearers of ‘marks of race’ ‘repulsive’ to the larger English population around them” (134).

<sup>216</sup> As William A. Cohen notes, “Maggie’s ungirliness serves decisively as a precursor of her fallen womanhood” (*Sex Scandal* 136).

been a surprise even to Maggie herself, the road to it was paved in the early chapter, “Maggie Tries to Run Away from Her Shadow,” in which Maggie tries to outrun her own darkness by seeking shelter with a band of Gypsies. The impetus for her flight is if not remorse, apprehension following the rash act of pushing cousin Lucy, ever available as Maggie’s saccharine blond foil and victim, into “the cow-trodden mud” (108), an action that causes Maggie’s beloved brother Tom, whose attentions to Lucy have incited Maggie’s jealousy, to slap Maggie and comfort the crying Lucy.<sup>217</sup> Maggie’s decision to run away with the Gypsies—her “unknown kindred” (114)—appear motivated by a desire both to “escap[e] opprobrium” and, perhaps more significantly, to cause Tom to regret that he “should never see her any more” (112). This is not a new idea for Maggie, who has previously contemplated such an adventure, and indeed, has asked Tom to accompany her, proposing “that he should stain his face brown and they should run away together” (112).<sup>218</sup> Tom, however, has refused on the grounds that “gypsies were thieves and hardly got anything to eat and had nothing to drive but a donkey” (112). Here, Tom is pitting a “realistic” conception of Gypsies, reminiscent of that of nineteenth-century reformers, against Maggie’s romantic view of them, rejecting Maggie’s foolish choices in a manner that foreshadows his later condemnation of her rash elopement.

In Maggie’s escape with the Gypsies, Eliot is playing on traditional stereotypes, which include the assumption that Gypsies are prone to kidnapping non-Gypsy children<sup>219</sup>; rather than being kidnapped, Maggie, using the same poor moral

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<sup>217</sup> Meyer calls attention to the fact that this action causes Lucy to “emerge ‘discoloured,’ with ‘blackened’ hands temporarily as dark as Maggie’s own.

<sup>218</sup> Note that Maggie’s face is evidently already quite brown enough.

<sup>219</sup> See Nord’s discussion of kidnapping narratives (*Gypsies* 10-12.).

judgment that will later inform her escape with Stephen Guest, reverses the paradigm and effectively kidnaps herself. Unfortunately for her, the contrast between the image of the Gypsies as a vehicle for romantic escape that impels her flight and the reality of those she encounters is striking: Tom, as usual, is proved exactly right as the Gypsies empty Maggie's pocket "without attracting her notice" (117), offer her inadequate "cold victual" (117), and send her home, somewhat poorer but essentially unscathed, on a donkey. That this scene rehearses Maggie's later encounter with Stephen Guest is suggested by the elements the two escapes have in common: both are the result of Maggie's poor judgment, in which she fails to predict accurately the consequences of her actions (unlike Tom, whose rise to fortune indicates that he is much better at long-range planning). Both involve Maggie's decision to flout convention and embrace literal and figurative Gypsiness (not only the aberrant sexuality but the itinerancy that characterizes her escape with Stephen), and in both cases, she repents her action, aborts the mission, and returns home to face condemnation. Both escapes involve triangulation with poor cousin Lucy (who displays a morally superior femininity in both instances by forgiving Maggie), and both involve Maggie's brother Tom, who throughout the narrative is the person she loves most.

Clearly, an elopement has an explicit sexual subtext: while Stephen's declared intention is that the two will reach Scotland and then be married (485), thus legitimizing their union, the fact that Maggie spends several nights away from home and then returns home, still unmarried, opens her up to the condemnation of all of St. Ogg's: "Maggie had returned without a *trousseau*, without a husband—in that degraded and outcast condition to which error is well known to lead.... Could

anything be more detestable?" (510). This "degraded" condition is understood to be a fall from virtue in which in compromising her virtue, Maggie has forsaken one of the most important criteria of marriageability—virginity—and thus doomed her status as a commodity. The reactions of "the world's wife" (511) as Eliot terms the voices of public opinion, which are "always of the feminine gender" (509),<sup>220</sup> underscore the connection between Maggie's past and present actions: "There had always been something questionable about her....[T]o the world's wife, there had always been something in Miss Tulliver's very physique that a refined instinct felt to be prophetic of harm" (511). Maggie's "physique"—her dark Gypsiness—has been a harbinger of this incident all along.

If we return to the earlier incident with the Gypsies, then, with this outcome in mind, we may discern a sexual subtext to these early concerns about Maggie's Gypsy-like appearance, which may be read as indications of her propensity for non-normative sexual projects (such as her plan to marry the deformed Philip Wakem). While nothing explicitly sexual transpires in her elopement with the Gypsies, there is a hint, as in Harriet's encounter with the Gypsies in *Emma*, that it might easily have done. As Maggie passes "through the gate into the lane" (a narrow passageway with a "gate" that evokes, as in *Emma*, female anatomy), she encounters two men, apparently vagrants (one has "a bundle on a stick over his shoulder" (113)) coming toward her. With typical lack of awareness of the nature of the threats posed to her by her lapses in judgment, she merely dreads "their disapprobation [of her] as a runaway" (113), but it is clear, at least to modern readers, that the men pose a far

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<sup>220</sup> See Cohen's discussion of the force of public opinion, i.e., scandal, in disciplining gender in the novel (*Sex Scandal* 133 ff.).



more powerful threat. She gives them a sixpence and receives thanks in “a less respectful and grateful tone than [she] anticipated” (113), a gesture much like the derogatory “air of nonchalance” with which she is greeted after the Stephen episode by a man in the door of a billiard room (513). Before she even reaches the Gypsies, Maggie has placed herself in the position of receiving the very “opprobrium” she dreads by her rash choice: here, as in the elopement with Stephen, she has rashly opted for itinerancy that is read by others as a marker of sexual availability. To these two strange vagrants, much as she will later be to the St. Ogg’s chorus of public opinion, she is already a fallen woman, despite having failed to consummate her journey.

In the Gypsy encampment itself, Maggie is unharmed, apart from the aforementioned pocket-picking; however, a faint air of menace attends her visit. Finding Gypsies in the aforementioned lane, and not on the common, as she had hoped, she “hardly dared look on one side of her, lest she should see the diabolical blacksmith [i.e., the Devil] in his leathern apron grinning at her with arms akimbo” (114).<sup>221</sup> Next, she “caught sight of a small pair of bare legs sticking up, feet uppermost, by the side of a hillock; they seemed something hideously preternatural—a diabolical kind of fungus” (in fact, a Gypsy boy, asleep) (114). It is possible that nineteenth-century readers would not, like modern readers whose daily press is peppered with tales of child abduction by sexual predators, have seen this image initially as a picture of child rape or dismemberment; nevertheless, it is unsettling.

The Gypsies themselves, housed in the lane instead of the common, are “disappointing” (115). When “a tall female figure” approaches her, Maggie

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<sup>221</sup> The blacksmith has been referred to previously (20-21).

immediately notes a physical resemblance between the Gypsy woman and herself: “her aunt Pullet and the rest were right when they called her [Maggie] a gypsy” (115). But while this woman’s “coaxing deference” (which the reader recognizes as manipulative and seductive) is “delightful,” Maggie wishes the woman “had not been so dirty” (115). Here, Eliot is apparently attempting to infuse the romantic image of Gypsies with a bit of George-Smith-like realism: rather than troping escape, these Gypsies refuse to allow Maggie to abscond with them, and return her home, but not without conveying a sense that they could indeed have injured her:

Her ideas about gypsies had undergone a rapid modification in the last five minutes. From having considered them very respectful companions, amenable to instruction, she had begun to think that they meant perhaps to kill her as soon as it was dark, and cut up her body for gradual cooking: the suspicion crossed her that the fierce-eyed old man was in fact the devil who might drop that transparent disguise at any moment, and turn either into the grinning blacksmith or else a fiery-eyed monster with dragon’s wings. (120)

Far from rejecting the romantic image of the Gypsy entirely, Maggie’s overheated imagination substitutes an equally far-fetched but far more sinister picture in which the hint of dismemberment suggested by the posture of the sleeping boy blossoms into a fear of being killed and eaten and of the devilish blacksmith who continues to haunt her thoughts.

Ultimately, Maggie is returned to her family, but the journey home contains hints of sexual molestation: she is seated on a donkey with a young man who is

“holding Maggie before him, and she is as incapable of remonstrating against this arrangement as they donkey himself” (121). The donkey “at a strong hint from the man’s stick, set off at a rapid walk along the lane towards the point Maggie had come from an hour ago, while the tall girl and the rough urchin, also furnished with sticks, obligingly escorted them for the first hundred yards, with much screaming and thwacking” (121). If Harriet Smith’s encounter with the Gypsies can be read as an attempted rape, this scene bears an even more striking resemblance to one, especially given the role of the lane in Maggie’s entrance into the encampment. The narrator compares Maggie’s ride “with the gypsy behind her” to that of “Lenore<sup>222</sup> in that preternatural midnight excursion with her phantom lover” (121), a comparison that calls to mind Maggie’s later journey with Stephen Guest. When Maggie is returned to her father, who meets her on the road and takes her up on his horse, she confesses to her misdeeds and is comforted, and is later surprised by the fact that she “never heard one reproach from her mother or one taunt from Tom about this foolish business of her running away to the gypsies” (123). Her abortive kidnapping, with its undertones of sexuality and black magic, becomes as unspeakable as if it had been a sexual transgression.

If the sexual content of her elopement with the Gypsies is latent, it is far more evident in her flight with Stephen Guest, in which the fact that she and Stephen do not actually have sexual intercourse in no way saves her from utter condemnation by the community.<sup>223</sup> As their mutual passion becomes apparent, the fears of

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<sup>222</sup> Lenore is a bride from an eighteenth-century “medievalizing ballad” who is “taken on a long ride by her dead lover” (566 fn.).

<sup>223</sup> As Cohen points out, “[E]ven if Maggie had committed the sexual crime of which she is accused, Eliot demonstrates that public reaction would still depend fundamentally on an imaginary account of

dismemberment that Maggie has expressed in the scene with the Gypsies come to fruition when Stephen makes love to her arm, a display of orality that must certainly have reawakened Maggie's fear of being eaten: "A mad impulse seized on Stephen; he darted toward the arm, and showered kisses on it, clasping the wrist" (460). The strange autonomy of the arm, noted by critics,<sup>224</sup> is underscored by Eliot's comparison of the beauty of Maggie's limb to the limbs of a sculpture in the Parthenon of a "headless trunk" (460): Stephen's attack on the arm fulfills Maggie's earlier worst fears about dismemberment. In the chapter "In the Lane," a title that recalls the earlier encounter with the Gypsies, Stephen declares that he is "mad with love" for her (465), and when he commands her, "Take my arm," she does so, and begins her "slid[e] downwards into a nightmare" (466). Maggie's actual flight with Stephen is a literal drifting with the tide, which bears them past their destination and on toward a destiny that Maggie feels "bear[s] her along without any act of her own will" (484); and indeed, her will is absent until she makes her final decision not to accompany Stephen any further. In their elopement, itinerancy, a literal drifting, is explicitly configured in sexual terms that are only hinted at in her flight to the Gypsies; and in both instances, it is Maggie's own Gypsiness, well established early in the novel, that is her undoing.

While her journey away from home on a boat with Stephen Guest does not result in a successful monogamous pairing, it can be argued that the novel does end

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the story. The popular presumption of Maggie's unchastity renders meaningless her actual virtue; she would have done better with 'the ladies of St. Ogg's' had she followed through her elopement rather than repenting it" (*Sex Scandal* 141).

<sup>224</sup> See, for example, Cohen's discussion of "the erotic trajectory of an arm" (149). Homans refers to Maggie's arms as "genteel metonymies for her breasts" and reads "the fetishizing of this arm" as an indication that Maggie's sexuality "has become a marker of her and Stephen's rank as consumers" (175), seeing it as "[r]hetorically detached from her body" (176).

on a note of heterosexual closure, if in an aberrant register.<sup>225</sup> If it is Maggie's Gypsiness and the consequent demise of her reputation that prevent her from fulfilling the terms of a marriage plot in a conventional manner with Stephen Guest,<sup>226</sup> or at least Philip Wakem, the novel does in fact close on a pairing, the embrace in which she dies with her brother Tom. While Maggie and Tom's final climactic "one supreme moment" can hardly be called overtly sexual, it suggests that in the last itinerant instant in which they are hurled downward by the current "in an embrace never to be parted" (542), the novel has affirmed the trajectory of their non-normative coupling. If the Gypsy episode and the romance between Stephen and Maggie's arm bespeak anxiety about dismemberment, in the novel's ending, Maggie is re-membered, as she and Tom fuse their bodies, replicating the hand clasp of their pre-sexual youth, the only form of monogamy available to Maggie, her brother's ghostly Gypsy bride.

V. "The Drowned Phoenician Sailor": Gypsies in "The Waste Land"

If, as Kirstie Blair has convincingly argued, Gypsies function as markers for same-sex erotic desire, we may expect to find one in "The Waste Land" (1922), a poem in which a homosexual subtext has long been posited and around which much critical controversy has arisen regarding the sexuality of its author. Since the 1952 publication of John Peter's article, "A New Interpretation of 'The Waste Land,'" which alleged that the poem was an elegy in which "the speaker has fallen

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<sup>225</sup> Mary Jacobus terms the ending a "plot of incestuous reunion" (213).

<sup>226</sup> Jacobus points out that marriage to Stephen "would have placed Maggie finally outside the laws of St. Ogg's" (219).

completely—perhaps the right word is ‘irretrievably’ in love” with “a young man who soon afterwards met his death, it would seem by drowning,” the case for a homoerotic reading of the poem, pro and con, has permeated critical discourse. In Peter’s view, “The Waste Land” is “a meditation upon this deprivation” (i.e., the death of the “young man”) as well as “upon the speaker’s stunned and horrified reaction to it, and on the picture which, as seen through its all but insupportable blackness, the world presents” (Peter 245). Eliot responded to the article by threatening to sue the journal that had published it; the article was withdrawn, and Peter was “obliged to tender an apology to Eliot through his solicitors” (Seymour-Jones 302), but it was republished in 1969, four years after Eliot’s death. Peter’s hypothesis was then taken up by others, notably James T. Miller, Jr., Wayne Koestenbaum,<sup>227</sup> and most recently, Carole Seymour-Jones, whose 2001 biography of Vivien Eliot, *Painted Shadow*, makes a compelling argument that a significant root cause of the Eliots’ famed marital problems was his homosexuality.

Seymour-Jones synthesizes the argument of Peter, which she terms “a convincing one” (302), with those of Miller, who “compared *The Waste Land* to Tennyson’s mourning for the dead Arthur Hallam in *In Memoriam*” (302), and of psychiatrist Harry Trosman, who has argued that the poet had “homosexual longings” to which he “responded with panic” (qtd. in Seymour-Jones 121). These critics posit

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<sup>227</sup> In his study of Eliot and Pound’s hysterical-homoerotic (homohysterical?) collaboration on *The Waste Land* in *Double Talk: The Erotics of Male Literary Collaboration*, Koestenbaum refers to the poem’s “Shakesperian Rag” as “an elegy for drowned men—Ferdinand, Phlebas, and, obliquely, [Jean] Verdenal” (133). For a recent discussion of Eliot’s sexuality, see Suzanne W. Churchill’s somewhat less subtly titled “Outing T.S. Eliot” in which she correctly directs attention away from the question of Eliot’s homosexuality and toward his poetry, which she sees “powerful homoerotic currents” (8). “Since we don’t have proof one way or the other,” she says, “let’s move beyond the question of proof...Eliot’s poetry and prose writings display an obsessive interest in sexual corruption and a particular fascination with homosexuality” (10).

the identification of “Phlebas the Phoenician,” the drowned sailor of the poem’s fourth section, “Death by Water,” with Eliot’s close friend, Jean Verdenal, with whom Eliot shared both a pension and what Seymour-Jones terms a “magical spring” in Paris in 1911 (54), and who was killed at Gallipoli in 1915. Miller cites a remark by Eliot in a 1934 review in *Criterion* in which the poet “burst forth with an uncharacteristically personal comment,” stating, “I am willing to admit that my own retrospect [on Paris] is touched by a sentimental sunset, the memory of a friend [Verdenal] coming across the Luxembourg Gardens in the late afternoon, waving a branch of lilac, a friend who was later (as far as I could find out) to be mixed with the mud of Gallipoli” (6).<sup>228</sup> It is difficult not to read echoes of this memory (and its implicit desire) in the opening lines of “The Waste Land” in which lilacs are bred from the “dead land,” i.e., the mud. Even if one does not fully accept Miller’s argument about the poem, one cannot help but be reminded by what is known of Eliot’s relationship with Verdenal or Matthew Arnold’s with Arthur Clough: both were close intellectual connections with romantic undertones (evidenced by the “sentimental” story about the lilacs), documented by a warm correspondence, one side of which has been lost (only Verdenal’s letters to Eliot are known to exist). When Verdenal writes to Eliot, “So this evening, when I got back [from a spring ride to St. Cloud in a “little boat”], I thought of writing to you, because *you* were especially called to mind by contact with a landscape we appreciated together” (qtd. in Miller 13), his evocation of the landscape as a metonymy for their relationship is

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<sup>228</sup> See Miller also for a discussion of G. Wilson Knight’s assertion that “the hyacinth girl appears to be male” (Miller 5).

reminiscent of Arnold's depiction of the Oxford landscape in his Clough poems.<sup>229</sup>

While there is no evidence that the hyper-erudite Eliot had somehow decoded Arnold's "The Scholar-Gipsy" and was thus drawing upon the Gypsy trope as a figure for homoerotic longing, it does appear that that within the complex multiple destabilizations functioning in "The Waste Land," a Gypsy—Madame Sosostris—has a pivotal role.

In "T.S. Eliot's 'Uranian Muse': The Verdenal Letters," Miller examines Verdenal's letters in conjunction with sections of "The Waste Land" and cites numerous parallels between them in support of not only the theory that Eliot's relationship with Verdenal was homosexual but that in terming Ezra Pound his "Uranian muse" Eliot was "locating the poem's origin in a homosexual union" (4).<sup>230</sup> Miller discerns evidence of homosexual desire in both Verdenal's letters and "The Waste Land": for example, in his final letter to Eliot (from December 26, 1912), Verdenal says, "I wish you, for the coming year, an oft-renewed ardour—ardour, flame—but its source is in the heart, and here it is that our wishes must be prudent." Miller locates this reference to what is "prudent" echoed in the final section of the poem:

*Datta*: What have we given?

My friend, blood shaking my heart

The awful daring of a moment's surrender

Which an age of prudence can never retract. (Miller 6)

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<sup>229</sup> Another strange similarity between Eliot and Arnold is that both made a "sudden and inexplicable marriage" (as Miller said of Eliot's, 16) shortly after breaking with their respective friends.

<sup>230</sup> See also Koestenbaum's reading of Eliot's collaboration with Pound: "Pound, Eliot's male muse, is the sire of *The Waste Land*": "Receptive Eliot takes in Pound's sperm, for E.P....is [in Pound's bawdy verse to Eliot] the source of the upjutting 'cream'" (121).



In addition, following G. Wilson Knight's reading, Miller considers the evidence in the Facsimile manuscript of the poem that these lines originally read as follows (added words in brackets):

DATTA: ~~we brother~~, what have we given?

My friend, my ~~blood/friend~~, [blood shaking] ~~beating [within] in~~  
my heart,

The awful daring of a moment's surrender

Which an age of prudence can~~not~~ [never] retract— (*Facsimile 77*)

The deleted words reveal that the person to whom the speaker (at least, one of the poem's speakers) addresses these remarks is male, a fact elided in the final draft. If Eliot's relationship with Verdenal was indeed a love affair, and if the "moment's surrender" was romantic and/or sexual, Eliot seems to have taken steps to conceal that; his threatened lawsuit against Peter might imply, as Miller has intimated, that where there was smoke, there must have been fire.<sup>231</sup>

But as in the case of Arnold and Clough, the biographical underpinnings of "The Waste Land" are less important to this discussion than that the poem can be, and indeed has famously been, read in terms of homoerotic desire; and that a Gypsy figures prominently in it. The appearance of Madame Sosostris in the poem's first section, "The Burial of the Dead," has been much remarked upon by critics, several of whom have advanced interpretations of the Tarot readings she performs.<sup>232</sup> That Madame Sosostris is a Gypsy can be confirmed by tracing the origins of her name to

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<sup>231</sup> See Miller's letter in *The New York Review of Books* in response to Irving Ehrenpreis's skeptical review of *T.S. Eliot's Personal Waste Land* ("Mr. Eliot's Martyrdom").

<sup>232</sup> See, for example, Max Nanny, "'Cards are Queer': A New Reading of The Tarot in *The Waste Land*," and Betsey B. Creekmore, "The Tarot Fortune in the Waste Land."

Aldous Huxley's 1921 novel *Crome Yellow* in which Mr. Scogan, a character said to be based on Bertrand Russell, appears at the local Bank Holiday fair dressed as "Sesostris, the Sorceress of Ectbatana" wearing "a black skirt and a red bodice, with a yellow-and-red bandana handkerchief tied round his black wig" (132). As we may recall from *Guy Mannerling* and *Jane Eyre*, the bandana is a marker of Gypsy costume,<sup>233</sup> and Scogan's Gypsiness is further established by the narrator's remark that he looked "like the Bohemian Hag of [William Powell] Frith's *Derby Day*" (132), a popular 1858 painting, now in the Tate, in which a "Bohemian," i.e., Gypsy woman is represented among a large crowd. If Eliot had a tendency to hide personal allusions inside a series of poetic Russian dolls, his adoption of Scogan/Russell's interestingly transvestite Sesostris may be a cryptic representation of the affair between Russell and Eliot's first wife Vivienne documented by both Seymour-Jones and Peter Ackroyd (84). Eliot's adoption of Huxley's character suggests that not only Sesostris but also by implication, Madame Sosostris borrows the trope of the ambiguously-gendered Gypsy figure, in accordance with the multiple references in "The Waste Land" to ambiguous or dual gender of which Tiresias is the mythological embodiment.

The appearance of Madame Sostriis in "The Waste Land" is critical to the poem: a modern and ergo debased sibyl, she introduces the presence of a character who, like Verdenal, has been killed<sup>234</sup>: in the fortune she lays out with Tarot cards, the first card she draws, presumably for the speaker, is that of "the drowned

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<sup>233</sup>Judith Okely quotes a 1927 description of a Gypsy woman's traditional costume in which the woman first dons her "hawking-apron" and "*monging*-sheet [i.e., begging sheet]" and then "re-ties the kerchief she is wearing on her head" (209).

<sup>234</sup> As I have mentioned, it has been argued that the "hyacinth girl" is Verdenal, but Sosostris's fortune is the first place the drowned sailor, thought to be Verdenal, appears.

Phoenician sailor,” who will surface later in the poem as “Phlebas the Phoenician.” In the postscript to the republished version of his 1952 article, John Peter identifies Phlebas as Verdenal (Miller 5). The next line, “Those are pearls that were his eyes. Look!” comes from the song in *The Tempest* in which Ariel reminds Ferdinand of his presumably drowned father, Alonso, and suggests that rather than fading, Alonso has “suffered a sea change,/Into something rich and strange” (I, ii, 401-04). Perhaps, to build on Peter’s and Miller’s readings, for Eliot, Verdenal has not faded but has simply been transmuted into poesy where he is well hidden by the “depersonalization” Eliot adumbrated in “Tradition and the Individual Talent”—though unfortunately for Eliot, not sufficiently hidden to deter critics from homosexual readings of the poem, even within the poet’s lifetime.<sup>235</sup> As Max Nanny puts it in his article on the poem’s Tarot spread, “By burying the personal element under an opaque or occult layer of Tarot symbolism, Madame Sosostris’ cards were for Eliot also ‘a means of talking about himself without giving himself away’” (337). Verdenal or not, it is clear that the Phoenician sailor haunts the entire poem, returning as “Phlebas the Phoenician” in section IV, “Death by Water”<sup>236</sup> to reveal that Madame Sosostris’ reading has been accurate. Despite its importance to the poem, the card of the drowned Phoenician sailor is not actually one of the Waite Tarot deck, as Eliot notes in his perhaps deliberately misleading footnotes,<sup>237</sup> but was created by Eliot, as was “Belladonna, the Lady of the Rocks,” a card generally equated with

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<sup>235</sup> Eliot seems to have curiously underestimated the powers of New Critical interpretation.

<sup>236</sup> The short Phlebas stanzas are all that remain of a longer narrative section excised by Ezra Pound (see the *Facsimile*).

<sup>237</sup> Eliot was allegedly familiar with the deck, despite his protestations to the contrary (see his footnote to line 46 and also Creekmore 908 and 911 and Diemert 176).

Eliot's wife Vivienne, to blend with the actual Tarot deck, from which Eliot says he "departed to suit my own convenience" (note to line 46).

Thus, a Gypsy woman with a subtext of multiple gender begins the poem by dealing the speaker, presumably, a fortune to which cards inspired by Verdenal and Vivienne are central, with the warning, "Fear death by water"—an admonition that would perhaps have been helpful to Phlebas, whose sea voyage evidently ended badly. Eliot claims in one of his footnotes to the poem to associate the "Hanged Man, a member of the traditional pack" with both "the Hanged God of Fraser" and "the hooded figure" in Part V, adding "The Man with Three Staves (an authentic member of the Tarot pack) I associate, quite arbitrarily, with the Fisher King himself" (note for line 46). Perhaps Eliot has hidden the important cards, Verdenal and Vivienne, among the real cards and obscured their significance further with his strategically obfuscatory footnoted explanations. Though he attempts to associate the figure of the Hanged Man, i.e., the dead man, with mythological and religious figures, these allusions appear to be Eliot's ways of concealing the identity of the man who lurks underwater, at the heart of the poem, turning into "something rich and strange" that can no longer be identified as Verdenal.

The final stanza of Part I also contains a hidden dead man: the speaker describes a London scene that echoes Dante's *Inferno*, then sees someone he knows and cries, "Stetson!/You who were with me in the ships of Mylae!" and asks him, "That corpse you planted last year in your garden,/Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?/Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?" (69-73). The similarity

between the battle of Mylae and World War I<sup>238</sup> is in keeping with the poem's consistent juxtaposition of the horrors of modern life with classical analogies. The speaker's next remark to Stetson is the warning, "Oh keep the Dog far hence, that's friend to men,/Or with his nails he'll dig it up again" (74-5).<sup>239</sup> Because the entire poem is so redolent of the war and its aftermath, it is not far-fetched to associate this buried corpse with that of Verdun, "mixed with the mud of Gallipoli." The fear that the corpse will be dug up again bespeaks a nightmarish rendition of the dormancy and transformation of Phlebas who, being Phoenician, has perhaps also been killed in the Punic Wars. The final line of this section, "You! hypocrite lecteur!—mon semblable—mon frère," is generally thought to be addressed to the reader, like Baudelaire's "Au Lecteur," from which it comes, and perhaps the speaker's fear is that the reader will, like an overenthusiastic dog, dig up the corpse of Verdun that he has planted in the poem—as indeed Peter and Miller have done.

Critics generally agree that Part II of the poem, "A Game of Chess," reproduces Eliot's relationship with Vivien: in his notes, Pound refers to the dialogue in lines 111-14 as "photography" (*Facsimile* 11), i.e., what Seymour-Jones terms "a virtual transcript of [Vivienne's] own nervous assaults upon her husband" (308). At the end of this onslaught, the woman says, "'Do/You know nothing? Do you see nothing? Do you remember/Nothing?'" to which the speaker of this scene responds, "I remember/Those are pearls that were his eyes," a response that in light of the previous allusion to *The Tempest* sounds very much like a coded allusion to the drowned Phoenician sailor introduced by Madame Sosostris, and perhaps, in terms of

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<sup>238</sup> This is remarked upon in the footnote to the Norton Anthology edition of the poem.

<sup>239</sup> Here, Eliot substitutes the dog for the wolf and "friend" for the "foe" of Webster's original lines in *The White Devil*.

the Peter/Miller argument, to Verdenal. *The Tempest* surfaces again in the poem's third section, "The Fire Sermon," as the speaker is "fishing in the dull canal...behind the gashouse" and "Musing upon the king my brother's wreck/And on the king my father's death before him." The actual line from the play is "Sitting on a bank/Weeping again the King my father's wrack" (I.ii.392-3); Eliot has inserted a second death, that of a "brother." Eliot's father died in 1919, just before the poem was written but well after the death of Verdenal; however, if Eliot wanted to conceal his "musing" on Verdenal's death, he might indeed have chosen to render the poem more "impersonal" by fiddling with the chronology. It would appear from this "Shakepeherian" allusion that while the poem's references to *The Tempest* conflate the drowned sailor with the presumed-drowned king of the play, the separation of father from brother here indicates that it is not just his father's death the speaker is musing but that of a male contemporary.

In the next full stanza, contrapuntal to the veiled reference to Phlebas, the Smyrna merchant Mr. Eugenides makes a proposition to the speaker that is not only homosexual but vulgar, i.e., "in demotic French" (209-12). If Madame Sosostris has predicted the death of Phlebas, it appears she has also alluded to Eugenides, the "one-eyed merchant" of her reading. It is in the following stanza that Tiresias, "Old man with wrinkled female breasts," appears, a classical version of the hermaphroditic Sosostris, and introduces "the typist home at teatime" and "the young man carbuncular," whose debased modern affair contrasts not only with the "lovely woman" who "stoops to folly" in Oliver Goldsmith's poem but also with the relationship between Queen Elizabeth I and the earl of Leicester, as Eliot's footnote

affirms. A similar pairing is legible in the juxtaposition of another line from *The Tempest*, “This music crept by me upon the waters,” with “The pleasant whining of a mandoline” from “a public bar in Lower Thames Street” that is filled with lounging “fishmen” (260-61). The poem continually yokes the debased urban modern to the elevated classical and/or mythological; here, perhaps the *Tempest*-music redolent of the Phoenician sailor is favorably contrasted with the quotidian homosexual assignations available with the also vaguely aquatic “fishmen.”

The poem’s fourth section, “Death by Water,” asks the reader to ruminate on Phlebas the Phoenician, who is “a fortnight dead”: “[c]onsider Phlebas, who was once handsome and tall as you” (321). That Phlebas’ bones are “[p]icked in whispers” by a “current under the sea” suggests once more the lines from *The Tempest* about “sea change.” If indeed, as Eliot’s notes claim, “The Waste Land” is influenced by Jessie Weston’s *From Ritual to Romance* and its examination of the ancient roots of Arthurian legend, it would appear that the Fisher King is not the only male figure in the poem who has died and is awaiting resurrection: Phlebas the Phoenician, too, awaits the kind of rebirth that takes place in *The Tempest* in which the presumed drownings of Ferdinand and his father are shown to have been a magical illusion, and the entire party of the downed ship is renewed, their garments freshened and their senses restored. If indeed Phlebas is in the same condition as Ferdinand’s father, then he, too, like the Fisher King, is not truly dead.

The poem’s final section, “What the Thunder Said,” laments that “He who was living is now dead” (328). If water is what renews Phlebas, here it is absent, and “We who were living are now dying” (329), presumably as a result of this lack. The

fourth stanza asks, “Who is the third who walks always beside you?” With maddening playfulness, Eliot’s footnote ascribes this reference to an anecdote about “one of the Antarctic expeditions (I forget which, but I think one of Shackleton’s)” in which “the party of explorers, at the extremity of their strength, had the constant delusion that there was *one more member* than could actually be counted” (52-3). His introductory note to this section asserts that “the [Christ’s] journey to Emmaus” is one of its “three themes”; the other two are “the approach to the Chapel Perilous...and the present decay of eastern Europe” (perhaps Turkey, i.e., Gallipoli) (52). If one assumes that a function of Eliot’s notes is to obscure his cryptic allusions still further, it seems likely that whoever this third presence is, he is somehow related to the other male figure who lurks in the poem, awaiting resurrection.

While there is much more to be said about Eliot’s alleged homosexuality and its presence in “The Waste Land,” the important fact here is not that the poem *should* be read as a cryptic coming out for Eliot, but that such readings are possible and indeed, compelling. Certainly, it is uncontroversial to assert that Mr. Eugenides’ proposition to the speaker involving “a weekend at the Metropole” is sexual; therefore, when Madame Sosostris introduces him in the form of the “one-eyed merchant,” a Gypsy figure has entered a text and triggered manifestations of homosexual desire. Whether other such manifestations lurk, Phlebas-like, in the poem, we may only speculate, but certainly the appearance of Sosostris introduces the vulgar sexual relationships that the poem so trenchantly juxtaposes with a mythopoetic underpinning like that of Joyce’s *Ulysses*, one of Eliot’s inspirations. Sosostris does not so much signal an overturning of the status quo, like other Gypsy



figures we have examined, as a lament that the status quo is so debased *vis a vis* that of the classical world, which Eliot seems to view as the *real* status quo, a Platonic reality to which the horrific modern world can never measure up. Whereas in “The Scholar-Gipsy,” the Gypsy, who is male and an object of desire, emblemizes a vanished rural world, in *The Waste Land*, the repellently female Sosostri<sup>240</sup> serves as a marker of modernity, in which she participates. Both point nostalgically toward the past, but Madame Sosostri, infected by “a bad cold,” is a denizen of the corrupt present in which homosexual assignations, like that proposed by Mr. Eugenides, are sordid and tawdry, unlike the heroic homosexuality of the classical past in which Verdenal can loom immortal as a mythic figure in Eliot’s imagined fallen world.

VI. “Be Braver in Your Body”: *The Virgin and the Gipsy*

If there is anywhere one might expect to find non-normative sexual exploration in the Modern period, it is in the work of D.H. Lawrence. Unlike in the other works this chapter examines, in which erotic desire roils beneath the surface, signaled by the Gypsy trope, in Lawrence’s novella, *The Virgin and the Gipsy* (1930, posthumous), the Gypsy figure’s sexuality is foregrounded and indeed, fundamental to the plot. Similarly, while other female protagonists whose paths have crossed those of Gypsy figures may have become infused with Gypsiness, Yvette Saywell, the eponymous virgin of Lawrence’s novella, is explicitly infected with it. As its title implies, the entire novella is informed by the threats to her virginity posed by the Bohemian sexualities of her wayward mother (who has deserted her father, the

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<sup>240</sup> Koestenbaum calls her “a cross-dressed Ezra Pound” (130).

rector), the scandalously unmarried couple with whom Yvette takes up, and the Gypsy himself, whose dark, threatening sexuality hovers over the entire novel.<sup>241</sup>

For Lawrence, this non-normative figure beyond the margins of the repressive, class-bound society is homologous to other representations of the “primitive” in his work. Brett Neilson (1997) has read “the Lawrentian primitive” in terms of a “negotiability of gender” which “allows the co-existence of hetero- and homosexual modes of desire” (par. 2); for Lawrence, the “primitive” is synonymous with modes of sexuality unfettered by convention. The exoticism with which Gypsies are depicted has, in Said’s terms, an inherently erotic, even pornographic dimension that renders them a fit subject for Lawrence’s textual/sexual explorations.

By Lawrence’s time, Gypsies’ nomadic presence in Britain was even more at risk than it had been in the previous century, making Gypsies even more representative of vanishing pastoralism as their position was endangered by government attempts to regulate them.<sup>242</sup> *The Virgin and the Gipsy* records this exoticised, “vanishing” figure of the Gypsy in a Borrowian register; a reworking of a High Victorian text, Tennyson’s “The Lady of Shalott” (see Turner 154; Guttenberg 170),<sup>243</sup> the novella depicts the virgin Yvette imprisoned not in a tower but in a provincial rectory. While the Lady of Shalott is doomed to suicide by her glimpse of Lancelot, Yvette is saved from drowning by the Gypsy, who appears as a flood is about to decimate her house and brings her upstairs to safety. By the novella’s end,

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<sup>241</sup> Lawrence biographer Brenda Maddox characterizes it as “a rollicking tale on a familiar theme: well-born girl breaches class barriers and finds sensual truth in arms of swarthy primitive” (388).

<sup>242</sup> Okely states that the treatment of Gypsies in the twentieth century continued to manifest “contrasting concerns; either to control or to exoticise Gypsies” (23).

<sup>243</sup> John Turner suggests that Lawrence’s “hostility to *The Lady of Shalott* epitomizes his rejection of a whole nineteenth-century cultural tradition in which the impingements of reality upon artistic or sexual fantasy were either dreaded as a kind of death or longed for as a *Liebestod*” (154). Carol Siegel reads *Virgin* as a reworking of *The Mill and the Floss* (172).

Yvette is overcome with desire for the Gypsy, and though whether she is still technically a “virgin” at that point is still a matter of critical debate, it is clear that she has undergone a form of sexual liberation as a result of spending the night, naked, with him.<sup>244</sup> Their encounter is not a traditional glamouring, in which the high-born maiden is lured away; here, the Gypsy is enticed into Yvette’s own house and does not carry her away to join the “raggle-taggle Gypsies” but leaves her to return to her own life. The Gypsy here is not merely the embodiment of a simple sexuality, as the traditional ballads hint, or of doomed attraction, like Lancelot in “The Lady of Shalott,” but a vehicle for the complex sort of sexual liberation and transformation that interested Lawrence.<sup>245</sup>

Some critics have argued that in fact, *The Virgin and the Gypsy* was a harbinger or even a direct progenitor of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*.<sup>246</sup> The hasty composition of *Virgin* in January 1926 was only nine months prior to the inception of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, a novel that was to go through three iterations (Maddox 401). It is easy to locate many casual similarities in plot: like Yvette, Connie Chatterley is imprisoned in a provincial British parish, fettered to a middle-aged man—in Connie’s case her impotent husband, in Yvette’s, a father who has been rendered asexual by the desertion of his wife. Both women are released from their

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<sup>244</sup> According to Turner, “Kingsley Widmer is convinced that Yvette loses her virginity, whilst Julian Moynihan is equally convinced that she does not. Does she or doesn’t she? We may refer the question to the requirements of censorship if we wish, but I suspect that Lawrence’s silence is part of his purpose” (156).

<sup>245</sup> John B. Vickery identifies the Gypsy as “the fertility figure who appears as a stranger to assist in the ritual defloration of unmarried girls.” “Strikingly enough,” he adds, “this ritual does not seem to take place in the story, though some readers feel that the ending of Section IX is discreetly ambiguous on this score” (240).

<sup>246</sup> As Barnett Guttenberg puts it, “In 1925, while Lawrence worked on *The Virgin and the Gypsy*, *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* was slouching toward Italy to be born” (174). Siegel says that *Virgin* “has been regarded as the prototype of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* (11).

sexless states by lower-class men who are viewed as inappropriate but whose influence effects a transformation. Unlike *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, *The Virgin and the Gipsy* is a return to the practices of the Victorian novel in which sexuality is coded; however, while the Gypsy's ultimate sharing of Yvette's bed may not be as blatantly sexual as the relationship between Connie and Mellors in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (and indeed, little had been published by Lawrence's time that was as blatantly sexual as that), by Victorian standards, the erotic content of *Virgin* is relatively clear.

Throughout the novella, the Gypsy's virility is contrasted with the signs of sexual inadequacy in the landscape: the rectory itself, "a rather ugly stone house down by the river Papple," is near "the big old stone cotton-mills, once driven by water" (2). The absence of water in Papplewick and nonfunctionality of the cotton-mills suggest impotence, and foreshadow Yvette's later release from virginity, literal or figurative, and the concomitant flood. The other members of the rector's household are equally physically impaired in ways also evocative of impotence: Granny, whose sight is failing; Aunt Cissie, who is "over forty, pale, pious, and gnawed by an inward worm"(2) and "had to have an operation" (15); Uncle Fred, "stingy and grey-haired," who "just lived dingily for himself"(2); and Yvette's sister Lucille, who is also a virgin, though of a different order from Yvette. It is an environment from which all apparent danger appears, falsely, as it turns out, to have been banished: "There was now a complete stability, in which one could perish safely" (5).<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> Maddox quotes Lawrence's remark to Frieda's son Monty: "Remember...only the dead are safe" (397).

The rectory itself, to which Yvette and Lucille have returned after a “finishing year in Lausanne” (though in Lawrentian terms, they are not finished) (8), embodies the stultification and impotence of English provincial life:

The rectory struck a chill into their hearts as they entered. It seemed ugly, and almost sordid, with the dank air of that middle-class, degenerated comfort which has ceased to be comfortable and has turned stuffy, unclean. The hard, stone house struck the girls as being unclean, they could not have said why. Even the food at meals had that awful dreary sordidness....(10)

Yvette and Lucille are imprisoned both in this frigid environment and in middle-class Englishness; they return from abroad to the tedious society of their peers, who are free to “do almost entirely as they liked,” but in whose hands “the keys of their lives...dangled inert” (another image of impotence), as “[i]t is very much easier to shatter prison bars than to open undiscovered doors to life” (21).

While on a road trip in a car driven by Yvette’s unappealing suitor, Leo, the young people overtake a cart that is driven by “a black, loose-bodied, handsome sort” of Gypsy, at whose sight “Yvette’s heart gave a jump” and at whom Leo honks and yells “imperiously” (26).<sup>248</sup> Following behind the Gypsy, the car enters a “deep recess” and turns into a “disused quarry,” a “lair, almost like a cave” where three caravans are sheltering in a camp that is “hidden” and “snug” (28). The topography into which they venture, reminiscent of that of the Gypsy encounter in *Emma*, is populated by the Gypsy’s extended family, an elderly man and woman and “a

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<sup>248</sup> See Trumpener for a discussion of the relative paces of the vehicles in this scene, which, she says, “stresses the nonsynchronicity with which the Gypsies in their cart and a careful of bored young white Europeans move through time” (847).

darkfaced gipsy-woman.” While the male Gypsy is described as handsome and “curiously elegant” and “quite expensive in the Gypsy style,” his wife is depicted in more stereotypical terms, “with a pink shawl or kerchief round her head and big gold earrings in her ears” and a “flounced, voluminous green skirt,” “one of the bold, loping Spanish Gypsies,” “handsome in a bold, dark, long-faced way, just a bit wolfish” (28-9), a “pagan pariah” (29). The Gypsies’ fecundity is manifested in their prolific offspring, whose number the Gypsy man estimates at five (69).<sup>249</sup>

While the explicit sexual diction of *Lady Chatterley* ultimately did much to advance the cause of freedom of speech, *Virgin* employs a more traditional, more repressed language; the novella’s depiction of the Gypsies as dark, exotic, even sinister, suggests a well-suppressed erotic subtext with which Austen and the Brontës might have been comfortable. Yvette’s brush with them might have been, like Harriet’s, a disturbing, even traumatic encounter with an otherness that bespoke hidden, furtive sexuality, but for the ending in which her liberation is enacted. Her transformation begins in the scene at the camp: she opts to move away from her friends and have her fortune told discreetly in the Gypsies’ caravan, a fortune so private that the reader is never told precisely what it was, and when she emerges from the caravan, she has already been infused with Gypsiness: her “long legs” are suddenly “witch-like,” and “[t]here was a stooping, witch-like silence about her” (33-4). Though she claims to her friends that the Gypsy said “the usual old thing,” the implication is that her summary is a fiction, as the narrator asserts that “what the Gypsy told her, no one ever knew” (33). It is hardly surprising that the fortune would

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<sup>249</sup> Nord notes that this scene “draws on a number of visual clichés of Gypsy representation” and that “Lawrence milks this virtually ready-made imagery of charismatic, socially marginal masculinity throughout the narrative, only to expose it as cliché and fantasy in the end” (*Gypsies* 162-3).

be unspeakable, given how much else in the novella cannot be talked about openly, beginning with the subject of Yvette and Lucille's mother, unlike in the linguistic world of Mellors' frank Anglo-Saxon discourse. Yvette's surname, Saywell, is well suited to the hypocrisy of her milieu in which sex is unmentionable.

Yvette's resemblance to the Lady of Shalott is underscored by her position at the window of the rectory. The narrator tells us that she "always expected *something* to come down the slant of the road from Papplewick [the village, on the other side of the river], and she always lingered at the landing window" (53; Lawrence's italics). Instead of Lancelot, the Gypsy man approaches in his cart, "as if in a kind of dream....It was like something seen in a sleep" (53). He nods to her; she returns his nod, and when he comes to the door, she looks at him "with her naïve, childlike eyes, that were as capable of double meanings as his own" (55). Unlike in *Lady Chatterley*, their sexual attraction is conveyed entirely through nuance and innuendo: "He looked back into her eyes for a second, with that naked suggestion of desire which acted on her like a spell, and robbed her of her will" (55). In an invitation that is well understood by both Yvette and the reader to be sexual, the Gypsy tells Yvette to return to the camp on Fridays, "when I'm there," and she responds as if she has not heard him (56). This is the stuff of romance, even pornography; the Gypsy "had seen her, his swarthy predatory face was alert" (53), and what he has seen is "the dark, tremulous, potent secret of her virginity" (58). His exotic otherness contrasts with the dullness of the rectory, and to the "common, but good-natured" Leo, whose proposal of marriage Yvette dismisses as "perfectly silly!" (60). Even Leo understands the sexual power of the Gypsy: "Ever since those gipsies told your fortune, I felt it was

me or nobody, for you, and you or nobody, for me,” he tells her. (Yvette’s response is, “I could never have dreamed of such an impossible thing” (60).) She imagines the Gypsy man, his elegance, “the level, significant stare of the black eyes, which seemed to shoot her in some vital, undiscovered place, unerring” (62). In this moment, she makes an unconscious identification with the Gypsies, as if she has been “glamoured”: she realizes that she despises her peers, “[j]ust as the raggle-taggle gipsy women despise men who are not gipsies” (62). In referencing the well-known ballad about the upper-class woman who forsakes her home for a Gypsy man, Yvette implies that she not only identifies with the woman’s escape—much like that of her mother—but with the Gypsy women themselves. Since her encounter with the Gypsies, she is a “tall young virgin *witch*” who “might metamorphose into something uncanny before you knew where you were” (63; Lawrence’s italics).

It is this gradual foregrounding of sexuality that causes the novella to transcend its *Lavengro*-esque study of Gypsy life. When Yvette arrives at the Gypsies’ camp, the Gypsy man sees her and smiles in “triumph,” and it is clear what his intentions are. The subtext underlying their interaction is quite clear, and the scene reads like a prelude to seduction in which he, Svengali-like, overpowers her:

Her will had departed from her limbs, he had power over her: his shadow was on her. And he, as he blew his hot coffee, was aware of one thing only, the mysterious fruit of her virginity, her perfect tenderness in the body.....Like a mysterious early flower, she was full out, like a snowdrop which spreads its three white wings in a flight into the waking sleep of its brief blossoming. The waking sleep of her



full-opened virginity, entranced like a snowdrop in the sunshine, was upon her. (69)

Yvette has come to the Gypsy camp because her attraction to the Gypsy man has overpowered her will, and it is apparent that she is about to assent to his sexual advances. When he repeats, “You want to go to my caravan now, and wash your hands?” she responds now, “I think I might” (70). “Come!” he says, and she “follow[s] simply, follow[s] the silent, secret, over-powering motion of his body in front of her....She was gone in his will” (70). They are poised on the brink of a moment like those of Lady Chatterley and Mellors, in which Connie lies down with “a queer obedience” (121): “[h]is body was urgent against her, and she hadn’t the heart any more to fight....her will had left her. A strange weight was on her limbs. She was giving way. She was giving up” (*Chatterley* 137). The process by which Yvette submits to the Gypsy structurally and thematically mirrors that of Lady Chatterley and the gamekeeper.

But while Connie and Mellors are soon in the grips of a very sexually explicit physical congress, this outcome is aborted in *The Virgin and the Gipsy* by the unexpected arrival of a motorcar. The Gypsy and Yvette pause on the steps to the caravan and return to the fire, where they are joined by the Eastwoods, a woman “in the coat of many dead little animals” whom the narrator decides is “probably a Jewess,”<sup>250</sup> and a man she calls her husband, with fur gloves and a pipe (71).<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> According to Maddox, “Lawrence spoke with the casual anti-Semitism common to his day” (165), but Meyers, another biographer, says that “Lawrence had a pronounced and unpleasant strain of anti-Semitism,” a “curious compound of traditional hostility to Jews and a belief that Jews were an ancient race with a depth of experience, but in a state of decay,” (132), and notes Lawrence’s “theorizing about the connection between Jewish and modern decadence” (128).

<sup>251</sup> Turner notes, “At this point the tale seems set to follow the traditional pattern of ballads like ‘The Wraggle Taggle Gipsies’, in which a woman throws over all the advantages of class, education, and

Perhaps the othering of Mrs. Eastwood, and her alleged decadence, is meant to contrast with or double the othering of the Gypsies; the Eastwoods exemplify bourgeois materialism, and appear to be the embodiment of all that Lawrence disliked about England in general and Eastwood, his home town, in particular.<sup>252</sup>

Here, Yvette is forced to choose between the bourgeois decadence of the Eastwoods and the primitive romance of the Gypsy: for the time being, she chooses the Eastwoods, and a ride home. At Yvette's entrance into the Gypsy's caravan, the novel has taken a sharp turn from the Victorian to the Modern, and the Eastwoods appear to emblemize the latter—with their open admission of adultery—yet in their disapproval of Yvette's attraction to the Gypsy, they veer suddenly back into Victorianism. Later, Yvette explains the Eastwoods to her sister Lucille, who says, in a Victorian register, "I should think, *when they're married*, it would be rather fun knowing them" (Lawrence's italics, 80). Just as Lucille functions as a foil to Yvette in a Lawrentian sister-pairing, so do the Eastwoods mirror the Gypsies, a parallel Yvette draws attention to when she asks Lucille, "What is it...that brings people together? People like the Eastwoods, for instance, and Daddy and Mamma, so frightfully unsuitable?—and that gipsy woman who told my fortune, like a great horse, and the gipsy man, so fine and delicately cut? What is it?" Lucille replies, "I suppose it's sex, whatever that is" (81). Lucille goes on to distinguish between two kinds of sex—"the

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wealth in order to roam the wildness of nature with her chosen gipsy. But Yvette and the gipsy are interrupted by the arrival of the 'Eastwoods'" (143).

<sup>252</sup> Oddly, their situation—in which "Mrs. Eastwood" admits to being a "Mrs. Fawcett" on the verge of divorce, the "mother of two children," on an adulterous "honeymoon" with the younger Major Eastwood—parallels that of Lawrence and Frieda, just as the Saywell sisters' situation parallels that of Frieda's daughters. Perhaps in one register, Lawrence saw himself as the Gypsy, liberating Frieda from her tedious bourgeois marriage, but in another, he saw their situation, mirrored by the Eastwoods, as decadent and corrupt.

low sort” and “the other sort, that isn’t low,” and concludes, “I never feel anything *sexual*....Perhaps I haven’t got any sex.” “Perhaps we haven’t really *got* any sex, to connect us with men,” Yvette agrees, and Lucille says, “Oh, I think it’s an awful pity there has to *be* sex” (81). Yvette, in contrast to her sister, ponders the Gypsy: “She felt rather like Peter when the cock crew, as she denied him,” but concludes that it was not the Gypsy she denied, but “some hidden part of herself: that part which mysteriously and unconfessedly responded to him. And it was a strange, lustrous black cock which crew in mockery of her” (82). This complex conflation of *double entendre* and biblical allusion intimates that Lawrence views Yvette’s relationship with the Gypsy in particular and sex in general as holy, a spiritual act of redemption, and that the flood waters that accompany the Gypsy’s later rescue of Yvette have a religious significance. The Gypsy is later quite literally her savior, but here the implication is that he is a figurative savior as well.

Yvette’s nascent relationship with the Eastwoods is threatened by her father, who associates them with “criminal lunacy” and vows, “I will kill you before you shall go the way of your mother”(93). It is increasingly clear that the rector is taking a stand against sex itself, and he warns Yvette that she may associate with the Eastwoods if she wishes, but “you must not expect to associate with your Granny, and your Aunt Cissie, and Lucille, if you do. I cannot have *them* contaminated” (93) He adds, “You have to choose between clean people, and reverence for your Granny’s blameless old age, and people who are unclean in their minds and their bodies” (94). Yvette writes a note to the Eastwoods breaking things off, but at this point, she is acutely aware of her growing desire for the Gypsy: “She wanted to be confirmed by

[the Gypsy], against her father, who had only a repulsive fear of her,” while at the same time, she fears that this thought is “obscene, a criminal lunacy” (94-5). While she continues to conform to what is expected of her—“It is useless to quarrel with one’s bread and butter”(95)—she develops an infected inner self that is “hard and detached, and unknown to herself, revengeful” (95). Her feelings of hatred for her family are crystallized in her loathing of her grandmother, whose “toad-like self-will...was godless, and less than human!” (96). Here, Yvette is forced to temporarily act out the values of the rectory to which the Gypsy stands in opposition. Though she sees him when he comes to the house selling things, she is more compelled by a desire for “comfort” and “prestige” than by a desire to “go with [the Gypsy] and be a pariah gypsy-woman” (98). The next time Yvette sees the Gypsy, as she is cycling past the quarries, she feels that “she knew him better than she knew anybody on earth, even Lucille, and belonged to him, in some way, for ever” (100). She buys a brass plate from him, and he tells her that the older Gypsy woman has dreamed about her: “She said: Be braver in your heart, or you lose your game. She said it this way: ‘Be braver in your body, or your luck will leave you.’ And she said as well, ‘Listen for the voice of the water’” (101). Here, the Gypsy woman’s dream makes the association between the “voice of the water” and the body that is later underscored by the events of the flood.

The climax of the novella begins after this scene, in Chapter IX, when Yvette is musing about the Gypsy, watching the river flow: “‘Listen for the voice of the water,’ she said to herself” (105). Aunt Cissie leaves, putting Yvette in charge of Granny, and as she sits outside, regretting the necessity of returning “indoors, to those

hateful rooms” (106), she suddenly hears shouting and sees the Gypsy running toward her. She looks behind her and sees “A shaggy, tawny<sup>253</sup> wave-front of water advancing like a wall of lions. The roaring sound wiped out everything” (107). As the Gypsy grabs her arm as “the first wave was washing her feet from under her” and drags her toward the house, “[s]he was barely conscious: as if the flood was in her soul” (107). As the water mows both of them down, the Gypsy pulls her up, holding her head above the water. They manage to open the door to the house, and the water rushes in and overwhelms Granny, who opens her “coffin-like mouth” and then bobs to the surface of the water, “like a strange float” (109). As they climb the stairs and reach Yvette’s room, they hear “a sickening, tearing crash” as the house itself begins to come down (110). As the blind old order is washed away by the flood, the foundations of Yvette’s bourgeois existence are demonstrated to be inadequate.

At this point, the Gypsy removes his clothes, then helps Yvette remove “the horrible wet death-gripping thing” that her dress has become (111), and the two of them stand naked until he commands her to get into bed as he gazes out at “the chaos of horrible waters” (113). “Warm me!” Yvette moans to him. “I shall die of shivering” (113). If one has read *Lady Chatterley*, it seems inconceivable that this is not the prelude to a barrage of explicit sexual description.<sup>254</sup> However, in *Virgin*, though both Yvette and the Gypsy are in the grips of convulsions reminiscent of the language of *Lady Chatterley*, their violent shuddering is abated, and “the warmth

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<sup>253</sup> “Tawny” is a word much like “swarthy,” associated with skin color. See the *OED*: “1660 F. BROOKE tr. Le Blanc's Trav. 347. There are Tawnies amongst them, they weare in their eares rings of gold and silver.”

<sup>254</sup> In *Lady Chatterley*, Lawrence draws a clear connection between explicit sexual content and the Gypsy trope: at the beginning of the famous scene in which Mellors discourses on the meaning of the word “cunt,” Connie is described as “glowing like a Gypsy” (190).

revived between them. And as it roused, their tortured semi-conscious minds became unconscious, and they passed away into sleep” (114). While some critics have concluded from this scene that Yvette and the Gypsy do indeed have sex, it is difficult to base a case for this reading on the phrase “the warmth revived between them,” though the words “warmth,” “unconscious,” and “shuddering” echo explicitly sexual passages in *Lady Chatterley*.<sup>255</sup>

In the end, the novella reverts to Victorianism; the sexual relationship between Yvette and the Gypsy returns to being unspoken, as well as unspeakable, and the powerful associations of Gypsiness are overcome by the mundane and ordinary. Yvette awakens from her night with the Gypsy to find a policeman leading a team of rescuers; the Gypsy has gone. She tells a version of the story of how the Gypsy saved her that is so sanitized that her friend Bob Framley naively opines, “You know, I think that Gypsy deserves a medal” (120). Bob and the rector go in search of the Gypsy to thank him, but find the quarry<sup>256</sup> deserted. The novella concludes with Yvette recovering in bed, moaning to herself, “Oh, I love him! I love him! I love him!” (120). In the final paragraph, she receives a letter from the Gypsy expressing his hopes that she is all right after her “ducking,” an interesting euphemism for what has occurred, and that he will see her again one day. “I come that day to say goodbye! and I never said it, well, the water give no time, but I live in hopes” (120). His “goodbye” sounds like a declaration of sexual intentions, and his letter confirms that there is indeed unfinished business between them. He signs, “Your obt. servant Joe

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<sup>255</sup> For example, “and further and further rolled the waves of herself away from herself, leaving her, till suddenly, in a soft, shuddering convulsion, the quick of all her plasm was touched, she knew herself touched, the consummation was upon her, and she was gone” (*Chatterley* 178).

<sup>256</sup> Another pun?

Boswell,” and the novella’s last sentence says, “And only then she realized that he had a name” (120)—in other words, that he was an ordinary man and not a mythic, symbolic figure, the embodiment of all the connotations of “Gypsy.”<sup>257</sup>

In the end, Yvette has undergone a transformation in which if she has not technically lost the capital of her virginity, she has come to understand the primal power of sex. It is not clear whether she will return to the life of Papplewick and marry someone like Leo, or will ally herself with her mother, the Eastwoods, the Gypsy himself, but as with Connie Chatterley, her encounter with a “swarthy primitive” has left her permanently altered, contaminated by Gypsiness in ways that, because unspeakable, are invisible to Papplewick (unlike Maggie Tulliver’s public fall from grace, which this novella revises) yet palpable: the old order has quite literally been dissolved. The family’s property, the rectory, similarly transformed by its encounter with the Gypsy, is a ruin: “the house, that leaned forward as if it were making a stiff bow to the stream, stood now in mud and wreckage, with a great heap of fallen masonry and debris at the southwest corner. Awful were the gaping mouths of rooms!...The house might go down any minute” (115-16). The Gypsy has shaken the status quo quite literally to its foundations.

While the texts examined here are varied not only in content but in period and genre, in all of them, Gypsies function as destabilizing figures who signal non-

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<sup>257</sup> According to Coroneos and Tate, this “return to everyday idiom and the sense of normalization thus achieved is characteristic of a deflation of the sublime which takes many forms in Lawrence’s later tales” (116). Nord points out that “Boswell” was a common Gypsy name—“The Boswells were a well-known clan of British Gypsies” (*Gypsies* 167)—and sees this conclusion as Lawrence’s ultimate “debunking of Gypsy myth” like that in *The Mill on the Floss*, but I am not persuaded by this reading, since throughout the novella Lawrence has appeared to be, as Nord suggests, drawing upon multiple Gypsy clichés rather than debunking them.

normative erotic desire whose pull is so powerful that it often results in the contamination of non-Gypsy characters with Gypsiness. In *Orlando*, for example, the destabilizing sexual capacity of the Gypsy Rosina Pepina is implicit in the reference to her that inaugurates Orlando's sex change; and it is this perceived sexual threat that appears to cause Harriet Smith to be far more terrified of Gypsies than seems warranted when she is accosted. Similarly, Maggie Tulliver's own explicit Gypsiness is revealed to be a harbinger of her later non-normative desires, not just for her cousin's fiancé but, in a sense, for her brother. When examined in conjunction with the functions of Gypsies in these texts, the subtext of homosexual desire that Kirstie Blair locates in *Orlando* becomes legible in "The Scholar-Gipsy" and "The Waste Land"; and certainly the figure of the Gypsy as emblem of erotic desire was tailor-made for Lawrence, who after the dry run, as it were, of *The Virgin and the Gypsy* brought the project of washing away the pre-war social order to a climax in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

The fourth and final chapter examines the function of the Gypsy trope in destabilizing national identity and its contribution in shoring it up, using *Orlando* as a lens through which to view earlier texts: as Gypsies are othered and rejected in texts from *Lavengro* to *Dracula*, British national identity is preserved, a process that is rehearsed in literature and then replicated in tragic fact by the Nazis.



## Chapter Four: Gypsies and National Identity

The scenes of action lie in the British Islands;--pray be not displeased, gentle reader, if perchance thou hast imagined that I was about to conduct thee to distant lands, and didst promise thyself much instruction and entertainment from what I might tell thee of them. I do assure thee that thou hast no reason to be displeased, inasmuch as there are no countries in the world less known by the British than these selfsame British Islands, or where more strange things are every day occurring, whether in road or street, house or dingle.

--George Borrow, *Lavengro*, Preface to the First Edition (9)

### I. "The English Disease": The Gypsy as Exotic Other

Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* opens with the novel's protagonist amusing himself<sup>258</sup> by jousting with the severed head of a Moor. Had Woolf been a student of Edward Said, she could hardly have chosen a more apt image for Othering than Orlando's "slicing at the head" which had been "struck...from the shoulders of a vast Pagan who had started up under the moon in the barbarian fields of Africa" (13).<sup>259</sup> As the novel begins, just as Orlando's sex is not yet in question, his aristocratic English identity, too, is immediately established beyond doubt: "His fathers had been noble since they had been at all. They came out of the northern mists wearing coronets on their heads" (14). These "northern mists" are presumably the origins of the Germanic tribes who invaded the British isles, a more noble pedigree, it would appear, than that of the isles' Celtic inhabitants. Orlando's nobility is further established by the description of the sun shining through "the stained glass of a vast coat of arms" (14), and by the fact that his ancestral estate commands such a high

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<sup>258</sup> "...for there could be no doubt of his sex"(13).

<sup>259</sup> In "Orlando's Voyage Out," Karen R. Lawrence reads this scene as a "flight from the maternal" (254).

geographical position, both literally and figuratively, “that nineteen English counties could be seen beneath” it (18). Throughout the novel, this opening scene is replicated in conflicts between Orlando and other exotic others in which Orlando’s Englishness functions in opposition to the Orientalism of these others.

Nowhere is this opposition, also demonstrated in Orlando’s collisions with the Russian Sasha and the Turkish court, clearer than in Orlando’s relationship with the Gypsies with whom he escapes from Constantinople. As the novel progresses, Orlando’s English identity is problematized, as his gender soon will be, by the gift he manifests for assimilating to and even embodying other cultures: during his stay in Turkey, he dons “a long Turkish coat,” “light[s] a cheroot,” and gazes at the “wild panorama” surrounding the city with such exultation and affection that he wonders “if, in the season of the Crusades, one of his ancestors had taken up with a Circassian peasant woman” (120-21). This cultural chameleonism is evident during Orlando’s stay with the Gypsies, during which she (a woman at this point) inhabits this same “wild panorama” with them<sup>260</sup> and adopts their ways: “She washed in streams if she washed at all....she stole a hen’s egg now and then....she trod the grape; she filled the goat-skin and drank from it,” etc. (141). But unable to assimilate completely, Orlando runs afoul of the Gypsies in her compulsion to extol the beauty of nature, which the narrator refers to as “The English disease” (143), characterized by a mania for metaphor: “She likened the hills to ramparts, and the plains to the flanks of kine....Trees were withered hags, and sheep were grey boulders. Everything, in fact, was something else” (143). This compulsion leads to a “difference of opinion” in which the Gypsies harbor the suspicion that “here is someone who doubts....here is

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<sup>260</sup> As noted discuss below, “wild” is a code word for Gypsiness.

someone who does not do the thing for the sake of doing” (146). Because of their conflict, Orlando is hesitant “to marry and settle down among them for ever” (147), and eventually, envisioning “a summer’s day in England,” she decides to leave. The narrator adds, “It was happy for her that she did so. Already the young men had plotted her death” (151). Orlando’s Englishness, demonstrated in the novel’s first paragraph, proves to be a “disease” that ultimately gets in the way of her fully identifying with the exotic others with whom she otherwise has such an affinity.

Thus, much as Orlando’s gender is later shown to be far less stable than in the novel’s initial depiction of him, so is his (and her<sup>261</sup>) English class identity, initially depicted as indisputable, later complicated by hints of the hybridity. While it appears to be perfectly acceptable within the parameters of the construction of Englishness to trace one’s antecedents to the Germanic “northern mists,” it nevertheless deconstructs any illusions of monolithic ethnic English (not to mention British) identity. Orlando’s aristocratic pedigree is similarly complicated almost immediately by the admission of both lower-class and French antecedents: “a certain grandmother of his had worn a smock and carried milkpails. Some grains of the Kentish or Sussex earth were mixed with the thin, fine fluid which came to him from Normandy” (28); the narrator, Orlando’s faux-biographer, attributes Orlando’s “liking for low company” to this low-class ancestry, and Orlando’s associations with the exotic sailors and loose

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<sup>261</sup> In “Writing the Land: The Geography of National Identity in *Orlando*,” Erica L. Johnson follows Karen Lawrence in reading the Turkish landscape as “feminized” and suggests that Orlando’s experience of national identity is different as a woman, i.e., “one who is read by her homeland,” than as a man, “one who reads other landscapes” (108). I would argue, however, that Woolf satirizes the concept of national identity by insisting that it does indeed remain the same for Orlando both pre- and post- transition, at least in terms of Orlando’s commitment to it.

women whose ships have docked in London from the Indies prefigure his time with the Turkish Gypsies.

Orlando's suspicion that he has descended from a "Circassian peasant woman" suggests that a literal genetic hybridity complicates his/her national identity in the same way that on a larger scale, English identity is complicated by its foreign antecedents. While Woolf's narrator approaches genealogical analysis with the greatest solemnity, the subtext he (or she) establishes, that even the finest English pedigree is in fact constructed from numerous sources, some of which are not English at all, destabilizes Englishness and burlesques its xenophobia just as surely as Orlando's sex change calls gender into question. While Orlando's blood is as blue as is conceivable, the English aristocracy (for at this point in the narrative, the late sixteenth century, there is no "United Kingdom") is revealed to have sprung from a variety of foreign sources: the "northern mists," Normandy, and even Rome: as he tells the Russian girl, Sasha, his family "had come from Rome with the Caesars and had the right to walk down the Corso (which is the chief street in Rome) under a tasseled palanquin, which he said is a privilege reserved only for those of imperial blood" (48). Later, the narrator mentions that "the first Lord of the family...had come from France with the Conqueror" (71). This ancestral claim could be seen as contradicting the claims of Germanic and Roman ancestry, but it is more likely that this is Woolf spoofing nationalist claims to aristocratic lineage by illustrating that much as the self is a conglomeration of selves and gender a complex mess of performativity, Englishness is in fact a hodgepodge of other nationalities.

In *Orientalism*, Edward Said argues that the European discourse that he terms “Orientalism” serves the purpose of helping to “manage—and even produce—the Orient politically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period” and that “European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self” (3). In *The Spanish Gypsy: The History of a European Obsession*, Lou Charnon-Deutsch examines Gypsies in terms of this discourse and places Spain’s Romani population in the context of “[n]ation building and nationalism” in which “dominant groups construct marginalized ethnic groups simultaneously as diseased members of a body that should be if not amputated at least quarantined, or, conversely, as exotic assets to some imaginary pluralist society” (11). In other words, just as, as Said argues, Orientalism allows the dominant population to control those who are Orientalized and thereby abjected, so, too, does this abjection shore up national identity. It is, therefore, not surprising to find Gypsies present in texts that manifest anxiety about national identity, as in *Orlando*, a text that pretends, parodically, to manifest anxiety about practically everything. Since property, gender, and sexuality, all arguably preoccupations of Victorian culture, are contested in the novel, we may certainly expect to find the project of national identity undermined by Gypsies as well.

While Orlando’s own British ancestry is revealed as curiously hybrid, it is further complicated by his/her sojourn with the Gypsy tribe. Karen R. Lawrence has called attention to the “orientalized” sex change that Orlando experiences in Turkey, and adds, “It is worth asking why, in a fantasy of a transsexual life lived over more

than three hundred years, it seemed necessary to plot the text's most radical event *outside* of England, specifically, in the Levant" (255). Part of the reason for this, she argues, is biographical: Vita Sackville-West, the novel and character's inspiration, was on a trip to Tehran during the period that *Orlando* was conceived; but more significantly, in Lawrence's view, "English soil is inimical to the emergence of female subjectivity and sexuality" (255): the strange fluidity of Orlando's gender and sexuality cannot be subsumed in British national identity and must therefore be exiled quite literally to Turkey and figuratively, to the Gypsy tribe. During Orlando's sojourn with the Gypsies, the concerns of property, gender, and sexuality become moot because they are simply not recognized by the Gypsies as possessing any importance. As Lawrence argues, Orlando is no more interested in policing female sexuality than in "policing the Orient"; rather, he, then she, rebels against "aristocratic, patriarchal Englishness" (Lawrence 265) by marrying (presumably) the Gypsy Rosina Pepita and siring several children who are not only illegitimate and thus, propertyless, but Gypsy-hybrids who further deconstruct Orlando's already complicated aristocratic English lineage.<sup>262</sup>

Questions of national identity are intricately bound up in the subjects the three previous chapters have examined: property distribution and the disciplining of gender and sexuality all participate in the project of creating from the hodgepodge of ethnicities, as well the complex multiple possibilities of gender and sexuality, to which Woolf calls attention, something univocal and stable that can be called "English," and later, "British." If, as Said argues, the discourse of the novel is central

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<sup>262</sup> As suggested earlier, here Woolf is drawing from biographical details of Sackville-West, whose own ostensible Gypsy ancestry lent an eroticized hybridity to her sexuality, as Kirstie Blair has argued.

to this project, it makes sense to examine novels, as well as other works on the margins of this genre (creative nonfiction, if Borrow's works can be called that, and narrative poetry), in which Gypsies function to destabilize national identity much as they have destabilized property distribution, gender, and sexuality, and in which British national identity turns out to be, as in *Orlando*, a multiplicity lurking behind a monolith. In George Borrow's genre-defying autobiographical novels (or fictional autobiographies) *Lavengro* (1851) and *The Romany Rye* (1857), national identity is posited by the exoticization and attempted abjection of a variety of others, not only Gypsies, but tinkers, Catholics, and just about anyone who isn't George Borrow. Wilkie Collins' *The Moonstone* (1868) locates otherness in India, whose exoticized culture infiltrates and thus destabilizes Britain in the form of a stolen gem, and it is a Gypsy hybrid whose death helps to repel this misappropriated property and its malefic influence and to reestablish the status quo. In the long poem, *The Spanish Gypsy* (1868), George Eliot examines the conflict between Spanish national identity and Gypsy national or racial identity and although she attempts to treat Gypsies sympathetically, she concludes that removing them from Spain to their own homeland is the optimal solution to this problem. Finally, in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), British national identity is threatened by the invasion of the Count, a conspicuously foreign Gypsy fellow-traveler, and while a stake is driven through the heart of his project, the threats of hybridity that his presence emblemizes remain. In each of these works, exotic, Gypsified others function as catalytic presences whose attempts to impinge upon monolithic Britishness are repelled with varying degrees of success. Their incursions into British national identity heighten the sense that this identity is

unstable—for ultimately, although they may be abjected, what is abjected is part of the British national “body” and cannot be expunged without doing violence to that body.

## II. “‘A Strange Set of People’”: Gypsies in *Lavengro* and *The Romany Rye*

It is impossible to discuss the figure of the Gypsy in nineteenth-century Britain without considering the hugely influential works of George Borrow, which launched a thousand caravans, as it were, including that of John Sampson, one of the co-founders of the Gypsy Lore Society who, like Borrow, was a philologist<sup>263</sup> and who, though “critical of his errors and omissions” fell “under the spell of Borrow” (Sampson 25).<sup>264</sup> Sampson’s biographer (and son) examines Borrow’s potent effects on Sampson and his fellow Gypsiologists and suggests that “[t]he gypsy enthusiasts inspired by Borrow longed to belong to a different world without material ambitions....Gypsy enthusiasts were united by their longing for the open road, and escape” (25). He also notes that “many of them<sup>265</sup>...liked to boast of gypsy blood” (25). The “different world” of the Gypsy “enthusiasts” was one in which imaginative

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<sup>263</sup>It is worth noting that biographer Collie says that Borrow “was sometimes condemned as a dilettante, an amateur linguist, someone whose shallow understanding of grammar and structure was immediately exposed whenever he had to translate English into [another] language” (24).

<sup>264</sup>Nord notes Borrow’s influence in the early twentieth century, following an 1899 biography by William Knapp and the republishing of Borrow’s works, on the Gypsy Lore Society, composer Ralph Vaughn Williams, Cecil Sharp (the famous collector of folk music), and poet Edward Thomas. Interestingly, one of the essays on Borrow that Nord cites is an appreciation by Leslie Stephen, Virginia Woolf’s father.

<sup>265</sup>Sampson *films* tells the story of Lady Eleanor Smith, one of these enthusiasts, “the daughter of Lord Birkenhead [who] had come under the gypsies’ spell through reading Borrow as a child,” and expressed her rebellion at the time of her debut by “going off with a circus” and writing Gypsy best-sellers (176). Lady Eleanor’s insistence that she had Gypsy blood was a constant trial to her brother, also Lord Birkenhead, who complained that Eleanor saw Gypsies “through the eyes of Borrow, romanticized, a race apart, shorn of squalor and rascality, an hallucination that survived repeated contacts with them” (qtd. in Sampson 177). Evidently, Eleanor’s claim to Gypsy ancestry had such traction, being purveyed by Winston Churchill and others, that, Sampson asserts, the Nazis “schedule[d] the whole family for extermination” (177).



identification with the subjects of their study enabled them to reconstruct themselves, often in the absence of evidence, as Gypsies, not only in terms of their lifestyle but also by virtue of “blood”: like Orlando, they adopted a genetic theory of Gypsiness to validate their escape from the status quo into a self-designated otherness.

The roots of this tendency to self-hybridization can perhaps be traced to Borrow, whose identification with Gypsies in *Lavengro* and its sequel *The Romany Rye* constructs, and indeed valorizes, him as a “Romany rye,” a Romani-speaking Lavengro (linguist), and as such, a virtual Gypsy. At the same time, Borrow depicts the Gypsies met by his persona (also called George, but also “Shorsha,” “Sapengro” (snake handler), and “Lavengro”) as exotic others who, as my epigraph suggests, strangely people the British isles, infusing it with foreignness and, a term Borrow favors, “wild”-ness in ways that suggest that far from being a homogenous society, Victorian Britain was a polyethnic composite of the same Celtic, Scandinavian, and Gypsy “blood” alluded to in *Orlando*. However, it is a mistake to conclude that Borrow anticipated the embrace of multiculturalism of our time and its manifestations in contemporary Britain; rather than proposing an all-inclusive model of heterogeneity, Borrow succeeds in othering each of the successive subjects of his scrutiny, creating a sort of Gothicized estrangement in which the British “islands” are peopled with wild, eccentric individuals who are nearly as strange as Borrow himself.<sup>266</sup> Indeed, perhaps *Lavengro* and *The Romany Rye* serve as complex modes of recuperation of Borrow’s own oddity in which by representing all the “strange

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<sup>266</sup> Nord reads Borrow’s “personal identification with the Romany” as “a commitment...to the preservation of Gypsy identity...in the interests of cultural heterogeneity and multifarious Englishness” (97), but I would suggest that this goal is incompatible with his project of the exoticized othering of Britain’s multiple ethnicities.

things” that are “every day occurring, whether in road or street, house or dingle,” Borrow lends an exotic cast to a life in which his own failures and foibles are essentially reconfigured as romantic Gypsiness.

If, as Nord argues, Gypsies represent for Borrow a “dream of ultimate origins” (*Gypsies* 72), it is interesting to note that Borrow’s recent biographers claim that he, like his literary descendent Lady Eleanor Smith, may have had Gypsy ancestry, and while they disagree about the particulars, both Michael Collie and David Williams agree that there were some irregularities in Borrow’s parents’ pasts that imply that George and his older brother John may have had different fathers (Collie 11-12; Williams 5-8). Although Williams discards the idea that George’s father might have been “a dark-faced stranger, perhaps even a gipsy from one of their encampments on Mousehold Heath outside Norwich” (7), he finds it quite possible that Borrow’s mother Ann was “the daughter of peasants—of gipsy origin perhaps, since gipsies, or Hungarians as they were known,<sup>267</sup> sought to give themselves respectability by use of the similar-sounding epithet ‘Huguenot’” (5). This theory tells us perhaps less about Borrow’s actual background and more about the myths about himself that Borrow perpetuated, and Williams’ interest in locating Gypsy ancestry for his subject and presumably thereby validating him attests to the power of genetic theories of Gypsiness, even post-Holocaust.<sup>268</sup>

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<sup>267</sup> I have found no corroboration of this.

<sup>268</sup> The myth of Borrow’s ancestry is reflected in the anecdote Williams cites from a letter by Nathaniel Hawthorne: “Dining at Mr Rathbone’s one evening last week. . . , it was mentioned that Borrow. . . is supposed to be of gipsy descent by his mother’s side. Hereupon Mr Martineau mentioned that. . . though he had never heard of his gipsy blood, he thought it probable, from Borrow’s traits of character” (7).

Indeed, since both Collie and Williams seem to conclude that in fact, George Borrow was indeed the child of Thomas Borrow, judging from the timetable of Thomas's visits to George's mother, one must suspect that Borrow's ancestry is only open to question by Borrow's own design. In *Lavengro*, Borrow casts doubt upon his own legitimacy and describes himself physically in terms that hint at Gypsy ancestry; in Chapter XIV, he relates a conversation between his parents that while not casting doubt on his legitimacy, constructs George as almost a changeling: "I love him, I'm sure," the father says, "but I must be blind not to see the difference between him and his brother. Why, he has neither my hair nor my eyes; and then his countenance! why, 'tis absolutely swarthy, God forgive me! I had almost said like that of a gypsy" (101).<sup>269</sup> One might suspect that in including this anecdote, which appears to overtly call his mother's fidelity into question, Borrow is merely reporting the facts, but it is worth noting that he has omitted a plenitude of vital information about his life from both of his "autobiographies," so clearly it is not a policy of full disclosure that motivates him, in general. Nor does this description of Borrow seem particularly accurate: Collie quotes the descriptions of Borrow by several of his friends, none of which suggest that Borrow was "absolutely swarthy" (an adjective so often seen in connection with Gypsies that it can be regarded as a "code" word): he is said to have had "rather a florid face" (and according to the *OED*, "swarthy" means "Of a dark hue; black or blackish; dusky"—not "florid"); brown eyes that were "soft," albeit "piercing," and, according to Theodore Watts-Dunton, "the Scandinavian complexion, luminous and sometimes rosy as an English girl's." Watts-Dunton adds,

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<sup>269</sup> While I have found no evidence that George Eliot drew from this interchange in her depiction of the conversation between Maggie Tulliver's parents in *The Mill on the Floss*, the echoes are striking. In *Mill*, however, it is not Maggie's legitimacy but the problem of her hybridity that is in question.

“An increased intensity was lent by the fair skin to the dark lustre of the eyes” (qtd. in Collie 5). This is hardly the portrait of a “swarthy” countenance, and it appears that Borrow deliberately destabilized his own Gadžo identity not only to further his identification with the objects of his study but to enhance his own project of self-exoticization, manifested in his identities of “Sapengro” (snake-handler) and “Romany rye.”

Gypsies are merely one of the many exotic groups, trades, and individuals Borrow profiles in his “volumes of uncertain genre,” as Nord terms them, in which “Like the feminized scholar-gypsy...Borrow’s rye evades the narrative of masculine efficacy,” an evasion that is expressed, Nord opines, “in the very form of his literary works” which she terms “picaresque” (*Gypsies* 72).<sup>270</sup> Borrow also describes encounters with Quakers, Jews, Catholics (a priest he calls “the man in black”), tinkers, Irishmen, Scots, boxers, swindlers, postillions, and members of other groups and professions, all of whom he colors with a perspective that is meant to turn a chance encounter with an apple-seller on London Bridge into an “adventure.” The net effect of all this rampant exoticization is the depiction of the British Isles as a repository of the strange and wild, a confederation of nations (he clearly views Scotland, Ireland, and Wales as culturally separate from England, thanks to their linguistic differences) in which various wandering groups prowl a rural landscape that

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<sup>270</sup> According to the *OED*, the term “picaresque” refers to “narrative fiction,” and it may not be accurate to describe *Lavengro* and *The Romany Rye* as fiction, though clearly they are also not autobiography if that term denotes the accurate representation of facts about a life. According to Collie, in trying to produce these works, Borrow was in the unpleasant position of being asked to write about his life but being somewhat short on the requisite “adventures.” He also apparently felt that it was necessary to be evasive about certain details of his life—such as, famously, the nature of his relationship with Isopel Berners, with whom he lived in a “dingle” for some time. Given these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that Borrow would produce works of “uncertain genre.”

is depicted with the kind of palpable nostalgia legible in “The Scholar-Gipsy.”<sup>271</sup> At the same time that Borrow seems remarkably accepting of all this diversity (remarkable given his obvious curmudgeonliness), with the notable exception of English Catholics, whom he regards virtually as enemies of the state, he seems to be constructing a complicated but homogeneous national identity in contradistinction to the identities of the exotic Others who inhabit England’s borders.

Like *Orlando*, *Lavengro* begins on a note of nationalism, and with a skull: as a child, while sight-seeing with his mother and brother in Kent, Borrow’s narrator, or “Lavengro,” as we might as well call him, comes upon the ancient skull of a Danish pirate that is so large it can scarcely be lifted. “I never forgot the Daneman’s skull,” the narrator says,<sup>272</sup> and he traces his later devotion to “Danish lore and the acquirement of the old Norse tongue and its dialects” to this encounter (25). In the next paragraph, he alludes to the Napoleonic war, then “at its hottest”: “we were at war, and determination and enthusiasm shone in every face; man, woman, and child were eager to fight the Frank, the hereditary, but, thank God, never dreaded enemy of the Anglo-Saxon race. ‘Love your country and beat the French, and then never mind

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<sup>271</sup> As much as Borrow dislikes Catholics, he appears to have a kind of grudging admiration for the Irish: when he visits Ireland as a child with his father, he expresses a desire to learn the language, which he describes as “strange and wild,” terms he generally reserves for Gypsies (71). His father remarks, “It is not like Scotch, no person can learn it, save those who are born to it, and even in Ireland, the respectable people do not speak it, only the wilder sort...” (72). But George does soon learn the language from a schoolmate (79), and it becomes a “stepping-stone to other languages” (80) with echoes of Romani: “[T]here was something mysterious and uncommon associated with its use.” Later, his father expresses his chagrin about this: “I sent him to school to learn Greek, and he picked up Irish!” (100), and adds, “I know that he kept very strange company when he was in Ireland; people of evil report, of whom terrible things were said—horse-witches and the like”; when questioned about this, he says, George “put on a look as if he did not understand me, a regular Irish look” (101). Ireland seems to function in the narrative as proto-Gypsy, with its strange, wild inhabitants and language who help inaugurate George’s linguistic pursuits as well as his interest in horses and who infect him with their transgressive qualities. The Catholic “man in black” George meets later speaks a bit of Italian, an emblem of his links to Rome.

<sup>272</sup> Here, perhaps, constructing himself as Hamlet.

what happens,' was the cry of entire England" (26). This burst of patriotic sentiment manifests blissful unawareness of the Celtic inhabitants of the United Kingdom, instead constructing "England" as an Anglo-Saxon "race" that is united against this "hereditary" foe. One minute Borrow is extolling Danish piracy, which presumably contributed to the creation of this "Anglo-Saxon race," and the next, he is positing the unification of this "race" against a foreign power that English national identity has subsumed.

That Borrow further identifies English identity with the Church of England is attested to by the numerous discussions of the evils of Catholicism, represented by "the man in black," who appears toward the end of *Lavengro*, eavesdropping at the edge of Mumpers' Dingle, where Lavengro is installed with his friend Isopel "Belle" Berners. As Nord has pointed out, the priest criticizes Gypsies and philologists (*Gypsies* 90), but she fails to note that he does so by terming each a "race": "the Gypsy race is perfectly illiterate," he says, and "the philological race is the most stupid under heaven" (*Lavengro* 485). Borrow's introduction to *Lavengro* suggests that the priest is part of the "dream, or drama" of his narrative, which as Collie points out, is Borrow's way of implying that his works are not strictly speaking autobiographies (210); and thus, the priest is very possibly a fictional creation, so it is not surprising that he casts his comments in racial terms redolent of Borrow's fundamental suppositions as a philologist: that the world's linguistic groups are often related, the way Lavengro discovers, at the end of *The Romany Rye*, that Romani and Hindi are, and as such, that there may be racial overlaps among these linguistic groups—but that English national identity persists as separate from these interloping

foreign influences. Borrow pits himself and his Anglican church against the Catholicism of the priest in *Lavengro*'s preface: "With respect to religious tenets, I wish to observe that I am a member of the Church of England, into whose communion I was baptized, and to which my forefathers belonged" (10). Though he concedes that "the other Church, I mean Rome" was once "prevalent in England," he characterizes the period of its dominance as "more prolific of crime and debasement than all other causes combined" (11).<sup>273</sup>

Borrow's narrative of a vanishing past is connected by Nord with a nostalgic ruralism (*Gypsies* 75-6); coupled with his view of a pre-industrial Eden is the construction of English identity grounded in an Anglo-Saxon heritage that has successfully thrown off the threats constituted by "Rome":

The people and the government at least becoming enlightened by means of the [Protestant] Scripture, spurned ["the other Church"] from the island with disgust and horror, the land instantly after its disappearance becoming a fair field, in which arts, sciences, and all the amiable virtues flourished, instead of being a pestilent marsh where swine-like ignorance wallowed, and artful hypocrites, like so many Wills-o'-the-wisps, played antic gambols about, around, and above debased humanity. (11)

The rural paradise that Borrow's followers tried, with whatever success, to inhabit may have been threatened by modernity (for example, the railroad, on which Jasper Petulengro comments, was eventually to bisect Borrow's own property in a manner

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<sup>273</sup> This reverses the paradigm Borrow notes regarding Ireland, in which he sees the Protestants as a civilizing influence: "amidst darkness they have held up a lamp, and it would be well for Ireland were all her children like these her adopted ones" (71).

not to his liking), but it is equally imperiled, Borrow's introduction implies, by "Popery," who "still wished to play her old part, to regain her lost dominion, to reconvert the smiling land into the pestilential morass, where she could play again her old antics"; to this end, her "emissaries" lurk, "cat-like and gliding" (11). Adjacent to the narrative of the Edenic return to the land that Lavengro enacts in Mumpers' Dingle with Belle is a narrative in which the Church of Rome conspires to return England to a "pestilential" condition.

Thus, while Borrow appears to embrace the various Others he encounters in his travels, especially the Gypsies, his texts are nevertheless preoccupied with the construction of a pure national identity that is under perpetual siege. Others may figure in this narrative as curiosities, but it is clear that they *are* others: Borrow's representations of all non-Anglo-Saxon groups as exoticized is a method of abjecting them in the interests of maintaining English identity, and the identities of these groups, in turn, are threatened by assimilation, which both he and his Gypsiologist successors view as undesirable.<sup>274</sup> In his lengthy appendix to *The Romany Rye*, a rant against his critics that runs to eleven chapters, Borrow defines yet another enemy of the state, gentility: "The wonderful power of gentility in England is exemplified in nothing more than in what it is producing amongst Jews, Gypsies, and Quakers. It is breaking up their venerable communities. All the better, some one will say," he adds, but "Alas! alas!" is his own lament (343). While gentility appears to be his target here, his further explanation indicates that what really troubles him is the potential for intermarriage and therefore hybridity.

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<sup>274</sup> The debates about Gypsy "blood" and definitions of the Romani "race" that still rage in the present day reflect anxieties about the effects of intermarriage on Gypsy identity.



Borrow asserts that just as gentility makes “the wealthy Jews forsake the synagogue for the opera-house,” it also “makes the young Jew ashamed of the young Jewess, it makes her ashamed of the young Jew.” The result of this is that

The young Jew marries an opera-dancer, or if the dancer will not have him, as is frequently the case, the cast-off Miss of the Honourable Spencer So-and-so. It makes the young Jewess accept the honourable offer of a cashiered lieutenant of the Bengal Native Infantry; or, if such a person does not come forward, the dishonourable offer of a cornet of a regiment of crack hussars. It makes poor Jews, male and female, forsake the synagogue for the sixpenny theater or penny hope; the Jew to take up with an Irish female of loose character, and the Jewess with a musician of the Guards, or the Tipperary servant of Captain Mulligan. (343)

The problem here, it would appear, is not gentility per se, or its effects on the Jewish community, but the fact that it threatens to lead Jewish young people into liaisons with non-Jews and then, presumably, into reproduction that produces hybridity, mingling Jewish “blood” with that of other “races,” e.g., the Irish, in ways that imperil their identities as communities. For Borrow, it appears that just about everyone in Britain who does not conform to his own particular ethnic make-up is an exotic other, of which language is a marker, and it is discomfiting to him to see these others dilute or confuse their otherness.

As we shall see in *The Spanish Gypsy* and *Dracula*, texts that also manifest anxiety about national identity, writers about Gypsies often link them with Jews,

casting Gypsies as Jews' romantic doubles. This passage from Borrow's appendix suggests just such a pairing; after examining these threats to the Jewish community, he immediately turns to Gypsies:

With respect to the gypsies, [gentility] is making the women what they never were before—harlots; and the men what they never were before—careless fathers and husbands. It has made the daughter of Ursula the chaste [a Gypsy woman of his acquaintance] take up with the base drummer of a wild-beast show. It makes Gorgiko Brown, the gypsy man, leave his tent and his old wife, of an evening, and thrust himself into society which could well dispense with him. (343-4)

Anxiety about sex and sexuality, as noted in the preceding chapter, seems to underlie much of the general discourse on Gypsies, and it clearly pervades this diatribe: anxiety about sexual reproduction underlies discussions of hybridity. Borrow's rant about Gypsies suggests the same trepidations he has expressed about Jewish intermarriage but in the context of a rural wildness in marked contrast to the urban scene played out by his hypothetical young Jews. At the same time, sexuality in Borrow's works appears so repressed as to be nonexistent: while Borrow's followers may have, as Nord suggests, detected in him "a kindred sexual spirit" (*Gypsies* 75), Borrow's narratives are notable for their lack of any hint of sexuality<sup>275</sup>; Lavengro and Belle inhabit Mumpers' Dingle together in separate tents, and the only hint of romance between them is his insistence on teaching her Armenian. If we read Borrow's exoticized depictions of Gypsies, Jews, and other Others in terms of the

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<sup>275</sup> Nord notes that "the editor and poet [and virulent counter-aesthete] W.E. Henley, one of Borrow's greatest nineteenth-century fans, identifies Lavengro's story as "entirely unisexual" (*Gypsies* 83).

shoring up of English national identity, it makes sense that his works not only elide sexuality but seem to view it, as in the examples above, as an abhorrent component of the deterioration of the Anglo-Saxon pastoral in which genetic intermixing threatens the discrete linguistic groups that he sees as the fundamental basis of national and racial<sup>276</sup> identities. It is sexuality that ultimately threatens the ethnic and linguistic purity of his subjects; and it is the work of the *Lavengro* to fix their identities in time, as Borrow does not only in his autobiographical writings but in his Romani dictionary, *Romano Lavo-Lil* (1874).<sup>277</sup>

In a sense, *Lavengro* and *The Romany Rye* are colonial narratives in which the colonizer is Borrow: by learning the languages of each of the groups he penetrates, he exerts a form of mastery much like that of his snake handling. As a boy, George has been schooled in the art of viper rustling by an itinerant (along the lines of Wordsworth's leech-gatherer) he has met in a "wild sequestered spot" (36) who has taught him the art of catching and defanging snakes.<sup>278</sup> George uses this technique to impress the Gypsies he meets, who attempt to evict him from what they declare are their "properties," to which George responds, "'Your properties!' said I; 'I am in the King's Lane'" (43). The Gypsy woman, whose "skin was dark and swarthy, like that of a toad" and whose "bosom was but half concealed by a slight boddice," lives up to the "particularly evil" expression of her "countenance" by threatening to drown and/or strangle George (43-4). To subdue her, as well as the Gypsy man's threats to

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<sup>276</sup> In referring to both Gypsies and philologists as "races," Borrow reveals a tendency to racialize all the groups and subgroups he depicts in his work.

<sup>277</sup> According to Collie, this book was rushed into print after the American Gypsiologist Charles Leland confided to Borrow his intention of publishing his own linguistic study of Romani.

<sup>278</sup> It is worth noting that this episode, a lesson in the art of defanging, which results in "a considerable quantity of foam" being released from the snake the man holds in his hand, might be read as an encoded sexual encounter.

“baste [him] down the lane,” George pulls a trained, defanged viper from his “bosom,” which causes the Gypsy couple to hail George as a “gorgeous angel” and “my precious little God almighty” (45). When George confesses that he is a snake hunter and tamer, they are disappointed, but declare him a “young sap-engro” or snake handler, and introduce him to their son-in-law Jasper Petulengro with the wish that they “be two brothers” (48). The Gypsies are less impressed but perhaps just as flummoxed by George’s reading to them from a book that is not named explicitly but is clearly *Robinson Crusoe*, a choice of text that signifies how George views this encounter. As the Gypsies hurry off down the lane, George gazes after them. “A strange set of people,” he says. “I wonder who they can be” (50).

This episode encapsulates many of the facets of George’s relationship with the Gypsies throughout the novel. While on the one hand, he is embraced as a “brother” by Jasper Petulengro, whom he will meet again later, he is also threatened by the evil and physically repulsive (in a slightly sexual register) Mrs. Herne, who later makes good on her threat to poison him. While he demonstrates a strategic superiority over them in not only his effective snake handling but in his wily use of that ability, it is clear that he is fascinated by them in much the same way as he is drawn to the “wild” landscapes he has described. His being embraced as a brother gives him access to their community in ways that are clearly meant to impress the reader: not only is George a “sapengro,” but they also proclaim him a “lavengro” or linguist when he learns their language. The mastery of language, like snake handling, gives George access into the wild and sequestered spots of England: rather than purely colonizing by teaching them his language, as Robinson Crusoe does with Friday, George himself

becomes hybridized by learning their language and is thus inoculated against their challenges to his Englishness: he is not a Gypsy because of his facility in Romani, but a lavengro; he is not a Romani but a Romany Rye.

Although *Lavengro/The Romany Rye* and *Orlando* both represent Britain in terms of multiple ethnicities, *Orlando* suggests that the very multiplicity of these identities deconstructs the monolith of British identity. Borrow's works, on the other hand, carefully carve out the precise limits of what is English—not British—by exoticizing and thus abjecting everyone who does not fit the Danish-Anglo-Saxon paradigm he sets up (i.e., everyone but Borrow). He provides an account, possibly utterly fictitious, of an historical moment in the 1820s when the otherness that cast Englishness in relief was at its post-pastoral zenith. The multiple groups that Borrow depicts, in all their strangeness, are described as if to depict a pleasantly multicultural society in which many forms of difference are tolerated, but ultimately, they represent an England whose national identity is under siege from within. The Gypsy woman, Mrs. Herne, makes clear that however cordial relations appear between her community and Borrow's, there is always the possibility that his community will be infected, poisoned, by the incursion of so much otherness. By creating a narrative in which all of these foreign elements are exoticized, mastered, and thus cast out, Borrow can maintain a tenuous grip on what, in the end, is left of Englishness.

### III. "A Set of Rascals Not Worth Regarding": Gypsies and *The Moonstone*

In the final chapter of *The Romany Rye*, just prior to its interminable Appendix, George travels south and then heads east, where he meets a "fiery-faced

individual” identified as a “recruiting sergeant” (308). The sergeant offers a shilling if George will agree to “serve the Honourable East India Company” (308), the corporation that colonized India until the British takeover in 1857 (Marshall 95).<sup>279</sup> George asks what he would have to do for the Company and is told, “Fight, my brave boy, fight, my youthful hero!” He then asks what kind of country India is, and is told, “The finest country in the world!” (308). “And the people—what kind of folk are they?” he asks. “Pah! Kauloes—blacks—a set of rascals not worth regarding,” the sergeant tells him, adding, “and they call us lolloes, which, in their beastly gibberish, means red” (309). At this, George has an epiphany: in noting the similarity between “kaulo” (“kala” in Hindi) and the Anglo-Romani word for black, “kauli,”<sup>280</sup> and between “lolloes” (“lal” is red in Hindi) and the Anglo-Romani word for red, “lalo” or “lala,” Lavengro declares, “[T]his is the very language of Mr. Petulengro” (309).

Indeed, it is on the basis of the linguistic connections between Hindi and Romani that the Indian origin of the Roma has been apparent since the nineteenth century: according to Mayall, the theory that the Gypsies migrated to Europe from Egypt “was abandoned by around the 1820s and 1830s by the vast majority of commentators, who replaced Egypt with India as the Gypsies’ place of origin” (*Gypsy Identities* 120). Mayall traces the Indian origin theory to observations by eighteenth-century philologists regarding the linguistic similarities between Romani and Sanskrit, and attributes its popularity in part to a “general vogue for Orientalism” (122). Although Mayall appears to greet these claims with skepticism, Romani

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<sup>279</sup> At the time Borrow is writing of, there were between 20,000 and 30,000 British troops stationed there, approximately ¼ of the British army, a figure not including the private army of around 15,000 employed by the Company (Marshall 93).

<sup>280</sup> *Patrin Journal*, “Romanichal Word List.”

Studies professor Ian Hancock states in no uncertain terms that “The Romani people...are of northern Indian origin, having moved out of that area probably some time between AD 800 and AD 950, migrating westwards into Europe and arriving there some time after AD 1100” (*Pariah* 7), and indeed, any student of elementary Hindi, such as myself, can immediately note the similarities between that language and Romani dialects, which Hancock says “remain two thirds or more Indian in their basic lexicon and grammar” (*Pariah* 10). Lavengro, too, posits this connection and concludes, as he is “proceeding rapidly along a broad causeway in the direction of the east,” “I shouldn’t wonder...if Mr. Petulengro and Tawno Chikno came originally from India. I think I’ll go there” (309).

While for Borrow, the connection with India represents a romantic travel possibility, it also reveals two significant assumptions: first, that far from being a “lifestyle choice,” Gypsies constitute a uniform linguistic group, or “race,” in diaspora, a theory that has far-reaching implications in terms of the British legal system under which racial groups are protected and “lifestyle choices” are not. Second, it suggests that nineteenth-century writers may have been aware of the Indian roots of the Gypsy population in the heart of Britain who, though itinerant for centuries, were, if Indian, therefore enacting a kind of “reverse colonization” such as that noted in connection with the Sherlock Holmes stories in Chapter One, and which Stephen Arata has argued is legible in *Dracula*. It is not clear from *The Romany Rye*’s conclusion whether George the “Lavengro” indeed goes to work for the East India Company and thus partakes of a sort of reverse-reverse colonization, or makes his way to India on his own, and it is equally unclear whether Borrow ever actually

visited India himself.<sup>281</sup> But in concluding with this connection, cementing it, in effect, Borrow both adumbrates an account of Gypsies' radical otherness and posits ties to a country that was both in his own time and that of the setting of his books an extremely important British colonial asset.<sup>282</sup> The anxiety about hygiene that infuses discourse about Gypsies as the nineteenth century progresses mirrors increased anxieties about the Raj, or "imperialist panic," as Ian Duncan terms it (*Moonstone* 300), in the period surrounding the 1857 rebellion.

In Sir Walter Scott's *Guy Mannering*, a seminal representation of the British Gypsy, anxiety about the British connection to India underlies the entire work: Colonel Mannering is posted to India, and India serves as the romantic backdrop for the meeting of his daughter and "Vanbeest Brown," who in reality is Harry Bertram, heir to the Bertram estate. It is the novel's project to turn the Dutch "Vanbeest" back into the Scottish "Harry," thus preventing him from importing the colonial and sexual mystique of India, represented by the "Hindu tune" that he plays for Julia on his invasive "flageolet (89 and 94).<sup>283</sup> Gypsy and Indian motifs function independently throughout the novel, only coalescing once, in the observation Bertram makes about Meg Merrilies, who he finds himself regarding with a surprising degree of emotion stemming, unbeknownst to him, from his distant memory of her: "Have I dreamed of such a figure?' he said to himself, 'or does this wild and singular-looking woman recal [sic] to my recollection some of the strange figures I have seen in an Indian

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<sup>281</sup> Reviewer Frederick Burwick notes the "paradoxical reasoning" of Borrow's biographers, Collie and Williams, who both try with limited success to account for Borrow's whereabouts from 1826 to 1829, with Collie positing that the deletions of references to Brazil and India in Borrow's manuscripts "increases the likelihood that he had been there" (qtd. in Burwick 212).

<sup>282</sup> According to Marshall, "After 1765 the revenues of Bengal alone amounted to about one-quarter of the public revenues of Britain as a whole; in the 1830s to the 1850s, the £20 million to £25 million collected by the East India Company was about half the revenue of the domestic British state" (91).

<sup>283</sup> As the project succeeds, the narrator begins to call Harry "Bertram" rather than "Brown."



pagoda?” (123), an image that seems to propound a theory of Indian origin for the Gypsies. While Scott’s discussion of the “origin of the gypsy tribes” in Chapter Seven traces their provenance to Egypt, asserting that they then “became a mingled race” (35), the Indian connection Bertram posits complicates this assertion and reveals that the India that lurks, threatening to impinge, is more pervasive than was initially apparent, given the ubiquity of Gypsies throughout the novel. The presence of India is further alluded to when Harry replies to Meg’s demand to know who he is and where he comes from: “My name is Brown, mother, and I come from the East Indies” (123). Harry’s “brown”-ness and his Indian origins (and Dutch name) render him ill-suited to be a heir to a fortune or husband to Julia Mannering, but in the end, the death of Meg Merrilies on his behalf restores him to both his property and his British (albeit Scottish) identity.

Like *Guy Mannering*, Wilkie Collins’ proto-detective-story *The Moonstone* (1868) is a novel about the displacement and ultimate restoration of property that is facilitated by the expunging of foreign elements. As D.A. Miller has argued, the detective story as a form and *The Moonstone* in particular embody a paradigm similar to the one I have posited in connection with the deployment of Gypsies: they involve “the identification and apprehension of a criminal who is by definition the ‘other,’” and they represent the detective’s investigation of the crime “as an anomaly, a dramatic exception to a routine social order...” (36). In other words, the detective novel has a project similar to that of a novel like, for example, *Wuthering Heights*: to locate the “other” who has intervened in the status quo and to cast him or her out, restoring the social order. Miller argues further that while the detective in *The*

*Moonstone*, Sergeant Cuff, vigorously pursues the investigation in a way that “brutally democratize[s]” the Verinder estate (38), the actual work of detection is carried out, albeit inadvertently, by the community itself (42): “*The Moonstone* dismisses the police altogether, and the mysterious crime is worked to a solution by a power that no one has charge of...The community does not mobilize in a concerted scheme of police action, and yet things turn out as though it did” (49-50). While this is a compelling argument, there is a significant element of the communal working of this solution that Miller does not address: the intervention of the half-Gypsy doctor, Ezra Jennings, without whose very deliberate mobilization the mystery could not have been solved. It is Jennings who conducts the experiment that establishes the innocence of Franklin Blake and then dies, thereby expunging one element of the specter of hybridity that haunts the novel.

*The Moonstone* traces the theft of a sacred diamond from India during the “Storming of Seringapatam” in 1799 and its apparent counter-theft from an English country house some years later. Even more viscerally than in *Guy Mannering*, the colonial specter of India lurks throughout the novel. Ian Duncan has proclaimed *The Moonstone* “the sole mid-Victorian novel of the first rank that makes England’s relation with India the center of its business” (297). Nicholas Saul argues that *The Moonstone* “is intimately concerned with the problem of Orientalism in British Colonial India” and that “Collins’ novel also has something valuable to say in this context about the discourse on Gypsies” (119).<sup>284</sup> While far more powerfully than in *Guy Mannering*, the Indian aspects of *The Moonstone* are ubiquitously menacing, the

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<sup>284</sup> Saul calls attention to the parallels between the Robinson Crusoe scene in *Lavengro* and Butler Gabriel Betteridge’s obsession with that text and reads *The Moonstone* as “a subtle attack on Orientalist Gypsy discourse” (127).

Gypsy connection does not emerge until the appearance of Ezra Jennings. Jennings is described by the narrator of this section of the novel, Franklin Blake, in terms that are redolent of both Gypsiness and India:

His complexion was of a gipsy darkness...His nose presented the fine shape and modelling so often found among the ancient peoples of the East, so seldom visible in the newer races of the West...From this strange face, eyes, stranger still, of the softest brown—eyes dreamy and mournful, and deeply sunk in their orbits—looked out at you, and (in my case, at least) took your attention captive at their will. Add to this a quantity of thick, close-curling hair, which by some freak of Nature, had lost its color in the most startling and capricious manner. Over the top of his head it was still of the deep black which was its natural colour. Round the sides of his head—without the slightest gradation of grey to break the force of the extraordinary contrast—it had turned completely white. The line between the two colors preserved no sort of regularity. At one place, the white hair ran up into the black; at another, the black hair ran down into the white. (326)

While it is not clear if by “ancient peoples of the East” Blake refers to Egyptians or Indians, Jennings’ hybridity, the result of some evident racial complications, is the most striking aspect of his appearance, having turned him into a sort of “piebald” (327), a “freak of Nature” who is doomed by a mysterious illness to extinction, perhaps because of these warring racial forces, emblemized by the black and white sections of hair.

While Jennings' Gypsiness may be the death of him, he is, however, able to act as catalyst in solving the mystery of the diamond (stolen by Franklin Blake himself while under the influence of opium administered as a prank by the aptly named doctor, Mr. Candy) and to set everything to rights before expiring. We discover in the novel's final statement by India hand Mr. Murthwaite that the diamond, having been stolen twice more (first by the upstanding Godfrey Ablewhite and then finally by the mysterious Indians), has been returned to India and replaced in the forehead of the Hindu "god of the Moon"; thus, the Moonstone and with it, the sinister Brahmins who have dogged its steps, are expelled from England, and the dangers of foreign infiltration and consequent hybridity are temporarily averted. In this way, *The Moonstone* follows the same trajectory as *Wuthering Heights*: in both works, an outsider operates to displace property, and the social order is paralyzed until the property is restored. But while in *Wuthering Heights*, it is a hybrid interloper, Heathcliff, whose Gypsiness poses this threat, in *The Moonstone*, the Verinder household is infiltrated by quite an assortment of peripatetic, transgressive foreign elements: not only mysterious Indians and dying half-Gypsies, but also English characters such as John Herncastle and Franklin Blake whose Englishness is imperiled. While in *Wuthering Heights*, it is the Earnshaw homestead whose ownership is in dispute because of a Gypsy figure, in *The Moonstone*, it is a Gypsy figure who restores the property; and indeed, it is the diamond itself which is the true itinerant catalyst whose arrival in England functions like that of Heathcliff to disrupt the social order and which must be expunged, or at least exported, to restore it.

Although the novel never explicitly identifies Indian-ness with Gypsiness, it suggests a parallel between them by underpinning the action with a classic “Gypsy curse” in a Hindu register.<sup>285</sup> The evil cousin John Herncastle stands, much like the later Mr. Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness*, as an example of the perils of abandoning this social order and “going native.” The first of the novel’s multiple narratives, a prologue by an anonymous cousin (from a “family paper” that has been “written in India” (11)), tells the story of Herncastle’s descent into a barbarism apparently inspired by the carnage he witnesses,<sup>286</sup> tracing the diamond’s complicated history and how Herncastle acquired it. Beginning in the “the forehead of the four-handed Indian god who typifies the Moon,”<sup>287</sup> the diamond’s itinerancy, as it were, began in the eleventh century when a “Mohammedan conqueror” plundered the temple it was housed in, so the statue of the deity, along with the diamond, was removed to Benares by “three Brahmins,” who then have a vision of “Vishnu the Preserver” who decrees that the Moonstone must be guarded “to the end of the generations of men” (12). The deity goes on to predict “certain disaster to the presumptuous mortal who laid hand on the sacred gem, and to all of his house and name who received it after him” (12). This curse-like injunction underpins the action of the novel, and while the misfortune that the diamond brings to the Verinder-Blake *ménage* may or may not be the result of it, the curse is certainly the articulation of anxiety about foreign infiltration. The

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<sup>285</sup> In “‘Dirty Linen’: Legacies of Empire in Wilkie Collins’ *The Moonstone*,” Melissa Free argues that the gem is not “cursed,” but “plundered”; I would suggest, however, that a gem can be plundered *and* still engage in the discourse of the Gypsy curse. She argues further that “empire, not the Moonstone, is the family curse” (343).

<sup>286</sup> “Herncastle’s fiery temper had been, as I could plainly see, exasperated to a kind of frenzy by the terrible slaughter through which we had passed” (14).

<sup>287</sup> According to Kemp, Collins got his information on Hindu deities from J. Talboys Wheeler’s *The History of India* (1867) and then took liberties with it, “substituting a moon god for the god of the sun” (*Moonstone* 474 fn.).

diamond, not to mention the mysterious Indians, presents no danger if left in its original environment, but its transplantation (like that of Heathcliff) threatens the Englishness of the country house with malign foreign influence.

The curse is perpetrated not only by Vishnu, but by the “wild” and peripatetic Herncastle, who runs afoul of the gem’s bad karma by stealing the dagger it is set in and, evidently, murdering its three Indian guards, the last of whom revivifies the curse by vowing in his dying words, “The Moonstone will have its vengeance yet on you and yours” (14). When Herncastle refuses to confess the murder and theft to his cousin, the cousin cuts off all relations with him, adding that although he has no proof that Herncastle is guilty, he personally believes him to be, and adds, “I am even fanciful enough to believe that he will live to regret it, if he keeps the Diamond; and that others will live to regret taking it from him, if he gives the Diamond away” (16). Thus, when John Herncastle bequeaths the Moonstone to his estranged niece, Rachel Verinder, as a birthday present, he is deliberately passing the curse along to her. While his degenerative wildness is not explicitly identified in terms of “Gypsiness,” the itinerant Herncastle has been infected with “wild” foreignness that gives him the status of an invading reverse colonist: in Betteredge’s words, “here was our quiet English house suddenly invaded by a devilish Indian Diamond—bringing after it a conspiracy of living rogues, set loose on us by the vengeance of a dead man.... Who ever heard the like of it—in the nineteenth century, mind; in an age of progress, and in a country which rejoices in the blessings of the British constitution?” (46). Betteredge casts the issue in nationalist terms and implies that the “invasion” of the diamond has threatened the legal framework of British civilization: the Moonstone’s

infiltrating presence destabilizes not only the “English house” but the “British constitution.”

If, as Miller has argued, it ultimately takes a community in *The Moonstone* to police itself back to the status quo, it would appear to also first require a community of itinerant outsiders to serially throw it into chaos. John Herncastle is first in this series of outsiders to conduct the Moonstone into the happy Verinder household and destabilize its social order; another itinerant, Franklin Blake, then continues the legwork involved in carrying out the curse. Not only does he conduct the diamond to Rachel, neatly avoiding the lurking Indians, but it is he who steals it from Rachel’s room, albeit unconsciously, and further enacts the degeneration of the household: as he comments, by the time Lady Verinder has taken Rachel away to recuperate and Franklin is taking dejected leave of the Verinder house, “When I came to her from London with that horrible Diamond...I don’t believe there was a happier household in England than this. Look at the household now! Scattered, disunited—the very air of the place poisoned with mystery and suspicion” (188). It is easy to blame the other foreign itinerants, Herncastle and the Indians, not to mention the diamond itself, for the dissolution of this quintessentially English household whose ruin demonstrates the ill effects these influences might have on the British body politic as a whole, but it is worth noting that Franklin himself constitutes a foreign influence: as Betteredge points out, Franklin was sent to be educated in Germany by his Parliamentarian father, after which he “gave the French a turn next, and the Italians a turn after that....He lived here, there, and everywhere; his address (as he used to put it himself) being, ‘Post Office, Europe—to be left till called for’” (29). Betteredge remarks on

“the varnish from foreign parts” that continues to adhere to Franklin (40) and complains of the “puzzling shifts and transformations in Mr Franklin” that were “due to the effect on him of his foreign training” (55) which has led to a sad lack of consistency:

At the age when we are all of us most apt to take our colouring, in the form of a reflection from the colouring of other people, he had been sent abroad, and had been passed on from one nation to another, before there was time for any one colouring more than another to settle itself on him firmly. As a consequence of this, he had come back with so many different sides to his character, all more or less jarring with each other, that he seemed to pass his life in a state of perpetual contradiction with himself. . . . He had his French side, and his German side, and his Italian side—the original English foundation showing through, every now and then, as much as to say, “Here I am, sorely transmogrified, as you see, but there’s something left at the bottom of him still.” (55-6)<sup>288</sup>

Like Herncastle, and like the three Indian guardians of the Moonstone, Blake is a wanderer with no clear “English foundation,” and as such, presents a threat to the English household that he infiltrates. Just as the novel’s project is to abject the malefic foreign influence of the diamond, so must Franklin vanquish his foreign personae and become thoroughly English.

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<sup>288</sup> Betteredge’s commentary is a good example of the way in which, as D.A. Miller puts it, his “comical intuitions nonetheless embody community norms” (40).



Gabriel Betteridge's narrative continually calls attention to the ongoing problem of Franklin's foreignness. When Rachel and Lady Verinder leave their estate, Rachel in high dudgeon, since she has witnessed the theft of the diamond, Betteridge notes the deleterious effect on Franklin: "It left him unsettled, with a legacy of idle time on his hands, and in so doing, it let out all the foreign sides of his character, one on top of another, like rats out of a bag. Now as an Italian-Englishman, now as a German-Englishman, and now as a French-Englishman, he drifted in and out of all the sitting-rooms in the house..."(179). Not only is Franklin suffering from a case of hybridity—less advanced than that of Jennings, but one which threatens him, perhaps, with the same fate—but he has resumed his itinerancy and is only able to drift, with no fixed abode. By the time he takes leave of the estate, though, Betteridge notes, "The foreign varnish appeared to have all worn off Mr Franklin, now that the time had come for saying good-bye" (187). It appears that the rat-like flight of Franklin's "foreign sides" has cleansed him of all that is not English in his character and rendered him capable of the daring experiment in which he, with the help of Jennings, recreates the circumstances of the theft, cleansing him of all guilt and leaving him free to marry Rachel and, by the novel's end, reproduce, thereby restoring the social order.

In Miller's terms, the entire community is instrumental in both the perpetuation and the solution of the mystery, but I would argue that the member of the community who contributes the most to the mystery's solution is the half-Gypsy Ezra Jennings. In a literal sense, Jennings takes care of the most important trajectory of the novel, the marriage plot: his scheme to demonstrate Franklin's innocence by

recreating the events of the diamond's theft, which enables him to discover that Franklin took the diamond while sleepwalking, removes the impediment from Franklin's engagement to Rachel Verinder, thus enabling the heterosexual procreative energies that maintain the social order by populating Britain with children who are demonstrably English (at least, once Franklin has thrown off his foreign patina). In a more figurative register, Jennings brings this union about by demonstrating to the community the evil effects of hybridity, which appears to literally kill him: it is clear to Franklin that Jennings' "melancholy" and illness are caused by his foreign influences: "He had suffered as few men suffer," Franklin notes. "[T]here was a mixture of some foreign race in his English blood" (371). With this hideous example before him functioning as a human sacrifice,<sup>289</sup> Franklin is scared straight, so to speak, abjuring his foreignness. On the other hand, his rival for Rachel's hand, Godfrey Ablewhite, the real thief, and arguably Franklin's other double, is killed while dressed as an Indian, a disguise that is described in Gypsy-like terms, with a "swarthy face" and a black wig and fake beard. Gypsiness and Indian-ness appear conflated here, as Ablewhite joins the list of undesirable foreign influences that must be expunged from the novel to facilitate the restoration of the status quo that they have all disrupted.

While it can be argued that in *The Moonstone*, unlike in the texts discussed in Chapter One, a Gypsy, Ezra Jennings, serves as a catalyst not for the misappropriation but for the restoration of property, there are two additional "Gypsy" catalysts that precipitate the disruption of the Verinder-Blake alliance. One is the diamond itself: the moonstone is an itinerant which migrates, Gypsy-like, from India

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<sup>289</sup> Miller notes that Jennings, in turn, sees Franklin "as a double of himself" (48).

to England and ruptures the community. It is only by abjecting its foreign influence, i.e., restoring it to its rightful home, from which it has been in a sort of diaspora, that national identity can remain intact. Another significant foreign influence is the opium that Mr. Candy gives Franklin Blake, which, as Jennings's experiment reveals, causes him to sleepwalk and remove the diamond from Rachel's room in an attempt to protect it from the Indians who he imagines are "in the house" (424). That opium is identified in the novel in terms of Gypsiness is suggested by its importance to Jennings, whose nervous system has been "shattered" by it (380). It is also Indian: during the nineteenth century, opium was one of India's important exported goods.<sup>290</sup> But if it is opium that caused the problem in the first place, and that is killing Jennings at the same time that it is palliating the pain of his terminal illness, it is also, in a similarly paradoxical mode, what enables Jennings to solve the mystery by administering it to Franklin and replicating the initial opium incident. Perhaps this ingestion of foreignness inoculates Franklin against the sort of foreignness that is killing Jennings: as Childers argues, perhaps "Englishness is most formidable after being 'touched' and potentially contaminated by the other; only against the face of foreignness can it show its true mettle" (205). After Franklin is thus contaminated by these foreign elements—the diamond, the opium, Jennings, and opium again—his British mettle is such that in the novel's penultimate section, Franklin is finally converted to Gabriel Betteridge's religion of Robinson Crusoe-ism, saying with what Betteridge interprets as "solemnity," "I'm convinced at last" (463). While Franklin's

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<sup>290</sup> See J.F. Richards, "The Indian Empire and Peasant Production of Opium in the Nineteenth Century." In "Foreign Matter: Imperial Filth," Joseph W. Childers makes a similar argument about Sherlock Holmes's use of cocaine, which is linked by Watson with "the dangers associated with foreignness" (205).

solemnity is most likely feigned, it is quite plausible that at this point, what he is convinced by is the British colonial project, to which he signs on by announcing his and Rachel's imminent reproduction.

So, in the end, all property is restored, and none of the novel's Gypsy-like elements—the diamond, the opium, the mysterious Indians, and Jennings—continue to pollute Britain with a threat of reverse colonization and/or hybridity. Franklin and Rachel are about to contribute to the population of Britain, thus perpetuating Englishness, and the threat of foreign invasion has, at least temporarily, been staved off, preserving British (and English, which the novel seems to view as synonymous), not to mention Indian, national identity, for the time being.

#### IV. "A Mighty Nation's Seed": *The Zincoli* and *The Spanish Gypsy*

In *Figures of Conversion: 'The Jewish Question' & English National Identity*, Michael Ragussis examines the interest of George Eliot, among other "Victorian writers of historical romance," in the historical moment of the Spanish Inquisition, and especially its role in the formation of Spanish national identity. "[A]s England attempted to define the origins of the nation-state as a way of articulating its own national identity," he argues,

the history of Spain provided a dangerous model—dangerous, at least, for England's Jews, for by locating the origins of modern Spain in the conquest of the Moors at Granada and the banishment of the Jews,

nineteenth-century historians and novelists alike began to use  
fifteenth-century Spain as a paradigm for the birth of a nation based in  
racial and religious homogeneity. (127)

George Eliot's dramatic poem *The Spanish Gypsy* (1868), which Ragussis discusses, examines just such a process of nation-building based on ethnicity or "race"; the poem's primary focus is not on Spanish national identity, however, but on the idea of a Gypsy "national" identity which would be created by the exodus of the "Zincali" from Spain to a new homeland in Africa. Unlike in *The Moonstone*, in which national identity is shored up by abjection of an Other, *The Spanish Gypsy* does not ostensibly concern itself with national identity of the Spain the Zincali will be leaving behind, which continues in its attempts to move toward religious and racial homogeneity, but rather with the nation-building that would result from the relocation of the "tribe" in a new homeland in Africa. This is not quite a project of ethnic cleansing; instead of being involuntarily expelled from Spain, or forced into conversion, like the Jews whose religious and ethnic identities Eliot shows as being imperiled by the Inquisition, the Zincali opt to transplant themselves. The Spain they will vacate is one whose national identity has in racial terms been fragmented by the Inquisition, as Ragussis has pointed out, and complicated by the consequent ubiquity of "crypto-Jews" whose forced conversions created large numbers of "New Christians" as well as "Marranos" who continued to practice Judaism in secret (156-59). The Gypsies themselves, though, led by the tragic heroine, Fedalma, will presumably construct a pure national identity that cannot, as Fedalma's ill-fated romance with the Christian Don Silva demonstrates, be polluted by intermarriage or conversion.

In this, *The Spanish Gypsy* is, as Deborah Nord terms it, a “romance of nation” (*Gypsies* 100) whose trajectory revises multiple paradigms. As Nord notes (102), it reverses the kidnapping story of *Guy Mannering*: it is the Gypsy child who is kidnapped and raised by non-Gypsies. Instead of a romance plot in which a daughter chooses her lover over the objections of a father, *The Spanish Gypsy* depicts a daughter choosing her father over her lover; as Ragussis puts it, “in the racial plot, the father reemerges at a critical moment to reestablish the heroine’s racial name and thereby to preclude the successful completion of the marriage plot” (137). In *The Moonstone*, the status quo and national identity may appear to have been restored by the expulsion of foreign elements, but these elements have left their mark on that which appears to be thoroughly English, e.g., Franklin Blake. Similarly, in *The Spanish Gypsy*, the departure of the Gypsies leaves behind a nation whose identity in racial terms has been undermined by the very methods the Inquisition used in an attempt to consolidate it: while the ethnic identity of one crypto-Gypsy, Fedalma, has been exposed, surely there are others who continue as “secret” Gypsies, as Ragussis has noted in connection with the Jews. Far from successfully establishing an ethnically pure Spain, the Inquisition has simply shored up the identity of the foreign Other, the Zincali who depart Spain for an ethnically pure new homeland.

The poem traces the Gypsies’ journey to nationhood, and to ethnic self-awareness, through the figure of Fedalma, a feisty heroine who has been raised by her Spanish abductors but who is in fact a Zincali. She is introduced to the reader by a spontaneous dance in the *Plaça* that manifests the genetic inheritance of which she is not yet aware. It is this dance, in which “she, sole swayed by impulse

passionate/...Moved as, in dance religious, Miriam,/When on the Red Sea shore she raised her voice/And led the chorus of the people's joy" (49), that serves as a marker both of Fedalma's Gypsiness and of her "heterodox femininity," in Nord's phrase ("Marks"192). In this passage, Eliot twins her with Miriam, who, as Nord notes, "helped lead the Israelites out of exile in Egypt to journey to the Promised Land" in the same way that Fedalma is destined to lead the Gypsies to their new homeland in Africa (*Gypsies* 114).

Much the way Eliot attempts to examine and recuperate Jewish identity in the later *Daniel Deronda* (1876), in *The Spanish Gypsy*, she represents the Gypsy diaspora in epic terms, giving it both tragic and biblical stature, and suggests that Fedalma is less an individual tragic heroine<sup>291</sup> than a representative of a "racial plot," as Ragussis puts it, in which an individual's fate is yoked to that of an entire people. Fedalma's dance reveals her as just such a representative: at its ecstatic pinnacle, just as "the crowd/Exultant shouts, forgetting poverty/In the rich moment of possessing her," the dance is interrupted by the presence of the chained "Gypsy prisoners," who "thrust apart" the crowd and "[w]alk in dark file" past her (52). This deferral of climax is a harbinger of her ultimate choice, the sacrifice of romantic love for the greater good of her people and their national identity as she chooses to lead them into what Ragussis notes is "an exile based in the sacrifice of the erotic" (155). As he passes, the Gypsy chief, Zarca (her father, though she does not yet know this) stares at her, arresting her in mid-dance, with eyes "[t]hat seem to her the sadness of the

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<sup>291</sup> Ragussis suggests that "[t]he entire project of *The Spanish Gypsy* was framed from the beginning by an attempt to understand in what ways the genre of tragedy could function as a category of the feminine..." (152). The same passage in the poem that compares Fedalma to Miriam then links her to Hecuba.

world/Rebuking her...[with] the sorrows unredeemed/Of races outcast, scorned, and wandering” (53). Here, as in the analogy to Miriam, the “wandering” Gypsies are twinned with the Jews (note that “races” is plural), and as the Gypsies are thus lent biblical/epic resonance, Fedalma’s stereotypical Spanish-Gypsy dance, complete with tambourine, which marks her as a crypto-Zincali, seems to be viewed by Zarca as frivolous compared to the Gypsies’ struggle for ethnic and ultimately national identity.

In the next scene, Gypsies and Jews are twinned again, as Don Silva discusses his fiancée with the Prior, who accuses her of being an “infidel.” Don Silva points out that “Fedalma is a daughter of the Church--/Has been baptized and nurtured in the faith,” but the Prior retorts, “Ay, as a thousand Jewesses, who yet/Are brides of Satan in a robe of flames,” i.e., the “secret race” of Jews who have been victims of the Inquisition. Don Silva says, “Fedalma is no Jewess, bears no marks/That tell of Hebrew blood,” and the Prior says, “She bears the marks/Of races unbaptized, that never bowed/Before the holy signs, were never moved/By stirrings of the sacramental gifts” (61). Don Silva responds scornfully that this kind of accusation, i.e., one based on physiognomy<sup>292</sup> or “marks,” is no more valid than palmistry, but the Prior asserts that a “record...[o]f her great history,” i.e., her ethnicity, is imprinted in her features, and adds, “That maiden’s blood is as unchristian as the leopard’s” (62). As evidence

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<sup>292</sup> According to Jeanne Fahnestock, “Readers from the 1850s through the 1870s could be relied on to understand something of the code of *physiognomy*, the “science” of reading character in the face” (325); Fahnestock argues that the “irregular features” of heroines in that period often encode similarly “irregular conduct.” In *The Spanish Gypsy*, Don Silva calls into question the validity of the code of physiognomy, but the Prior affirms it, since he has read Fedalma’s features correctly. Fahnestock traces a similar ambivalence in *Adam Bede* (1859), in which “George Eliot’s common sense tells her that any invariable correspondence between face and character is implausible, but she cannot quite give it up” (349).



of this, the Prior points to her dance, the marker of Gypsiness that has, like her physiognomy, revealed her race.

That the Prior's racial decoding turns out to have been quite correct is revealed when Zarca reveals to Fedalma that he is her long-lost father; their relationship is figured in terms of property. When she asks, "Father, how was it that we lost each other?" he responds, "I lost you as a man might lose a gem/Wherein he has compressed his total wealth..." (103). Like the diamond in *The Moonstone*, Fedalma has been misappropriated ("snatched" by "Marauding Spaniards" (103)) in a reversal of the traditional Gypsy-kidnapping plot similar to that which informs Maggie Tulliver's encounter with the Gypsies in *The Mill on the Floss*. Instead of the culmination of a marriage plot, as in *Wuthering Heights*, for example, the status quo is affirmed by the departure of the Zincali in an effort to construct a homeland and ergo an unequivocal national identity at the same time that their expulsion is an effort to shore up Spanish national identity by purging Spain of one of its two "secret races"<sup>293</sup>; and it is only by the restoration of Zarca's "gem" that these romances of nation can be consummated. When Fedalma accepts Zarca as her father, he "seizes [her] circlet of rubies and flings it on the ground," rejecting it as "her people's blood, decking her in shame" (105). Instead, Zarca proposes that she "take the heirship of the Gypsy's child" (108), a legacy she accepts.

Thus, when Fedalma assumes a Gypsy identity and pursues the idea of a homeland that will legitimize her "race" by turning it into a nation, her lost ethnic and cultural inheritance is restored to her. In this, as Michael Ragussis notes, "the conventional marriage plot is reconfigured here as the means by which the daughter

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<sup>293</sup> The Moors, too, appear in *The Spanish Gypsy* as a race of Others, but they are not "secret."

serves her father as the bride of his people. Intermarriage with the racial other [i.e., Don Silva] is canceled in a figure: marriage with the entire body of one's own race" (154-55). Eliot casts this "marriage" in terms of procreation: when Zarca proposes his plan that Fedalma join in the exodus to Africa, he says, "I your father wait/That you may lead us forth to liberty--/Restore me to my tribe—five hundred men/Whom I alone can save, alone can rule,/And plant them as a mighty nation's seed" (118). He adds,

My vagabonds are a seed more generous,  
Quick as the serpent, loving as the hound,  
And beautiful as disinherited gods.  
They have a promised land beyond the sea.  
There I may lead them, raise my standard, call  
The wandering Zincali to that new home,  
And make a nation...." (118-19)

Later, he refers to "lead[ing] his people over Bahr el Scham/And plant[ing] them on the shore of Africa" (168). These references to his followers as seeds who will impregnate Fedalma with nationhood, as it were, which Ragussis calls "a bitterly ironic form of propagation," doomed to failure (155), suggest that like *The Virgin and the Gypsy*, *The Spanish Gypsy* moves teleologically toward a sexual congress, but rather than a hybrid pairing like that of Yvette and the Gypsy, the marriage here is quite explicitly between Fedalma and her father and more generally, Fedalma and her people: "Father, now I go," she says, "To wed my people's lot" (122). Finally, as Zarca is dying, he says to Fedalma, "I held my people's good within my

breast./Behold, now I deliver it to you./See, it still breathes unstrangled” (248). Her father’s death impregnates Fedalma: she says, “I am but as the funeral urn that bears/The ashes of a leader” (262); as Ragussis notes, “The daughter’s body becomes no more than a kind of grave for the memorialization of the dead father” (155).

In her metaphors of impregnation and birth, Eliot, for all her apparent sympathy to the oppressed “races” of Inquisition Spain,<sup>294</sup> seems to uphold a doctrine of racial purity that calls for the separation of the four ethnic/national groups whose interactions she examines. While the outcome in *The Spanish Gypsy* may be tragic with respect to the death of Zarca and the deferral of his project of nation-building, it is a kind of Greek-inspired tragedy in which society is cleansed of hybridity and secret races. Zarca’s project of nationhood founders in the end; Fedalma seems not to be able to mobilize her troops the way Zarca could: “that great force that knit them into one,/The invisible passion of her father’s soul,/That wrought them visibly into its will/And would have bound their lives with permanence/Was gone” (255). But some of the Zincali are bound for their new homeland, carrying “bags of seed/To make new waving crops in Africa” (254); intermarriage has been prevented; and two false conversions (Fedalma’s from and Don Silva’s to Zincali-ness) have been reversed.

While the national identity of the Spain that the departing Zincali leave behind may be fractured by the presence of the remaining Zincali as well as the Moors and Jews (secret or otherwise) who continue to inhabit it, the new Zincali state is being constructed as racially pure, a condition that Eliot’s text seems, however

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<sup>294</sup> Ragussis refers to Eliot’s apparent “exaggerated horror of apostasy” in *The Spanish Gypsy*, which, he says, fails to take note of the fact that Jews were converted during the Inquisition “on threat of death”: “her portrait of the converted Jew seems to function as an indictment of Jewish hypocrisy and opportunity” (156).

unconsciously, to advocate.<sup>295</sup> While Eliot appears to valorize the Zincali, depicting them in romantic terms as a noble people whose leaders, Zarca and then Fedalma, are willing to sacrifice themselves for the greater good, in viewing them as a race in need of a homeland, she appears to be unconsciously espousing a desire to abject them from Spain. Susan Meyer makes a similar argument about *Daniel Deronda*, noting that in the 1870s, i.e., prior to the Russian pogroms of the 1880s, British Jews were justifiably “suspicious” of the “British gentile proto-Zionist movement of the mid-nineteenth century, which sought to relocate Jews in a homeland: “When considered within its historical context,” Meyer argues, “the proto-Zionist ending of [*Daniel Deronda*] comes to seem more sinister. The novel ultimately...ushers [the Jews] out of the English world of the novel,” removing them “in the euphemistic language of the novel ‘safely to their own borders’” (162).<sup>296</sup> Similarly, perhaps Eliot, as an intellectual, thought she was espousing egalitarian or even Romani-philic attitudes in her representations of the Zincali (thereby revising her less complimentary view of the Gypsies in *The Mill on the Floss*), but could not help revealing a desire to expunge them from Spain and by inference, Britain. *The Spanish Gypsy* is arguably the British text most sympathetic to Gypsies of any; yet in choosing Inquisition Spain, as opposed to contemporary England, as its setting, the poem opts for an exoticized view of them—the Spanish Zincali, not the English Romanichal—that firmly places them outside the context of British national identity. It can be argued further that in

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<sup>295</sup> See Susan Meyer’s discussion of the critical debate regarding Eliot’s treatment of the Jews in *Daniel Deronda* (161-63 fn.): Meyer points out that while some critics, such as Edward Said, have read that novel as highly sympathetic to Zionism, others, such as Deirdre David and Patrick Brantlinger, have viewed it as anti-Semitic.

<sup>296</sup> Amanda Anderson takes issue with Meyer’s argument, arguing that it “suffers from imposing a parochialism on the highly cosmopolitan Eliot, who was deeply influenced by earlier continental, particularly German, debates on Judaism and nationalism” (120 fn.).

depicting Gypsies as so destructive to Spanish identity, albeit in an Inquisitorial register that appears to call Spain's nationalizing project into question, Eliot is suggesting that Gypsies have a similarly destabilizing role in terms of British identity, just as they have in *Orlando*, *Lavengro/The Romany Rye*, and *The Moonstone*, and that it is only by casting them out—even with the ostensibly sympathetic device of constructing a homeland for them—that Britain can consolidate its own national identity.

V. "An Empty Hole": *The Szgany and Dracula*

In *Dracula* (1897), as Jonathan Harker and Professor Van Helsing are discussing ways of gaining access to the London house of Count Dracula, located uncannily in the heart of Piccadilly, the professor relates a strange and seemingly unimportant story:

I have read of a gentleman who owned a so fine house in your London, and when he went for months of summer to Switzerland and lock up his house, some burglar came and broke window at back and got in.<sup>297</sup> Then he went and made open the shutters in front and walk out and in through the door, before the very eyes of the police. Then he have an auction in that house, and advertise it, and put up big notice; and when the day come he sell off by a great auctioneer all the goods of that other man who own them. Then he go to a builder, and he sell him that house, making an agreement that he pull it down and take all away

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<sup>297</sup> [Sic.] Van Helsing's grammar is noticeably "foreign."

within a certain time. And your police and other authorities help him all they can. And when that owner come back from his holiday in Switzerland he find only an empty hole where his house had been.

(313)

While much has been written about the way in which anxiety about three of the subjects of this study—sexuality, gender, and national identity—operates in *Dracula*, Van Helsing's anecdote locates a fundamental undercurrent that has been less noted: fear of disruption to property.<sup>298</sup> His story in which a clever burglar is able to reduce a "fine house" to an "empty hole" with the aid of "police and other authority" implies that one current of anxiety in the novel is that the incursion of the burglar-like<sup>299</sup> Count into England, an opening gambit in the "reverse colonization" adumbrated by Stephen Arata in his comprehensive article on the novel, will foment the decline of the British Empire house by house, body by body, leaving only an "empty hole" (with all its gynophobic implications) in its place. *Dracula's* calculated assault on England and Englishness<sup>300</sup> is an attempt to infect its already hybrid national identity with the even more complex hybridity that characterizes his own homeland. It has often been noted that this attack destabilizes sexual norms and leads to the destabilization of gender, but not that the locus for this attack is property, i.e., real estate, houses and the body. In short, *Dracula* is a veritable smorgasbord, and complex intertwining, of

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<sup>298</sup> See Franco Moretti's reading of *Dracula* as metaphor for monopoly capital: "Like monopoly capital, his ambition is to subjugate the last vestiges of the liberal era and destroy all forms of economic independence" (92).

<sup>299</sup> Especially insofar as he can creep like a reptile up and down walls.

<sup>300</sup> He doesn't seem interested in Scotland or Wales, though the dialect of the Whitby characters has a Scottishness redolent of an unstable border.

the multiple currents this project examines, and it is significant that Gypsies, or Szgany, as Stoker chooses to call them,<sup>301</sup> have a small but significant presence.

As the novel opens, the rampant hybridity that Dracula threatens to import to England is made clear when the ethnic diversity of Dracula's corner of Transylvania is immediately noted by Harker: "In the population of Transylvania there are four distinct nationalities: Saxons in the south, and mixed with them the Wallachs, who are the descendents of the Dacians; Magyars in the west, and Szekelys in the east and north" (8); and on his journey to Dracula's castle, Harker encounters "Cszeks and Slavaks, all in picturesque attire"(14).<sup>302</sup> Dracula explains this diversity to Harker by claiming that waves of invaders had come in search of hidden treasure, i.e., gold that has been buried in the ground, and he adds that "there is hardly a foot of soil in all this region that has not been enriched by the blood of men, patriots, or invaders" (28). Here, blood and gold are conflated and located in the soil itself, which causes soil to become a synecdoche for the national identity that has been destabilized by all this co-mingling of the blood. Dracula identifies himself as a Szkely, but alludes to his own hybridity: "We Szekelys have a right to be proud, for in our veins flows the blood of many brave races who fought as the lion fights, for lordship" (35-6). He goes on to describe his land as "the whirlpool of European races" that includes waves of invaders, and adds, "Is it a wonder that we [the Szekelys] were a conquering race?" (36). Blood, here, is connected to race, and to the complicated web of Dracula's vexed though clearly "Oriental" national identity and its connection to the soil; it is

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<sup>301</sup> An alternate spelling, evidently, of "Tsigane," as Gypsies are called throughout Europe, "Cigány" in Hungary.

<sup>302</sup> Their picturesqueness is, however, marred by goiter.

this blood, and ergo this race, of which the soil of Transylvania is literally, as we shall see, a conduit, and with which Dracula threatens to infect his victims.

In the midst of this “whirlpool” appear the Szgany, encamped, Harker notes, in the heart of Castle Dracula, its courtyard. Not only do they prove to be the Count’s henchmen by thwarting Harker’s attempts to be rescued, but Harker, who seems to know something about them, says that they are “allied to the ordinary gipsies all the world over,” living “outside the law” and speaking “only their own varieties of the Romany tongue” (49),<sup>303</sup> suggesting that they are part of some kind of international conspiracy that is already in place to facilitate the global spread of vampirism. Not only do they refuse to help Harker escape, turning his letters immediately over to the Count, but their treachery is underscored by their pointing and laughing at him (51) and then continuing to work “somewhere in the castle,” where the sounds of a “muffled mattock and spade” indicate that they are performing some “ruthless villainy” (52) that turns out to be filling full of soil the boxes that the Count intends to import to England.

It is worth asking here how the exoticized, eroticized, perhaps dangerous but fundamentally appealing figure of the Gypsy as we have seen it in *Guy Mannering* and later in *Lavengro* and *The Spanish Gypsy* has transmuted here into something so repulsive. Of course, while Stoker has used the term “Szgany” rather than “Gypsy,” with which he may have hoped to further exoticize and Orientalize them in order to avoid the positive and romantic connotations of the term “Gypsy,” he does make clear that the Szgany are Gypsies. One possible impetus for this luridly negative

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<sup>303</sup> While Harker explains his knowledge of the Szgany by saying, “I have notes of them in my [travel] book” (49), it’s not clear how he knows that these campers are in fact Szgany.



characterization of them may have been the general air of xenophobia at that time, in response, presumably, to the waves of immigration that Britain was experiencing in the decades leading up to *Dracula*. In “A Sympathetic Vibration: Dracula and the Jews,” Jules Zanger points to the arrival of “European Jews [who] from 1880 on had begun to appear in England in increasing numbers....Between 1881 and 1900, the number of foreign Jews in England increased by 600 percent. The response to their presence was both hostile and fearful” (34). Zanger argues that the Count, while not necessarily “specifically Jewish,” “vibrated sympathetically to the generalized unease resulting from the highly visible presence of great numbers of these Jews from the East....Beyond a miscellaneous xenophobia, the Jew evoked...a cluster of associations concerning blood, the cross, and money, of antiquity and ancient wisdom, all of which Stoker, probably quite unconsciously, integrated into his Dracula myth” (43).<sup>304</sup> As we have seen in *Lavengro* and *The Spanish Gypsy*, the similarities between the states of diaspora of both Jews and Gypsies have at times given rise to their if not doubling each other at least being considered together in parallel terms. In *Dracula*, while it would seem to be overreaching to regard the Count as literally Jewish, notwithstanding Zanger’s compelling argument for this reading, it is certainly useful to read the xenophobia that pervades the novel in terms

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<sup>304</sup> Terry Eagleton reads *Dracula* as an “allegory of the collapse of the gentry” written by a “Dublin civil servant,” and Dracula a member of the Protestant Ascendancy: “Like many an Ascendancy aristocrat [Dracula] is a devout Anglophile, given to poring over maps of the metropolis; and this gory-toothed vampire plans, a touch bathetically, to settle in Purfleet, as a member of the Anglo-Irish gentry were to migrate from the wilds of Connaught to the watering holes of the English south coast” (215). Maud Ellman notes the conflation of the “circulating currencies [that] endanger boundaries”: “Milk, blood, words, and money” (xx), and sees parallels between Dracula and “the fantasy-figure of the Jew”: he is “the scion of an ancient sect; he is a wanderer whose clothes are stuffed with gold; he is a stranger disguised as a familiar; a murderer of Christian babies; a pollution in the blood of Westerners” (xxviii).

of the anti-immigration sentiment<sup>305</sup> that informed Britain in this time period. While the Szgany, unlike Dracula, do not seem to threaten England with “reverse colonization,” as they appear to be staying put, presumably their relatives “the world over” with whom they ostensibly share the “Romany tongue”<sup>306</sup> are already in place, waiting to facilitate Dracula’s invasion, if not his doubles, certainly his co-conspirators.

Another reason for this shift can perhaps be linked to the concomitant change in the tenor of anti-Roma legislation in the late part of the century, due in part to the efforts of “George Smith of Coalville,” who fought for “reform” of canal boat dwellers and then turned his attention to Gypsies, railing in print against the conditions in which they lived and thus, according to Mayall, “succeed[ing] in awakening the general public to the seriousness of the Gypsy problem” (*Gypsy-travellers* 136). As noted above, it was partly due to Smith’s efforts that attention began to be paid to sanitation issues, which led to the Moveable Dwellings Bills (1885 to 1894) in which the legislation Smith had fostered regarding canal boats was applied to travelers, regulating the amount of living space and sleeping accommodations and giving the government the power to inspect dwellings (*Gypsy-travellers* 138). This emphasis on controlling sanitary conditions, expressed in such legislation as the “Infectious Diseases (Notification) Act” of 1889, may have resonated with Stoker, whose inspiration for *Dracula* was evidently derived in part

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<sup>305</sup> While in the past, a xenophobic frenzy might have struck American scholars as theoretically interesting, we are now able to watch its implications unfold in our own time in multiple and very immediate registers.

<sup>306</sup> In fact, Roma in different parts of the world speak different dialects of Romani; for example, British Gypsies, or Romanichal, speak “Angloromani,” which “differs considerably from the inflected Romani of the Vlax Rom, and is not mutually intelligible with it” (Hancock, *Pariah* 135).

from his mother's 1875 written account of "The Cholera Horror" (*Dracula* Appendix II: 412); at this point in the nineteenth century, thanks to George's Smith's polemics, the romantic view of the Gypsy which continued to exist in the minds of post-Borrovian Gypsy-lorists had undoubtedly been "infected" by the Smithian picture of "indescribable ignorance, dirt, filth, and misery...divested of the last tinge of romantical nonsense" (qtd. in Mayall, *Gypsy-travellers* 134).

What Stoker's Szgany have in common with the other Gypsies of nineteenth-century British literature, though, is the power to disturb the status quo with their mere presence in the text; and the status quo in *Dracula* is disturbed in multiple registers. Certainly, the novel's *outré* eroticism has been discussed by critics so inexhaustibly that Elizabeth Miller has recently argued for a reassessment of twentieth-century voyeuristic readings, noting that "every imaginable sexual practice, fantasy and fear has been thrust upon the pages of the novel: rape (including gang rape), aggressive female sexuality, fellatio, homoeroticism, incest, bestiality, necrophilia, paedophilia, and sexually transmitted disease" (par. 2). Miller's somewhat cantankerous critical history provides a useful compendium of these readings, the sheer volume of which argues rather forcefully against her point. Indeed, it would require an act of will not to regard Jonathan Harker's initial encounter with the three vampire women, for example, which sets the stage for the narrative, as overtly and deliberately erotic: how does one interpret Harker's confession, "I felt in my heart a wicked, burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips" (45), in any other way?

But while it would perhaps be redundant to rehearse the novel's steamier moments, it is worth considering this eroticism in the light of its conflation between blood, gold, and soil/nationhood. When three of the main characters, Jonathan, Lucy, and Mina, are threatened by vampires, each experiences a sort of rape that is rendered in terms that Maurice Hindle refers to as "soft-pornographic" (xxi).<sup>307</sup> Each of these rapes constitutes a mini-incursion by Dracula and his three vampire women into England; by infecting these British subjects with the plague of vampirism (which he does successfully with Lucy and Mina, and on British soil), he is moving his "treasure," i.e., vampire blood, into England. At the same time, Dracula is literally importing fifty boxes of Transylvanian soil, mined by Szgany from his castle, and as he has made clear, this soil contains the blood of the "men, patriots, or invaders" of his hybrid nation. While it is only Mina who, forced to drink Dracula's blood, is literally invaded with his blood, the infectious condition that he attempts to spread does indeed infect and then kill Lucy. This pollution with blood and soil is by inference a soft-core rape of England, facilitated by an international Gypsy conspiracy; rather than being eroticized themselves, the Szgany function as it were as the Count's pimps, facilitating his rape of England via the importation of his soil, i.e., the transfer of property.

Harker's narrative in the opening section of the novel casts both his own rape and that of England in terms that bespeak a parallel between them: while by night, Harker is in terror for his life as he is accosted by various vampires in highly charged erotic terms, by day, he is arranging for the Count's transfer of assets to England.

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<sup>307</sup> Maud Ellman makes the interesting point that given the "important principle of vampire lore" that a vampire can only enter a house if he is invited in, Mina and Lucy "must have desired or even invited the vampire-kiss" (xxiv).

Much of the interaction between Harker and Dracula has to do with the Count's acquisition of British property, for which he has planned thoroughly by acquainting himself with all manner of things English, including its train schedules. "Come," the Count says to Harker, "tell me of London and of the house which you have procured for me" (29). The term "procured" suggests that Jonathan is unwittingly serving as a pimp, as one definition of "procure," dating from 1603, is "To obtain (women) for the gratification of lust" (*OED*). Dracula's lust for blood, for both men and women, and for a house in England are part of the same colonizing impulse: he wishes to become one of the waves of invaders who have co-mingled the blood of so many "races" in both his own country and, as Mina points out in her journal during her trip to Whitby, the destination of Dracula's boxes, in Britain: Whitby Abbey was, as Mina notes, "sacked by the Danes" (71). Like Woolf and Borrow, Stoker appears to be aware that Englishness has been complicated by invasion—and of course, this hybridization of "blood" and "race" is purely the result of heterosexual intercourse; *Dracula's* apparent eroticization of hybridity is really merely a logical conclusion of tracing hybridity to its source in human reproduction.

In the end of his introductory narrative, after several nights of attempted vampire-rape so harrowing that he has "sat down and simply cried" (53), one of the novel's many moments of gender destabilization, Harker himself makes the connection between the transfer of property, which he has facilitated, and the transfer of "blood," or vampirism, which he now realizes he has also been party to; as Harker gazes on the smiling, blood-bloated face of the Count, lying in one of his shipping boxes, and contemplates the imminent invasion of his own body, which he realizes

might soon become “a banquet” for the three vampire women, he laments his part in the Count’s invasion of Britain: “This was the being I was helping to transfer to London, where, perhaps, for centuries to come he might, amongst its teeming millions, satiate his lust for blood, and create a new and ever-widening circle of semi-demons to batten on the helpless” (60). As he contemplates his next move, after giving the Count a glancing blow to the forehead with a shovel, “in the distance,” in a moment that is half *Borat* and half *Snow White*, he hears “a gipsy song sung by merry voices” (60); the insensitive, brutal Szgany, along with some Slovaks, are coming to move the fifty boxes of earth so they may be transported to England.

In a sense, *Dracula* is the story of these boxes, and of an elaborate real estate transaction of which they function as synecdoche: while Dracula initially ships all of the boxes, as well as himself, making himself into “cargo” (90), to the port of Whitby, the progress of these boxes to London hinges on the various real estate deals that Harker, acting for his employer, Mr. Hawkins, has set up. (Hawkins, presumably, has been paid for this service, and when he dies and leaves everything to Jonathan, he is in a sense “infecting” Jonathan with Dracula’s gold.) In order to colonize England by spreading vampires, Dracula needs to import his own soil so he will have a safe place to rest during his daytime periods of dormancy; forty-nine of these boxes are superfluous, camouflage for his resting place, and the houses he buys, too, function to throw pursuers off the track. In bringing his own soil, which is repeatedly described as odiferous, to England, he is turning his land and himself into commodities and

thereby polluting—literally soiling—Britain via the purchase of real estate.<sup>308</sup> Like the stolen diamond in *The Moonstone*, not to mention the opium, these boxes enter England in an exoticized, peripatetic fashion—in diaspora—conveyed by Szgany who disperse infectious foreignness that threatens to destabilize every aspect of the status quo.

While *Dracula*'s epistolary form, influenced, according to Maurice Hindle, by Wilkie Collins's 1860 *The Woman in White* ("Introduction" xxxi), has been much remarked upon, less mention has been made of the fact that some of its epistles are more or less legal documents. In addition to the various characters' journal entries, there are letters, as well as an invoice, between Dracula's Whitby solicitor, Samuel F. Billington, and the firm receiving the London delivery of the boxes and routing them to Dracula's estate in Purfleet, on the Thames east of London<sup>309</sup>; a letter to Arthur Holmwood (or Lord Godalming as he is known after the death of his father) from Dracula's London estate agent; two telegrams to Arthur regarding the process of Dracula's getaway ship, the *Czarina Catherine*, from a representative of Lloyd's of London; and virtually incessant discussion of real estate, importation, and other business matters, including a meeting with Dracula's representative in Galatz, a Mr. Hildesheim who is described as "a Hebrew of rather the Adelphi Theatre type, with a nose like a sheep, and a fez" (371) to discuss his transactions with "Mr de Ville of London," i.e., Dracula, regarding the last of the fifty boxes, in which the Count is

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<sup>308</sup> It is no wonder that Jonathan Harker says of his dealings with Dracula, "[H]e certainly left me under the impression that he would have made a wonderful solicitor" (38); his invasion takes place in a highly systematic and businesslike manner.

<sup>309</sup> Purfleet is not far from Gravesend, a missed opportunity on Stoker's part.

fleeing London. Here, as in *The Spanish Gypsy*, Jews and Gypsies are twinned: both are the Count's henchpeople, and both abet his colonization of England.

Indeed, while much of the novel centers around the threatened rapes, near-rapes, and virtual rapes of the characters—Mina's run-in with Dracula in which he forces her to drink his blood is as close to actual rape as the novel comes, and the posthumous murder of Lucy, as it were, has been characterized as a gang rape (Elizabeth Miller par. 2)—I would argue that equally significant and perhaps even more sinister is the systematic and perfectly legal rape, i.e., colonization, of England, in which Dracula fills the void created by his destructiveness—the “empty hole”—with his own earth/filth.<sup>310</sup> Stephen Arata has noted the “double thrust—political and biological—of Dracula's invasion” which are “conflat[ed] into a single threat”: “Dracula's twin status as vampire and Szekely warrior suggests that for Stoker the Count's aggressions against the body are also aggressions against the body politic” (630). It appears that this invasion is only able to occur, at either the political or biological level, through the transfer of property. Stoker's continual emphasis on its legality, indeed, its legalism, implies that what the novel really objects to is the misappropriation of property, its allocation to non-British subjects. Several of the inheritances in the novel are allocated peculiarly, i.e., not according to primogeniture: in addition to Hawkins having left everything to Jonathan, Lucy's mother leaves everything to Arthur, though he has not yet married Lucy, as if to underscore the instability of the transfer of property.

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<sup>310</sup> Maud Ellman cites parallels between the novel's “technologies of writing” and vampirism, and compares both to venereal diseases (xix).



This instability and its effects on primogeniture find their culmination in the novel's last section, in which the birth of Jonathan and Mina's baby is announced. Jonathan states that the baby's "bundle of names links all our little band of men together, but we call him Quincey" (402), after the American member of the "little band," who gave his life in pursuit of Dracula. What Jonathan fails to note is that these men have been linked together before: they have all given transfusions to Lucy, thereby commingling their blood. As if this didn't render Harker *filis*'s parentage unstable enough, there is also the problem, noted by Hindle, of Dracula's forced "transfusion" of Mina: thus while Harker celebrates the birth of his son and hopes that he embodies some of their "brave friend's spirit," he is "conveniently forgetting that something *else* has 'passed into' the body of little Quincey, too" ("Introduction" xxxvi). Dracula's utterance at the time of Mina's "rape" suggests that a kind of marriage has taken place between them: "And you, their best beloved one, are now to me, flesh of my flesh; blood of my blood; kin of my kin..." (306). Thus little Quincey is not only the heir of Harker and his band of brothers, but of Dracula himself, a perverse inheritance indeed.<sup>311</sup> As in both *Orlando* and *Lavengro*, Englishness is revealed to be a hodgepodge of disparate bloodlines and ethnicities whose unity, a quality essential to nationalism, is an illusion.

Throughout this study, we have seen ways in which the mere presence of Gypsies in a text served to destabilize a variety of social norms, and that these norms hinged on property in a variety of ways. *Dracula* provides a perfect storm of these multiple valences, conflating the "property" of body, blood, race, and empire to construct an erotic connection between the biology of inheritance and that of national

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<sup>311</sup> See Franco Moretti's compelling reading of Quincey as a vampire (94-6).

identity. All of these elements are embodied in Dracula's "cargo," the boxes, which not only pollute the land with his soil (both his own personal soil and that of his land) beneath the radar of the law, but which commodify "reverse colonization," turning it into a legal transaction in which national identity becomes a form of capital. It is fitting, then, that the final role of the Szgany, who function as a frame for the novel's transactions, is to attempt to delivery the Count's last box to his castle before sunset and to do battle with the band of vampire-slayers; it is they who deal the death blow to Quincey Morris. When Jonathan cuts Dracula's throat with his kukri (i.e., colonial-Indian) knife and Quincey stabs him in the heart with his (also colonial) bowie knife, the vampire's body "crumble[s] into dust" and the Szgany—referred to as "gypsies" now, as if rendered harmless by the action—flee "as if for their lives" (401), their job as conduits, as catalysts, having concluded.

If in the majority of texts considered by this project, Gypsies and Gypsy figures have been abjected so that the social order may be restored, it is in this discussion of national identity that the material of these four chapters coalesces: ultimately, it is in the interests of creating a sense of stable national identity that Gypsies are exoticized, eroticized, romanticized, and rejected; it is the threat they pose of a kind of infection of the body politic from within that causes them to serve as such a powerful trope that they destabilize every text they enter in multiple registers. Yet in the texts this chapter has considered, this pursuit of a stable national identity is doomed to failure. Both Woolf's and Borrow's depictions of Britain's hybrid past point to the fundamental instability of British and/or English national identity, an

instability to which the difficulties of terminology—“British” or “English”?—call attention. Even if these Gypsy figures can be successfully repelled—as they are in *The Moonstone* and *Dracula*—it is this contested national identity that we are left with, much like that of Spain at the end of *The Spanish Gypsy*. Just as *The Spanish Gypsy* allegorizes this abjection, albeit in an ostensibly Gypso-philic register, it also allegorizes the state of British national identity: the Spain the departing Zincali leave behind is a hodge-podge of ethnicities: Moors, Jews, and the remaining Gypsies.

Like the incursion of *Dracula*, the continued presence of Gypsies in Britain threatens to destabilize its project of creating a monolithic national identity from the multiple ethnic and genetic strands of which it is constituted (a fact legible in the term “Anglo-Saxon”), a prospect that is enacted in Lawrence’s *The Virgin and the Gypsy*, which dramatizes the implicit threat of hybridity via reproduction. The process by which non-Gypsy characters (such as Jane Eyre and Franklin Blake) are “infected” with Gypsiness bespeaks the power of this contagion, against which “reformers” like George Smith “of Coalville” crusaded in a literal register. These texts struggle, with varying degrees of success, to abject literal and figurative Gypsies or at the very least, Gypsiness, and thus to shore up the body politic; but as in *Dracula*, the vampiric specter of hybridity may have been ostensibly vanquished, but the profound fissures to which it has called attention remain.

## V. Afterword

In the dark halls of the museum that is now what remains of Auschwitz, I see a heap of children's shoes, or something like that....The abjection of Nazi crime reaches its apex when death, which, in any case, kills me, interferes with what, in my living universe, is supposed to save me from death....

--Julie Kristeva, *Powers of Horror* (4)

The texts this study has examined depict Gypsies as catalysts who function in a variety of registers: as Byronic interlopers, like Heathcliff; as figures of pastoral nostalgia, like the Scholar-Gypsy; as heroines, like Fedalma—and, in a less romantic vein, as narrow-minded peasants, like the Gypsies in *Orlando*; as thugs, like the Szgany in *Dracula*; as sexual predators, like the Gypsy man in *The Virgin and the Gypsy*; Gypsiness has been portrayed as both performative, as in *Jane Eyre*, and contagious, as in *Bleak House* and *The Moonstone*. What this study has not purported to do, however, and indeed, has strenuously avoided, is engaging with the historical reality of the Romani people. At this point, however, it is important to note that underlying the multiple manifestations of the Gypsy trope in British literature is a real people whose history and ongoing reality have been consistently misunderstood and misrepresented since their arrival in Europe.

On the other hand, it is difficult to write about the real Romani people (indeed, as I have noted, it is difficult even to know what to call them) without falling into historical and/or rhetorical error or perhaps worse, academic feuding, with which the field of Romani Studies is rife. One of the most bitter of these academic controversies

is adumbrated in Ian Hancock's online article for the Romany Archives and Documentation Center (of which he is the Chairman of the Board), "Romani Origins and Romani<sup>312</sup> Identity," in which he sums up the complex contestations of the theory of Indian origins. Taking issue with the writings of Judith Okely, Leo Lucassen, Wim Willems, and others who have questioned the "Indianist" hypothesis, Hancock suggests that their theories<sup>313</sup> that seem to posit a "connection between the specific language one speaks and one's *genetic* history" reflect "19<sup>th</sup> century racist thought." Even those scholars who fundamentally accept the theory of Indian origins, such as Gypsy Lore Society Board member Sheila Salo and linguist Yaron Matras, editor of *Romani Studies* (the publication of the Gypsy Lore Society), come under fire from Hancock for questioning his theory of exactly which caste(s) in India were the origin of the Roma. Hancock quotes Matras's statement on the subject:

In a number of recent publications, Hancock claims that Romani was formed as a military koiné by a caste of warriors assembled to resist the Islamic invasions of India. In some circles, this view is gaining popularity as it pretends to revise what is referred to as potentially racist, or at least stereotypical images of the Rom. There is, however, neither linguistic nor historical evidence to support it. (2004:301)

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<sup>312</sup> He uses this term, although elsewhere he states, "Rrom (plural Rroma) is the term officially adopted by the International Romani Union to refer to all people of Romani descent, regardless of self-ascription. Where a Romani population has a different name for itself, the policy is to use that name, thus one Romani population in northern Europe refers to itself as Sinti, those in Spain, Finland and Wales as Kalé and so on. Confusion arises because Vlax-speaking Rroma use the term only with reference to themselves, having other names for other Gypsy populations. The spelling used here, with double-rr, reflects the usage in the New Standard Orthography established by the Language Commission of the International Romani Union." ("The Struggle for the Control of Identity").

<sup>313</sup> Okely, for example, raises the point that while the presence of words from Indian languages in Romani is interpreted as indicative of Indian origins, the presence of European words does not evoke "linear migratory explanation" (qtd. in Hancock).

Hancock's response to this is as follows:

Surely such cynicism masks a certain unease on the part of those who seek to define and limit Romani identity. It is difficult to believe that this kind of scholarship is serious, and its purpose may indeed have been simply to generate controversy and debate; but its existence is dangerous at a time when the number of administrators and policy makers who would exploit this scholarship in their decision-making is growing.

Both the tenor and tone of this controversy are encapsulated here.<sup>314</sup> Matras appears to accuse Hancock of trying to locate a more elevated ancestry for the Roma than the combination of musicians, jugglers, and craftworkers posited by Donald Kenrick and others.<sup>315</sup> Hancock responds with accusations of "cynicism," lack of seriousness, and a desire to merely generate debate.

As someone who is neither a Romani nor a linguist, I have no idea which of these theories, if any, to give credence to, but I find it striking, and fascinating, that even among people who are arguably the world's leading experts on the subject, there is little to no agreement about the most fundamental aspects of the history of the Romani people. If ever a signifier had been emptied of all "essentialist" meaning, surely the figure of the Gypsy, about which so much has been said but so little

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<sup>314</sup> I was told by Judith Okely that someone who disagreed with her theories once shoved her in the lunch line at a conference.

<sup>315</sup> In *Bury Me Standing*, journalist Isabel Fonseca takes up this debate: "Judith Okely, with particular reference to British Travelers, deploras all talk of an Indian origin, which she sees as just another way of exoticizing, and marginalizing, this widely traveled and long-resident European people. At the same time, many contemporary Gypsy writers and activists are intrigued, but they argue for a classier genealogy: we hear, for example, that the Gypsies descended from the Kshattriyas, the warrior caste, just below Brahmins [Hancock's theory]. There is something useful about ambiguous origins, after all: you can be whoever you want to be" (100).

known, is an “empty” one, and has appeared throughout their history as deliciously inscrutable, available for infusion with the multiple signifieds this study has endeavored to locate. If as exotic others of unknown origin, the Roma arrived in the countries of Europe and became the site of diverse projections that reflected the anxieties of the cultures they inhabited, it is clear that they continue to function this way in the present day, embodying contemporary anxieties about race, human and civil rights, and national and ethnic identity.<sup>316</sup> The long history of the Gypsy trope reflects the history of these projections, in which available cultural anxieties are projected onto an available object which the subject—the national body—then attempts to abject in order to effect a cure for whatever is ailing the body politic.<sup>317</sup> What distinguishes the Gypsy figure from other Others, however, is that they have historically been the objects of both contempt and aversion but also of desire and identification. In fairness to Okely, her point about the problem of discussing Indian origins is that the Travellers of Britain, as she has referred to them, are as British as anyone else; it is only by exoticizing a population that a society can succeed in rejecting it, whereas an indigenous population, whatever its origins, cannot be abjected without doing violence to the body that abjects it.

So while a discussion of the complex cocktail of desire and aversion located in the Gypsy trope in literature is interesting in the abstract, it is important to bear in mind its ramifications: although as with almost every other aspect of Roma history,

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<sup>316</sup> See, for example, Neda Atanasoski, “‘Race’ Toward Freedom: Post-cold War US Multiculturalism and the Reconstruction of Eastern Europe,” which compares the racism directed toward Roma in Eastern Europe with that directed toward African Americans in the US.

<sup>317</sup> We are witnessing a very similar process in contemporary America’s debates on immigration, in which immigrants, especially Islamic ones, have been represented by a vocal portion of the population as responsible for all of society’s ills.

the number is contested, historians estimate that “between one-quarter and one-half million Roma and Sinti, usually referred to as ‘Gypsies,’” were murdered by the Nazis (Milton 212). Even if, as Guenter Lewy argues, Gypsies were not targeted for immediate mass “extermination” in quite the same way as the Jews were, clearly the vast scale of their deportation, incarceration, and murder reveals a policy of systematic abjection with horrific consequences.<sup>318</sup> Ultimately, the Nazis’ persecution of the Gypsies, whose fate was often tragically parallel with that of the Jews, was motivated by theories of racial purity, or “blood” (Lewy 37 ff.) that are uncomfortably reminiscent of the linguistic groupings in *Lavengro* and the discussion of “blood” in *The Spanish Gypsy* and, of course, in *Dracula*. By eliminating Jews and other “racially inferior” Others by whatever means necessary, the Nazis hoped to purify the “blood” of an “Aryan” race<sup>319</sup> (Lewy 4), a project that may have begun philosophically but that ended in Auschwitz. Viewed through the lens of the Holocaust, or as it is called by the Romani community, the *Porrajmos*, Romani for “great devouring” (Lewy 226), the power of the “wild” Gypsy figure to destabilize British texts cannot but seem like a sinister harbinger of their tragically literal abjection.

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<sup>318</sup> While Lewy’s view is disputed by Roma historian Ian Hancock, Lewy suggests that the persecution of Gypsies by the Nazis was of a different order from that of the Jews: in the case of the Jews, the Nazis intended to “annihilate physically every man, woman, and child,” whereas “the Gypsies were considered a ‘nuisance’ and a ‘plague’ but not a major threat to the German people,” and thus “their treatment differed from that of the Jews” (225-6).

<sup>319</sup> According to Lewy, some Nazis, including Himmler, posited that “racially pure” Gypsies, because of their Indian origins, were in fact descendents of a proto-Aryan “race,” and they were therefore the subjects of academic study that led to these “pure” Gypsies being exempt from some of the anti-Gypsy policies (135-40 and ff.).



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